

EVENIMENTE

Identity and Interculturality in Contemporary Musical Art Symposium within "Meetings of New Music"

(Cluj, September 30 – October 1, 1999)

The Symposium took place in Cluj-Napoca, in the the Ciolan auditorium of the "Gheorghe Dima" Music Academy between September 30 and October 1, 1999. The moderators of the meeting were: Mr. Nicolae Brînduș (composer) on behalf of the UCMR main organizer of this meeting and Mr. Pavel Pușcaș (musicologist) on behalf of the Music Academy, hostess of the stage in Cluj of the Festival. This material is a concentrated account essential but hopefully faithful to the ideas and arguments, to the lines of interest and relevance in the thematic frame (and not only that) for those 27 participants of 16 contries and 4 continents. The dialogue was in English. Find enclosed some of the most relevant positions.

Nicolae Brînduș (*Bucharest, Romania*): I salute this meeting of composers, musicologists, and musicians who participated at the Festival and I thank the Music Academy, our host in Cluj. We would like our meeting to be informal. That dialogue is open to every participant. The most important ideas will be retained, written and translated to be published in the "Muzica" Magazine. I give the word to Mr. Ph. D. Pavel Pușcaș University Reader, Professor of Musicology and Musical Aesthetics to open and conduct these discussions in our meeting.

Pavel Pușcaș (*Cluj-Napoca, Romania*): To give a conscious base and to center the ideas we talk about, I would try a short examination of the two fundamental concepts of our symposium: Interculturality and Identity. Although these are concepts that should better belong to the philosophy of culture, to anthropology and cultural sociology rather than to music, they do have a concrete application, of an acute actuality within the frame of new music, both in the creation and performing field, as well as in the musical and aesthetical analysis.

The interculturality is not a new concept. It is a problem that relates to an imminence of the human society, the one to integrate alterities, to include the Other in different hypostasis: as alterity, complementary or interiority. All the great empires in the history of humanity have generated aspects of Interculturality. Either we talk about the Chinese Empire, about the Moguls, the Arabs, the Greeks, the Roman Empire, or the Ottoman Empire, every time we have present the phenomenon of Interculturality. Of course, it is a reality born of different vectors, important at first sight: political, social, economy, military etc. In Europe, the Christian spirituality has digged up a special kind of interculturality that still lives on. As well for the Islamism in the Middle East or the Buddhism in the Far East. In modern times, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the British or the Russian ones have obviously the same prerogative. Any structure that includes more nations, spiritualities face this result.

In the same manner, the period of great geographical discoveries also had the problem of interculturality. The old, the stable was confronted with the New, the unknown, the surprising that had to be integrated. This integration could be made from equal positions from a dialogue that generates synthesis and symbiosis, or from the dominating position of a "civilisating model" that unfortunately lead many identities and cultural spiritualities to disappear. Think of the minoic civilization, the Etruscan and the Cathar ones. The problem of Identity is not anymore ostensive but intensive. It is one of the most difficult challenges of the philosophy and the culture, in culture, in general. In fact, the Identity itself makes serious problems regarding the premises we use as preliminary concepts to fundament identity. There are identities at different levels. We accept that the primary one is at the person level by an irreducible personality. But we can also talk about an identity of the family, the human group, the population of a region, of an ethnical group, nation, a continent, a race. Nietzsche talked about nations as "higher individuality". The problem implies philosophy, sociology, psychology, psychoanalysis or politology. There are individuals with multiple personalities, as we all can have different identities in different days, periods, and environments.

In the musical art, to define identity means to find those morphologic elements of connection, technical an/or formal that generate unique, original solutions. In an ermetic society like a traditional culture or a historic period of revolution, this could be an easy problem, but within an alive, contemporary phenomenon like music today, it seems risky and hopeless. This because both the technical and the morphological repertoire, the syntax and the forms became international, and, on the other hand, the originality is a phenomenon more and more built, reflexive, more artificial.

Mario Stern (Mexico): In Mexico we have many ethnical groups (Aztecs, Maya) which give original ancestral origins. We can not talk about a genuine cultural identity having all these different groups. We have national composers (Carlos Chavez and the tendency defined by him) or cosmopolitan who write in universal languages or for electronic media. The overall tendency is to be more universal, to use more and more general means and techniques. Trying to "identify the identity" is like wanting to define breathing. The differences are made at the profound level of the unconscious, and not at the artificial level of the intellect.

On the other hand, the SIMC meetings do just that. They place face to face identities in the context of intercultural dialogue.

Menahem Zur (Israel): The specificity of the identity is not material, in using the folk song or the ancestral, tribal languages. I am an Israelite composer born in Israel. I have nothing yet to prove, not even to myself. The immigrant composer are more Israelite than I am. They use more native, more genuine languages. The important thing is what you want to be. The Japan jazz musicians who sing in America want to be Americans. The German ones who come to Israel, want to be Israelite. There is a perspective dimension in the identity: it does not matter what you were, but what you want to be!

Janos Decenyi (Hungary): Is there a common point to every Jew? Of course, the language. When you leave for America as Irish immigrant, you are simultaneously both Irish and American. There is only cultural model. There is a plurality and everyone is valid. You can have more than one identity.

I am a Hungarian composer. It is very difficult to define what's Hungarian in the Hungarian music. The folk music or the use of it, for example! However, what if I write modern oratorio on the lyrics of a Hungarian poet? However, what if I write only for instruments, maybe dodecaphonique? It is almost impossible to define, but there is "something" to show that we are Hungarians! We are open to more models, techniques, values and I think this is good.

Nicolae Brînduş (România): In the Hungarian music the only Hungarian thing are the composers! So also their creation!

Dora Cojocar (România): Applied to the Romanian music, the concepts of Identity and Interculturality can be interpreted in more than one way. In the 60s and 70s creation, there are three main directions: post-Enescu, constructivism and archetypal music. The new generations are searching for new ways, new constructive solutions, and new languages. They are not interested in showing first that they are Romanian. Still their music has their own feeling. Something appears beneath all these orientations and techniques that can establish an appartenance to an identity of the Romanian music.

John Beckwith (Australia): Australia has a pluralistic society that identifies itself with many overposed influences from many cultures. There are different models, different ways to exploit some identifiable identities, but what is more important is the intense need to belong to an identity. Psychologically speaking, every person has a need of a reference identity, and the composer even more. Historically speaking, it is more difficult. We can say that we all follow a model of European music over the last 4 or 5000 years. But we can not say until when. Nobody can predict what we will write or sing in the future. On the other hand, there is the real danger of some cultures disappearing, some specificities, identities, a danger of dilution of essences.

Richard Tsang (Hong-Kong): What is interesting is that we need to identify ourselves through creation and not through others. Still we have to understand that we work on a base of concepts, notions that are western. Every one of us accepts the premises that music is a work of art and the base line is that the music itself is art. This is not a western renaissance concept. We do have a western mental frame. The essence of the Chinese music is different. Its base is another aesthetics, philosophy and another scenery. But to compose music is, by simplifying it, to work with inter-related sounds. The western way seems now the only universal way to communicate? I do not suggest or sustain this solution. I am only asking a question. As far as I am concerned, I can not say that I am genuine Chinese. I am Chinese born in Hong-Kong with every consequences of this situation. I can still see that the music composed within SIMC is the consequence of the European music over the last 300 years.

John Beckwith: Canada, as well as the entire North America is a country of immigrants. So there is not really a national identity. We consider identity as a personal, individual matter. The Canadian composers do not want to be Canadian, but individuals with individual creation. Of course, they always reflect some traditional background, but they want to be something else. In the relation Identity – Interculturality we have the problem of cultural exploitation and cultural expropriation. We have not yet got beyond the exclusive property of some motives, lines and sometimes we have the dangerous situation when we use other languages, other "identities".

Makoto Shinohara (Japan): If you will come to Japan, you will be surprised how western Japan is. It is full of malls and markets. But we still have an identity of culture, of spirituality, of music. I can find it even when a Serbian composer uses traditional instruments such as Koto or Sho. Of course, the techniques, the forms, the languages are universal. But all of these can change the way you feel appreciate or prefer some sonorities and musical typologies. The identity lies in our own feeling. I believe and I hope there is a Japanese identity.

Conclusions:

We discussed in terms of modernity about interculturality from about 200 years, from the Enlightenment period on. The concepts of cosmopolitan and, related to that, the one of "citizen of the world" were an invention of that period. Today we do not think in terms that belong to a revolted culture. Following the synthesis from the beginning of the 19th century, of the avangarde currents, as European we were forced to recognize to other cultures, to other spiritualities some ontological qualities sometimes higher than our own. In the last half-century, we move within a philosophy of the human that integrates in interculturality different but equal cultures, that integrates under the umbrella of mutual relevance and tolerance. It is a phenomenon both democratic and profoundly demagogical. Because although all cultures within themselves are equal, the civilizations were never equal. The civilizations develop for themselves by imperatively (and imperialistic) promoting the culture, their own pattern. The philologists say that every year 26 languages, dialects, idioms disappear because of different causes. How many musical idioms disappear every year of the Interculturality of free time of economic market of the culture? The ethnomusicologists could come up with an answer, but not with a solution, admitting that it exists and that we want to take it?

We find ourselves between Identity and Interculturality. We can talk about Transculturality that comes stronger and stronger. But like every specie of the terrestrial life, every culture is precious. We do not know yet sufficient how, but we must preserve this richness of diversity.

Pavel PUȘCAȘ