

A multiple approach to Vasile Spătărelu's work

Review

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Carmen Chelaru (coord.), *Studii de muzicologie de & despre Vasile Spătărelu* [Studies of Musicology by & about Vasile Spătărelu], Iași: Editura Artes, 2015.

A bulk of literature has been written abroad and in Romania about music and musicians – bestsellers, artistic biographies and also many sophisticated studies aimed at experts. Nonetheless, the research and promotion of composer Vasile Spătărelu's work initiated by musicologist Carmen Chelaru is an exceptional work, contrary to usual cultural products. An exceptional work in its consistence – put into practice by means of an edited volume, *Studies of Musicology by & about Vasile Spătărelu*, and in some of the master's scores (*Epitaph 1989. Meditations about Enescu III; The ridiculous precious* – voice and piano; *String Quartet no. 1; Sinfonieta*); studies of outstanding quality bringing a new depth of understanding of the creator's world, the founder of the modern school of composition in Iași.

On the other hand, the discussion includes one of the favorite topics of Iași musicology, the history of composition in the old capital of Moldova. The field of research developed by means of doctoral and post-doctoral studies, some completed and others ready to be published, and also through team projects that have already become known (*Achim Stoia 2010*, edited by musicologist Paula Bălan; a series of scores, *Restitutio*, initiated by composer Viorel Munteanu and the list could be continued).

More varied and complex, the volume *Studies of Musicology by & about Vasile Spătărelu* works as a mirror with two sides, one in which the creator is reflected and the other providing a true image of musicology in Iași – authors belonging to all generations, the ones who have just completed their doctoral studies (Mihaela Balan) and the authors already recognized through their volumes and articles, personal research methods, such as Gheorghe Duțică and Carmen Chelaru. In what follows, we will describe their contribution to knowledge development and underline specific features of each study, therefore recreating the image of Vasile Spătărelu's style as it may be seen in the content of the volume.

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Studies on a single work

In her article *Tradiție și inovație în Sonata pentru pian de Vasile Spătărelu* [Tradition and Innovation in Piano Sonata by Vasile Spătărelu] Mihaela-Georgiana Balan discovers the defining stylistic features of his music as already present in this composition of his early youth (1962). Along with the rigour of coherence and proportionality, the author identifies two alternating styles in the technique of the work: abstract sonority obtained through modal intonation cutouts from the chromatic total and modal sonority of folk origin with warm, colorful, central tonal harmonies. Comparisons made with similar works of composers such as Tiberiu Olah and Liviu Glodeanu show Spătărelu's blending into the Romanian creative context of the 1950s and '60s.

The study *Vasile Spătărelu. Trei lieduri pe versuri de Nichita Stănescu (1978)* [Vasile Spătărelu. Three songs on poems by Nikita Stănescu (1978)] by Anca Simona Ciobanu underlines another distinctive feature of the composer: intuition, emotion, recomposing poetics and poetry. The author focuses on the means of musical composition: infinite melodic inspiration, richness and the variety of chromatic harmony, finally concluding: "Vasile Spătărelu penetrates into the depth of the text, amplifies its poetic meaning, shapes its atmosphere and enriches it with new expressive features" (p. 120). The study also stresses the author's preference for depressive expression defined by unrest, fear, nostalgia and pain.

"Prețioasele ridicole" – sărbătoare a spiritului comic ["The Precious Ridiculous" – a feast of the comic spirit] by Consuela Radu-Țaga is a consistent study that takes advantage of the author's experience as a performer and conductor and makes use of her skills in analyzing musicology. The article also presents another artistic direction of the composer, the neoclassical inclination with a postmodern contextualization – an ironic, satirical expression that identifies the musical and artistic vocabulary of comic effects.

In *"Epitaf 1989" ("Meditații la Enescu" III sau Variațiuni poetice pe o temă de Enescu)* ["Epitaph 1989" ("Meditations on Enescu" III) or Poetic variations on a theme by Enescu] Anca Mihaela Sîrbu looks into the last symphonic work of Vasile Spătărelu (2002), which was also the topic of his doctoral dissertation. The study underlines the ideas from the composer's dissertation and also incorporates the author's own experience as a composer and conductor. The article underlines the two articulation modes of the two starting points of the composition – the events of 1989, inspiring a *quasi-programmatic* music, "a musical script of emotions, declared and commented in a pseudo program" – and a personal note underlined by the use of Enescu's resources – the two directions uniting by citing psalm song "Smooth Light".

The study *Soluții de prelucrare în Liturghia psaltică în glasul al III-lea și prelucrare corală la trei voci de Preot Florin Bucescu și Vasile Spătărelu* [On the *Psaltic liturgy in the third mode* by Priest Florin Bucescu and Vasile Spătărelu] is written by Irina Zamfira Dănilă who discusses the composer's last

creation (2005) as having the meaning of a spiritual Christian revival and being the outcome of a great friendship resulted in an artistic cooperation.

Overview studies

Carmen Chelaru is the author of an extended study *Cvartetul de coarde în creația lui Vasile Spătărelu* [String Quartet in Vasile Spătărelu's Work] – an original research in the bibliography of this topic. The intertwining of a historical analysis, revealing cultural contextualizing information, with the approach of a competent music critic expressing her personal views and the sober and clear architectural analyses defines the musicological style of the author. The analysis of the four string quartets composed by Vasile Spătărelu at intervals of more than ten years (1961, 1974, 1982) gave the author the chance to discover dominant areas of expression – depressive, expressionistically tense, ironic, sarcastic (obvious by integrating march *Go forward, comrades – Quartet II* in the quartet writing). The awareness of the value of the composer's creations leads to firm conclusions: Vasile Spătărelu stands out by “mastering the craft, understanding the tradition and the masters of the genre, having a creative gift”.

Gheorghe Duțică's study – *Ars Choralis sau despre Poeticile lui Vasile Spătărelu* [*Ars choralis* or on the Poetics of Vasile Spătărelu] – stands out from the general tone of the book through its original, subtle and expressive musicological style. Vasile Spătărelu's vocation for choral art – an accumulation of abilities for poetry, articulation and harmonic sound subtleties – has always been recognized and admired and is becoming a source of inspiration for poetic musicology, able to express the ineffable artistic syncretism. The relation among harmony, polyphony and symmetry of form is the poetics between *space and time*; the strategy of intonation density is expressed by *the poetics of chromatic fullness, the reversed chromatic formula creates the poetics of ambiguity and evasion*; the source of rebirth of Vasile Spătărelu's choral writing is defined *through nostalgia of nostalgia or poetics of amnesia*. Gheorghe Duțică's roles as a composer and poet claim their rights, penetrating into his musicology where a rigorous method of structural analysis, novel academic vocabulary – results in a sublimation of technique in poetry. By defining Vasile Spătărelu's style outside the conventions of the 20th century as using “the attitude of the creative self”, we recognize the thought of another music author that views creation as an autonomous act.

Armonie și polifonie în colindele pentru cor mixt de Vasile Spătărelu [Harmony and polyphony in carols for mixed choir by Vasile Spătărelu] is an extremely rigorous and terminologically accurate modern study written by Luminița Duțică. It includes a creative application of important concepts of musical theory coined by Gheorghe Duțică and Dan Voiculescu and the integration of the analysis with a larger research interest of the author: a series

of studies on the plurivocal techniques in coral carols of some composers in Transylvania: Sabin Drăgoi, Sigismund Toduță, Adrian Pop and others.

The chapter *Vasile Spătărelu și Festivalul Muzicii Românești* [Vasile Spătărelu and the Romanian Music Festival] is an extension of the monographic research conducted by Florin Luchian, published under the title *Festivalul Muzicii Românești. Istorie, receptare critică și management* [Romanian Music Festival. History, critical reception and management] (2014). It presents a typical case for Romanian musical life: beginning with 1973, the festival became a stimulus for the creation of composers from Iași whose names started to appear frequently on concert posters. They supported the development of this event shaping the specific features of the Iași festival.

The editor's vision is reflected well in the title – *Studies of Musicology by & about Vasile Spătărelu*. Therefore, it begins with the composer's scientific work and his recognition in the world of music – through the inclusion of his doctoral thesis (*Meditations on Enescu. A creative project for the shaping of musical thought between tradition and modernity*) defended at the “Gheorghe Dima” Academy of Music in Cluj-Napoca in 2002 and the reports of the doctoral review committee made up of the following professors: Valentin Timaru (Academic advisor), Octavian Lazăr Cosma, Hans Peter Türk, Mihail Cozmei, Bujor Dâșorean. After the nine original studies of musicological research, the edition ends with the image of the creator colored by several refined aesthetic studies (also included in the volume *Our Vasile Spătărelu*, 2013 and/or other publications) by Anca Sîrbu, Florin Bucescu, Gheorghe Duțică and Viorel Munteanu.

Supported by the Faculty of Performing, Composition and Theoretical Music Studies of the “George Enescu” University of Arts, the *Spătărelu* Project shows power and unity contradicting the modern tendency towards a dispersion of life and creation and the fragmentation of life into minor, redundant, insignificant activities. Musicologist Carmen Chelaru has managed to unite creative forces for which love, respect and admiration for Vasile Spătărelu has turned into an inspiring stimulus, has strengthened their professionalism and also contributed to the development of music science. The volume has definitely contributed to attaining a more nuanced and contextual understanding of the great master's music.