

Cartoon-Variations on a Theme by Mozart **Op. 51 by Dan Dediu¹ or** **On the Various Forms of Fantasy**

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Abstract

*This study analyses the work *Cartoon Variations on a Theme by Mozart* by Dan Dediu, a Romanian composer recognised by the way in which his music reflects an abundance of imagination. It looks to draw a comparison between the way in which imagination and fantasy are reflected in the music of Mozart’s time – on the one hand through the writings of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach and his contemporaries, and on the other hand through the reception of the German composer’s music by Heinrich Wilhelm Gerstenberg – and the way in which creative fantasy gradually extended its limits to reach a “music of possible existences” in postmodern music. If Bach conceived that imagination was reflected in the richness of (harmonic) musical structures at an abstract level, refusing any explicit association with poetic images, Dan Dediu’s postmodern music, marked by the aesthetics of the genre, proposes a “fictional method” of composition, in which for any creative stage an extramusical association is possible, as the entire work constitutes a musical metafiction.*

Key-words: *Cartoon-Variations on a Theme by Mozart* Op. 51, Dan Dediu, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, fantasy

¹ Composer Dan Dediu is undoubtedly the most internationally renowned name in the Romanian contemporary musical landscape. His compositional activity is greatly enriched by his teaching career (professor at the Bucharest University of Music), by his commitment to new music (artistic director of the *International Week of New Music* Festival and of the *Profil* Ensemble) and by a constant and revitalising activity as an essayist and aesthetician.

While Dan Dediu's completed works, more than 150 in number, embrace a wide variety of musical genres, one of the hallmarks of his style is the abundance of fantasy, both in composition and in writing, which draws its inspiration from a variety of sources: from philosophical writings to physical phenomena, from contemporary literature to configurations of the natural elements. His music finds inspiration in literature when he enters the fabulous world of Baron Münchhausen², or in the mythical world of imaginary animals from *The Book of Imaginary Beings* by Argentinian Jorge Luis Borges; in microscopic unicellular biology when he writes *Mikrobenmusik*³, or in the laws of physics when he translates the phenomenon of light reflection into music - a continuous and infinitely abstract dialogue of languages.

This study analyses composer Dediu's *Cartoon Variations on a Theme by Mozart* from the perspective of how attitudes to fantasy changed over time - from the instrumental genre of the Classical period, to the idea of creative fantasy in the sense of a poet's imagination. Starting with the fantasy genre, as it was conceived, defined and received in Mozart's days through the theoretical writings of the time (in particular those of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach), the analysis follows both the aesthetic trajectory of the concept of creative fantasy and the way in which the concept of fantasy slowly widens over time, starting from a point where structure is purely musical and ending at a virtual space of many possible conjunctures, the latter encapsulated by the music and aesthetics of Dediu's work.

Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach and *freye Fantasie*, or the freedom of purely musical play

In defining the *freye Fantasie* (free fantasy) genre, strongly linked to the practice of improvisation, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach provides a precise description: "One calls a fantasy free if it has no metre, and modulates to more keys than is customary in other pieces

² Dan Dediu, *Münchhausen Herr der Lügen*, op. 98, chamber opera in three acts, libretto by Holger Siemann, Editura Muzicală, București, 2015.

³ Dan Dediu, *Mikrobenmusik* for clarinet, viola and piano op. 36 (1993).

which are in set metre or improvised.”⁴ Starting from these metric and harmonic constraints of the genre, Bach elaborates that a fantasy consists of “alternating harmonic passages which can be executed in all kinds of figures and divisions”⁵; thus, we already have a detailed picture of the actual musical content: figures and musical structures (cells and motifs with a well-defined melodic contour, operating according to precise rules) which follow a clearly directed and well-controlled harmonic path. The aesthetic ideal of a fantasy resides in its harmonic wealth (“an endless vista of harmonic variety”⁶ or “the beauty of variety”⁷), but this wealth is generated by thorough knowledge of the rules for figured bass realization and for adaptation of the melodic figures to the harmonic content intended.

Despite being based on these strict rules of harmonic leading of the voices, the sensitive style championed by C. P. E. Bach and centered around the court of Frederick the Great at Berlin and Potsdam permits some licenses to enhance musical expression; tempo fluctuations, dynamic differences, and omitting or adding voices (not only from one section to another but also from one chord to another) were practices used only at the court of Frederick the Great.⁸ Such control over performance was intended exclusively for *den Kennern* (the connoisseurs), although even for them the instrumental execution was a serious challenge. The effects of these explorations into the “sensitive style” found their way into the music of their contemporaries at the time, though it was used in a less concentrated manner: the idea of timbral, dynamic and structural diversity (in terms

⁴ “Eine Fantasie nennt man frey, wenn sie keine abgemessene Tacteintheilung enthält, und in mehrere Tonarten ausweicht”, in: Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen. Zweyter Theil, in welchem die Lehre von dem Accompagnement und der freyen Fantasie abgehandelt wird*, Berlin, 1762, p. 325.

⁵ “abwechselnden harmonischen Sätzen, welche in allerhand Figuren und Zergliederungen ausgeführt werden können”, in: Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, *Idem*, p. 326.

⁶ “ein unzu übersehenes Feld von harmonischer Mannigfaltigkeit”, in: Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, *Idem*, p. 335.

⁷ “Das Schöne der Mannigfaltigkeit”, in: Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, *Idem*, p. 336.

⁸ Siegbert Rampe, *Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach und seine Zeit*, = Große Komponisten und ihre Zeit, Laaber-Verlag, Laaber, 2014, p. 304

of content, of harmonic density) is also found to some extent, from one phrase to another, in Mozart's music.⁹

From the description above, we notice from the beginning that the creative imagination is limited to exclusively musical/instrumental parameters, we recognize the pleasure of playing¹⁰ and the imagination's involvement grows directly from the treatment and development of the musical material. Thus, musical language takes a first step away from the doctrine of the affections, in which music is subordinated to the word. However, the emancipation of instrumental music in the second half of the eighteenth century was often met with the need to complement the presentation of the music with the concreteness of a poetic image. Comparing music and poetry, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing questions the eloquence of instrumental musical discourse, associating its abundance of affects with the way they are perceived in a dream.¹¹ The variety of musical expression sought by instrumental music contradicts the principle of unity in feeling, which cannot be attained by a music that expresses multiple characters. The listener gets carried away by the musical ideas, without being able to obtain a meaningful and coherent image.¹²

C. P. E. Bach's fantasy, a purely instrumental genre compared by Immanuel Kant to *freie Schönheit* (free beauty)¹³ - referring to its non-thematic, *freye Fantasie*, stirred the imagination of poet and critic Heinrich Wilhelm Gerstenberg (1737-1823) in an unprecedented manner. Impressed by the expressive wealth of *Fantasia in C Minor* H.75.5./Wq 119/7, Gerstenberg performed the experiment of adding a voice with text, initially imagining the scene of Hamlet's famous "To be, or not to be" soliloquy. Later, he added an alternative text to the same piece, in which he presents a new scene: Socrates' death as reported by Plato. Although innovative, his approach ended up being ridiculed, while in our times it could easily qualify as blasphemy. As

⁹ Siegbert Rampe, *Idem*, p. 306.

¹⁰ Margarete Reimann, "Zur Deutung des Begriffs Fantasia", in: *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 10. Jg., H. 4., 1953, p. 254.

¹¹ Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, 1769, p. 212.

¹² Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, 1769, p. 212-213.

¹³ Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, Teil I, Berlin, 1790, Chapter 24, Paragraph 16.

naive as this translation of musical affects through words and poetry may seem, Gerstenberg's undertaking was true to the spirit of the Enlightenment, which sought to clarify and bring these feelings into the reality of the image, in other words to imitate nature, which instrumental music (especially *freye Fantasie* with its repeated and swift changes of affects) was unable to achieve, as it lacks the notional capacity of the art of the word.

Gerstenberg informed his admired composer of his intention to create a text for the music of his fantasy, and resulting correspondence includes a letter dated 21st October 1773 by the composer (published in Peter Schleuning's ample monograph dedicated to the *freye Fantasie* genre). About the union of instrumental music and text, referring to the Trio Sonata Wq 161 (1751), it states:

I, as a keyboard player, am so bold as to assert that in fact one can say a great deal on our instrument with a good performance. Such a keyboard player, especially when he has a highly inventive spirit, can do very much. Meanwhile, words remain always words, and the human voice remains pre-eminent. As long as we can have that which is near, we can ignore that which is further away without depriving ourselves¹⁴.

Bach's restrained words confirm, on the one hand, a certain reverence that instrumental music holds for vocal music, which has the clarifying word as an obvious advantage, but on the other hand, since "*Indessen Worte bleiben immer Worte*" (words remain always words), the word is viewed as limited compared to music, whose essential trait is its immediate and unrestrained-by-words influence on

¹⁴ "*Ich als ein Clavierspieler, getraue mir zu behaupten, daß man auf unserm Instrumente in der Tat bey einer guten Ausführung viel sagen könne. [...] Ein solcher Clavierspieler, zumahl, wenn er ein erfindungsreiches Genie hat, kann sehr viel thun. Indessen Worte bleiben immer Worte und die Menschenstimme bleibt uns immer voraus. Solange wir das Nähere haben können, dürfen wir, ohne Noth, das Weitere nicht suchen*", in: Peter Schleuning, *Die freie Fantasie. Ein Beitrag zur Erforschung der klassischen Klaviermusik*, = Göppinger Akademische Beiträge 76, ed. Ulrich Müller, Franz Hundsnurscher, K. Werner Jauß, Verlag Alfred Kümmerle, Göppingen, 1973, p. 178.

the soul. As Rilke would write in his First Letter to a young poet, “Most happenings are beyond expression; they exist where a word has never intruded”¹⁵.

Despite conjuring concrete scenes in the imagination of the contemporary listener, the tragic character of C. P. E. Bach's music is expressed instrumentally without exception. The rigour with which these musical structures were employed is obvious from no less than 325 pages he wrote dedicated to rules governing harmony, imitation, and rhythmic or melodic formulas, with only 17 pages being dedicated to *freye Fantasie*. Thus, we see that music is juggling with its own possibilities of expression, distancing itself from the hegemony of the word.

Fantasy in Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's music, or singular searches

Mozart became familiar with the fantasy genre as early as his childhood. Leopold Mozart used to compile notebooks in which we can find pieces, including fantasies, written both by his son and by other composers. It is in these notebooks that we can also find precious harmonic sketches for figurative improvisation.¹⁶ Mozart's work at this time is largely thematic fantasy, in which themes are developed through virtuosic passages, with an abundance of arpeggios and scales, and carried through bold modulations; in some short passages barlines are completely absent, giving free rein to instrumental virtuosity.

Peter Schleuning divides Mozart's fantasies into two groups: the early (KV 395/300g; KV 394/383a; *Fantasia* KV Anh. 32/383C; KV 396/385f; KV 397/385g) and the late (KV 475; KV Anh. 35/593a; KV 594 later named *Fantasia*; KV 608; *Fantasia* KV Anh. 92/616a) are

¹⁵ Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*, trad. Joan M. Burnham, New World Library, Novato, California, 2000, p. 9-10.

¹⁶ Peter Schleuning, *Die freie Fantasie. Ein Beitrag zur Erforschung der klassischen Klaviermusik*, = Göppinger Akademische Beiträge, ed. Ulrich Müller, Franz Hundsnurscher and K. Werner Jauß, Verlag Alfred Kümmerle, Göppingen, 1973, p. 327.

divided by the year 1783, that being the year of appearance of the two fantasies in the *Fourth Collection of Kenner und Liebhaber* by C. P. E. Bach, who he certainly came to know through Baron Gottfried van Swieten, the Prefect of the Imperial Library in Vienna.¹⁷

If the pre-1783 fantasies were influenced by the Baroque style, dominated by imitation and harmonic sequences at the fifth, in the later fantasies Mozart started to look for a more coherent formal structure beginning with the Fantasy in C minor KV 475 (without completely abandoning the previous traits, it should be said). The fantasies KV 284a/396 300g (Munich, October 1777), KV 394/383a (Vienna, April 1782) and KV 397 (KV 385g) contain extensive improvisatory passages and arpeggios, but by the Fantasia in C Minor KV 475 (Vienna, 20th May 1785) Mozart is searching for a more rigorous formal organization, with more attention given to the connections between sections. Schleuning emphasizes the experimental character of Mozart's fantasy, which exhibits an attraction for artistic deftness in relation to the musical material: it is not treated according to pre-established formal patterns, but individualized for each musical idea presented. Through this approach, Mozart's fantasies display an *individuell geplanter Künstlichkeit* (an individually planned deftness).¹⁸

Moving on from Mozart's time, in which the term fantasy referred exclusively to the musical material and the form of sound organisation, in Romanticism the fantasy took on metaphysical proportions, reaching a place where the unifying metaphor rises above the forms of language. This new artistic deftness manifests not only at the level of the musical material, but in the way that ideas are manipulated across different art forms, finding unifying principles. When he imagined the concept of *progressive Universalpoesie* (progressive universal poetry), Schlegel encompassed all the artistic languages, of which the play of imagination is the most revealing. He compares the Romantic creator's fantasy with mythology, where everything is transformed, everything is connected in an "artificially ordered confusion, this attractive symmetry of contradictions, this

¹⁷ Peter Schleuning, *Idem*, p. 330.

¹⁸ Peter Schleuning, *Idem*, p. 345-346.

wonderful, eternal alternation of enthusiasm and irony, which lives even in the smallest units of the whole”, and all these connections and correspondences proving to be “the oldest, original form of human fantasy”.¹⁹

Postmodernism in Dan Dediu’s music

But does Dan Dediu not start from the same structural premise of Classicism when, on a text by Saint Augustine, he imagines a music of a “special expression”, based on “simple musical material: scales, chords and melodic lines”?²⁰ Of course, for a contemporary composer, these scales, chords, arpeggios (the general elements of music vocabulary) have an entirely different internal configuration, meaning that the expression of sound rhymes with that of contemporary music.

For composer Dediu, sensible combinatorics, when raised to a level of aesthetic playfulness, are an essential feature; they are also found in the word games he uses in the titles of his pieces.²¹ Dediu distances himself from the avant-garde orientation precisely due to the quality his music has where the old is stirred to generate a new sound. In response to a question from musicologist Mihai Cosma he says “In my opinion, in our time more focus should be placed on the relationships between the 'words' that already exist in musical vocabulary. This relationship will result in the production of a new expression, in the image and likeness of the creator”²². And a quote he refers to in the concert program of the opera *Munchhausen – The Master of Lies* is similarly revealing: “There may be nothing new

¹⁹ Friedrich Schlegel, *Kritische Ausgabe II*. Hefte zur Antiken Literatur: Fragmente zur Geschichte der griechischen Poesie. Studien des Alterthums, ed. Armin Erlinghagen, Thomas Carl Schirren, Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, Paderborn, 2018, p. 318f.

²⁰ Dan Dediu, “Presentation” in: *Latebrae* for violin, viola and piano, op. 79, Editura Muzicală, București, 2013.

²¹ *Prélude à l'après un (grif)faune* op. 48, 1994; *Nostradamuandques* op. 29, 1992/1994; *Hörreste, sehreste...* op. 74, 1998; *Fantasia fantomagica sul nome B.E.C.H.* op. 97, 2002 etc.

²² Mihai Cosma, “Interviu cu Dan Dediu”, http://www.dandediu.ro/writings/dandediu_interviu_2001_mc.pdf (visualized on 18 May 2019).

under the sun, but permutation of the old within complex systems can do wonders” (Stephen Jay Gould, 1941-2002, American paleontologist, geologist and biologist).²³

Considering that in the time of C. P. E. Bach and Mozart a battle for aesthetic supremacy was still being fought between musical expression and the clarifying word, Postmodernism articulates a relativizing aesthetic, which constantly places the material used in novel contexts. The distance between the two epochs is, certainly, primarily historical, and can be illustrated by all the conquests of music history, including the Romantic *Sturm and Drang*, Liszt’s programmatic approach, and Wagner’s *Gesamtkunstwerk*, but also by the “absolute music” theorized by Eduard Hanslick, by the aesthetics of *transmission* as opposed to performance as required by Stravinsky²⁴ or, closer to our area of interest, by the emergence of musical Neoclassicism. Postmodernism differs from previous epochs by the historical distance it keeps from the material used and its historical value. If all previous aesthetics were based on strong dialectical positions, Postmodernism is defined, according to Jean-François Lyotard, as the “incredulity towards metanarratives.”²⁵ The area of interest of Postmodernism lies in “the little narratives”, which “remain the quintessential form of imaginative invention”²⁶ or, as Jean Baudrillard wrote, “We are no longer in the age of grandiose collapses and resurrections... but of little fractal events”²⁷. Not only is music able to return to the past, but it is also open to other artistic or scientific areas, with which it engages dialogues, lends and transmits common principles of manifestation. The plurality and diversity of Postmodernism lie in the freedom to associate and valorize its elements, but the quality of these interrelationships carries, according

²³ Corneliu Dan Georgescu, “Logica fanteziei și apelul la metaforă în opera lui Dan Dediu” [The Logic of Phantasy and the Appeal to the Metaphor in the work of Dan Dediu], in: *Muzica* 2017/3, p. 32.

²⁴ Igor Stravinsky, *Igor Stravinsky: An Autobiography*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1936, p. 51, 118.

²⁵ Kenneth Gloag, *Postmodernism in Music*, Cambridge Introductions to Music., Cambridge University Press, 2012, p. 5.

²⁶ Kenneth Gloag, *Idem*, p. 5.

²⁷ Kenneth Gloag, *Idem*, p. 6.

to Umberto Eco, the seal of a “lost innocence”²⁸: a personal critique of one’s own artistic approach, consolidated on theoretical bases that are not only studied and known, but also assumed and redirected into a new sense of value.

Dan Dediu described his own creative process in his work *Cei 9 i sau cum compunem. Posibil ghid de compoziție după metoda ficționalistă*²⁹ (The Nine “I” s or How to Compose: A Possible Guide to Composition According to the Fictional Method), conceived as a compositional guide for young creators and budding musicians. Here he describes the nine stages of composition (all described by a word that begins with the letter I): intuition, information, improvisation, inventorying, texture invention, fictional irrigation, immersion in micro-structure, visionary inflammation and creative inundation. Starting from musical intuition, there is a continuous confrontation between music and extra-musical ideas (be they major or minor artistic ideas, or even banal, everyday ones). This perpetual dialogue between sound structure and non-musical ideas acts as an inspirational reservoir of fantasy, a source of musical ideas whose freshness is the result of a hybridized poetic image.

The first four of these stages require exploration of ideas (either the composer's own, or those of other composers or creators): *intuition* is the original idea from where the work begins, *information* is the exploration of works that have approached a similar theme and which involves “acquiring” knowledge of various musical styles, with *improvisation* the valid ideas are differentiated from those lacking potential, and *inventorying* involves the classification and ordering of musical and extra-musical ideas. Given this, one might think that the following steps should be anchored definitively in the musical structure proper, yet Dediu's process continues to be associated with, and regulated by, extra-musical ideas: “Every musical fragment can suggest an idea from outside the music.”³⁰ *Texture invention* is

²⁸ Kenneth Gloag, *Idem*, p. 54.

²⁹ Dan Dediu, *Cei 9 “i” sau cum compunem. Posibil ghid de compoziție după metoda ficționalistă* [*The Nine “I”s or How to Compose: A Possible Guide to Composition According to the Fictional Method*], Editura Didactică și Pedagogică R. A., București, 2012.

³⁰ Dan Dediu, *Idem*, p. 65.

detailed work on the development of the musical material proper through techniques of combination, variation and transformation, it is the development and expansion of a musical idea. However, when clarifying the first stage of putting the musical ideas on page, Dediu asks the young composer, during the stage of *fictional irrigation*, to translate “the ineffability of music, placing it within a horizon in which he can at least vaguely understand it”³¹. But, like C. P. E. Bach, Dediu sees musical language having priority over other sources of inspiration. Though perhaps more clarifying, these sources are not at all translatable into musical expression: “In general, music does not accept to be forced. It is like the field in which we sow our sounds. Depending on the power of the seed, the music can be transmitted from the soil into the energy inside the seed.”³² The historical and aesthetic distance between eighteenth-century rationalism, which asked for the explanation of musical expression in clarifying words, and the postmodern plurality of artistic languages, which open new metaphors, beginning with musical expression, that enrich the semantic content of the work, explains the following image Dediu gives of a qualitative leap of fecundity of a musical work’s meaning:

[...] we can increase the force of the seed by means of fictional irrigation. By watering it with associations of ideas, sprinkling it with the fertilizers of general culture and imagination, we will be able to enhance its sonic seed and augment its ideational and emotional content with references that will increase the amount of musical meaning and of participation of the musical energies involved in the sound morphogenesis.³³

Next, we have *immersion in microstructure*, which involves the actual elaboration of the musical material by notating the score in detail. But the composer is once again not allowed to linger too long in the abstract realm of sounds, because this is followed by the visionary *flare* stage, where the overall form of the piece is anchored

³¹ Dan Dediu, *Idem*, p. 65.

³² Dan Dediu, *Idem*, p. 69.

³³ Dan Dediu, *Idem*, p. 69.

to a “visual, processual or factual narrative course, imagined based on similarities of structure”³⁴. This associative process is not too far from what Gerstenberg did for C. P. E. Bach's music, since literary texts, artistic images, fictitious actions etc. can be associated with the musical expression. However, Dediu presents this approach coming from the composer's creative intention, which welds the different facets of the language manifestations into an overarching, semantically enriched idea. Making use of all his artistic devices and of his own sensibility, of the cultural capital he has accumulated and of his knowledge of musical and artistic styles, the composer reaches the last stage of composition, *creative inundation*: all the ideas brought into the composer's creative laboratory communicate and materialize in a finite musical form, rich in expression and correspondences, “forcing the composer into an inevitable and urgent work of notation”.³⁵

What does this compositional path tell us about the richness of the postmodern composer's fantasy? If in Bach's time, the genre of fantasy was related to musical structures and the potential they offer for the combination and expression (possibly rhetorical) of ideas, the postmodern composer expands musical language not only with new languages, but also with new images and meanings which can complement, but also modify, the musical meaning, thus creating a fusion of musical, poetic, or even philosophical materials. This gives rise to semantic layers that intersect each other through combinations of different languages and styles, the outcome of which depends on the composer's playful ability to juggle with these forms of expression.

In the case of Dan Dediu's music, this blend of styles is achieved with utmost elegance and erudition, being drawn towards the paradox as an inventive nonsense. Referring to the first performance of the opera *Münchhausen – Herr der Lügen* in Berlin, Corneliu Dan Georgescu succinctly captures three

³⁴ Dan Dediu, *Idem*, p. 80.

³⁵ Dan Dediu, *Idem*, p. 86.

major levels in Dediu's aesthetic outlook: "1) the choice of characters or objects of a particular tradition and significance in the history of European culture, 2) which have a certain symbolic-metaphoric quality and 3) whose images are then distorted or coupled with purposely absurd notions, in contradiction with the first two points."³⁶

Cartoon-Variations on a Theme by Mozart, a sample of "music of the possible existences"

In the preface to the work, we learn of the composer's intention to create a sequence of six movements which "acquire a kaleidoscopic and *cartoonesque* configuration, whimsical and unpredictable." All six are to begin with a famous quote from Mozart: the theme of the variations in the *Piano Sonata in A Major* KV 331. Of the six movements, three feature characters who are firmly anchored in musical and literary culture: "The Phantom of Wolfgang Amadeus" (1), "Electric Hamlet" (2) and "Stravinskyan Baby" (4), while the other three movements "Chimpanzee's Melancholy" (3), "African Rodeo" (5) and "Galactic Waltz" (6) create musical scenes distinguished by characteristic, dominant features. The characters Mozart, Hamlet and Stravinsky are placed in bizarre musical contexts precisely to emphasize new facets of their aesthetically established images, and to defy them through the laid-back attitude of cartoons, which "require the viewer to suspend physical reality", in which any possible combination of events, however destructive, ends with the safe return of the character.

Although each movement starts with the same musical idea – the theme of the variations in the first movement of the Piano Sonata KV 331 – the musical expression and the visual connotations are extremely varied. As a *topos* for the musical action, the composer

³⁶ Corneliu Dan Georgescu, *Idem*, p. 27.

chooses the cartoon³⁷, a suitable realm for the angular gesture of the movement, the figural variety and the expressive intensity.

The cycle opens with two contrasting musical ideas, one of which is a faithful quote of Mozart's theme. Its cantabile nature is connected with first, and towards the end of the first movement it is superimposed on an *ostinato* musical structure, the latter comprising disparate elements, contrasting in register and mode of attack (*staccato*, *legato*), and offering a schizophrenic reality which is a stark contrast to the *andante grazioso* character of Mozart's theme. The opposition between the two musical ideas is also emphasized by timbre: Mozart's theme is played by the ocarina, an instrument whose sonority conjures up the nostalgia of a distant past, but it is set against the penetrating timbre of piano and percussion.

Example No. 1. Dan Dediu, *Cartoon-Variations on a Theme by Mozart, I* (“The Phantom of Wolfgang Amadeus”), measures 16-21

The hectic movement, varied rhythm, contrast of registers, and dynamic variety (even in a single measure) of the contemporary music stands at an opposite pole to the gentle undulation of Mozart's melody, both in terms of its steady *siciliano* rhythm and its linear dynamics. In this first movement the two worlds act in parallel, with the curious impulse of contemporary music to imitate fragments of melody in caricature style, to accompany Mozart's *cantabile* melody in a parodic

³⁷ The association of Mozart's music with the cartoons has also been speculated by Prendergast, who saw in Charles Rosen's description of Mozart's *opera buffa* similarities with the precipitous, unpredictable and erratic style of cartoons. See: Roy M Prendergast, *Film Music. A Neglected Art. A Critical Study of Music in Film*, 2nd Edition, W. W. Norton & Company, New York-London, 1992, p. 186.

way. In the example below, the transition passage (bar 10) maintains Mozart's sequential structure, while the accompaniment alludes to the interval that generates the third variation. The grotesque character of the *Alberti Bass* accompaniment is created by the *staccato* mode of attack, the four-octave appoggiaturas, and the changes in registers on unaccented beats of the bar (3 and 6, respectively, in 6/8 time). The estrangement between the two musical ideas is so obvious that even when the accompaniment is executed in a gallant *legato* manner the two worlds do not merge, indeed the distance between them seems to grow wider (see bar 14, where the piano resolves its dissonance). The world of contemporary music seems to imitate Mozart's gesture, but with that "lost innocence" that Umberto Eco wrote about, in which every new element – in this case Mozart's melody – alienated from its own culture, is first carefully studied and then rendered into its final form after passing through numerous filters of the unconscious and conscious mind.

The musical score is divided into two systems. The first system (measures 10-11) includes an Oboe (Ok.) part with a tempo of quarter note = 50 and a 'delicato' marking. The piano accompaniment (Pno.) includes wood-chimes and features a '15ma' (15th harmonic) and '13:8' interval. The second system (measures 12-14) features an Oboe (Ok.) part with a 'dolce' marking. The piano accompaniment (Pno.) includes wood-chimes (W. ch.) and features '2 Temple - blocks' and 'Sonagli'. The piano part is marked 'una corda' and 'tre corde'. Dynamics include 'mf', 'pp', and 'p'.

Example No. 2. Dan Dediu, *Cartoon-Variations on a Theme by Mozart, I* ("The Phantom of Wolfgang Amadeus"), measures 10-14

Unlike this first movement, where the theme appears in its original form, in the following movements of the cycle fragments of it navigate through various cartoon scenarios, and its structure is adapted to portray different places. The music will lean towards the musical world of the cartoon genre, with stylistic allusions to American composers (rag and swing influences, acoustic illusions of musical automation, bruitistic effects, etc.), integrating these elements into a stable form with subtle nuances of expression.

The second movement presents Hamlet's tragic figure in an overtly postmodern condition, "Electric Hamlet". The tragic image of the character and of the action, human values such as dignity, honour, rebellion and vengeance, elevating attributes which Gerstenberg associates with C. P. E. Bach's music, do not have a place in this instrumental miniature composed by Dediu. Here, the adjective "electric" suggests the hero's turmoil and anxieties, in the surreal universe of cartoons. The rhythmic ductus discourse of ragtime style carries the elements that appear on its path, without lingering too long over their development, returning invariably in a *perpetuum mobile* specific to the dance rhythm.

The piece starts with the *rag* motif and initially utilizes a collage technique, with motivic juxtaposition or agglutination/subtraction (in the composer's own language "swallowing"), so that later these musical ideas develop by means of variation (in order to "regenerate" themselves), giving rise to whole sections of development. Although the asymmetric metrical pattern (13/16, grouped 4 + 3 + 6) of the opening motif is not typical of the ragtime genre, where the syncopated rhythm is in constant delay with respect to the equal eighth notes of the bass (notated in binary metre), the syncopated rhythm, the *ostinato* repetition, the opening ascending melodic line which outlines a major arpeggio (such as the one underlying Mozart's theme, but with a minor seventh and ninth) and the timbre of the saxophone are often used in ragtime music, thus creating a ragtime which is stylized but that does feature clichés of the genre. After the collage technique, this motif is contrasted with another (bar 4). The metre is changed (7/16) and the rhythm of the equal sixteenth notes is grouped 3 + 4, while the melodic line is descending. The first four sounds of this motif are a

fragment from Mozart’s theme and will return over the course of the piece and in the accompaniment in similar forms. The motif is also treated sequentially, this time in ascending direction (using *B flat* and then *C* as starting notes).

Ardeno (♩ ≈ 200)

Saxofono baritono in Es

Tom - Tom grave

Piano

Sax. barit.

3 T. blk.

Pno.

ff

gliss. slur.

Tom - Tom

3 Temple blocks

gliss. slur.

sf

gliss. slur.

sf

gliss. slur.

sf

gliss. slur.

ff

gliss. slur.

Example No. 3. Dan Dediu, *Cartoon-Variations on a Theme by Mozart, II* (“Electric Hamlet”), measures 1-7

This dialogue of rhythms and meanings contains fragments of stylistic allusions to the balanced rhythm of swing music, though they are to be played *grotesco* in manner “like in a cartoon”, and also to the technical, mechanical side of cartoon music, where the frames could get stuck repeating indefinitely. In bar 39, the musical phrase “gets stuck” in a motif repeated five times, “like a malfunction”.

Swinging, grotesco, like in a cartoon

33

Sax. barit.

3 T. - blick. T. - Tom

Pno.

39

Sax. barit.

T. - Tom

Pno.

*) like a malfunction

Example No. 4. Dan Dediú, *Cartoon-Variations on a Theme by Mozart, II* (“Electric Hamlet”), measures 33-42

Once the musical idea is recovered, the phrase accumulates more tension as the musical material develops, reaching its climactic illustration of the hero's final blow – the final confrontation between Hamlet and Claudius, the usurper of the Danish throne. The composer prepares the finale in a dramatic manner, using an expressive cliché to suggest the rivals' sword blows. The long sounds in the low register (initially played by the baritone saxophone, then the piano) generate an internal tension through a *crescendo-decrescendo* alternation, followed by a theatrical gesture played *sforzato*. The subtlety of this moment lies in its timbral diversity (the gesture is taken over from the saxophone by the piano and then passed over to the percussion).

From the point of view of the fictitious action, the following piece “Chimpanzee's Melancholy” seems to be a caricatural lityny compared to the end of the previous movement, serving as a slow movement within the instrumental cycle. The ocarina is a melodic deployment detached from the rest of the instruments, somewhat reminiscent of the first movement of the cycle, in a Dorian mode on *C sharp*, which is gradually completed over the course of the piece. The accompaniment oscillates between highly dissonant chords and wide, meandering melodic gestures, creating a dialogue between the vibraphone and the piano. With the recapitulation of the first section, the *mesto* character turns into *malinconico*, while this well-rounded sonic background is pierced by the wailing of the chimpanzee, rendered by the harmonics of the ocarina. The Mozartian theme emerges in the form of characteristic motifs, motivic transformations of the incipit in ascending passages that culminate with the rise to the surface of certain familiar “flashes”: the descending nature of the sequences (sometimes difficult to recognize in the dense harmonic fabric), the melodic undulation, and the dotted rhythm of the initial cell used in tandem with an ascending second and third. Although the *lamento* character shifts the discourse towards the aesthetics of the tragic, the imagined scene – a crying monkey – and the wailing effect created by the multiphonics of the ocarina turns the scene into ridicule and irony.

Mesto (♩ = 68)

The musical score is written for three staves. The top staff is a single line in bass clef, 4/4 time, with a tempo marking of Mesto (♩ = 68). The middle staff is in treble clef, 4/4 time, featuring a melodic line with triplets and dynamics ranging from *pp* to *p*. The bottom staff is a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) in 4/4 time, with dynamics including *p*, *mf*, and *p*, and a marking *una corda* at the bottom. The score contains various musical notations such as triplets, slurs, and dynamic markings.

3 (frull.)
Ok. *p* *f* *p*

Vibr. *Sva* *p*

Pno. *pp* *f* *p*

6 harmonic sounds
Ok. *ff*

Vibr. *mf* *ff*

Pno. *p* *f* *ff* *ff*

14
Ok. *ff*

3 T. block 3 Temple blocks *mf* *ff* *pp* Vibrafono

Pno. *mf* *delicato* *pp* *una corda*

Example No. 5. Dan Dediu, *Cartoon-Variations on a Theme by Mozart, III* (“Chimpanzee’s Melancholy”), measures 1-8; 14-16

The *scherzo* character of the next movement results from a mockery of Stravinsky's style, imagined in this movement in its infantile “Stravinskyan Baby” version. The *meccanico* style, the

polyrhythms (produced by instrumental accents or attacks) and the collage technique are devices whereby Dediu comes close to Stravinsky's music, but the *staccato* mode of attack, and the vertically rarefied texture, give a verve and harshness to the style in order to steer the expression towards the desired image.

Cl. in B

Mba.

Pno.

quasi frusta

2 Gongs

Tam - Tam

mp

f

Example No. 6. Dan Dediu, *Cartoon-Variations on a Theme by Mozart, IV* (“Stravinskyan Baby”), measures 3-5

In this capricious scene, the theme appears in the uppermost register, as another collage element, superimposed over irregular rhythmic structures and angular melodic gestures.

Cl. in B

Mba.

Pno.

f

sf

secco

Sya

Example No. 7. Dan Dediu, *Cartoon-Variations on a Theme by Mozart, IV* (“Stravinskyan Baby”), measures 14-17

Dediu imagines an “African Rodeo” scene with the toccata style in the fifth movement. The animal's fierce struggle for life and the rider's swift movements are associated with the percussive timbre of African music. This piece is at the crossroads of three different worlds: the toccata style originating in the European Baroque period, the rodeo as a familiar image from American sport, and the percussive sounds of African music.

Example No. 8. Dan Dediu, *Cartoon-Variations on a Theme by Mozart, V* (“African Rodeo”), measures 7-9

If in the previous movement the theme still preserved the dotted rhythm, here it is only the interval of a second that “flickers” at mind-blowing speeds.

Example No. 9. Dan Dediu, *Cartoon-Variations on a Theme by Mozart, V* (“African Rodeo”), measures 18-20

Within the cycle, the Mozartian theme is overwhelmed by its advancement through the musical kaleidoscope of various styles. All the more surprising is the return of the theme, reduced to its micro structural configuration, in a pointillist context that transcends the actual structure of the musical material from which it is composed. It is a dance of rests with a continuous pulsating expectation of its materialization into sound, a “Galactic Waltz”.

Comodo (♩ = 70) (slap) (multiph.) (frull.) (gliss.) (multiph.)

Saxofono baritono in Es

Hand - clap
Finger - clap
Foot - clap

2 Temple - blk.
Guiro
2 Bongos

Piano

7 (frull.) dolce (sans bec) Tongue - ram (Kientzy) Bec - seul (gliss.) Tongue - ram ord.,

Sax. barit.

H-cl.
Fg-cl.
F-cl.

2 T. - blk.
Gui.
2 Bg.

Pno.

cantabile malinconico giocoso

p *più p* *p* *più p* *f*

Example No. 10. Dan Dediu, *Cartoon-Variations on a Theme by Mozart, VI* (“Galactic Waltz”), measures 1-14

Just like Monteverdi, who proposed a new musical style (*seconda pratica*) as an alternative to the already existing one (*prima pratica*), Dan Dediu offers a historical theorization of three levels of “existence” of music in relation to the world of extra-musical ideas, i.e., to fantasy. If the fantasies of C. P. E. Bach and Mozart were conceived as a pure musical structure, without imaginary associations, a “music of the essence”, the Romantic period brought music, through the concept of “fantasy”, to the intersection of artistic languages and of communication through different languages across different art forms. Thus, it became a “music of existence”, focused on creating artistic images that transcend the means of language as it is used in programmatic music. The third level raises these very images to the realm of fantasy, generating a virtual level of existence thereof, which leans towards paradox through the combinations used in which music starts from a “possible image”. Music becomes the expression of these combinations brought into play by the creator, thus becoming “the music of possible existences”.³⁸ The American rodeo, the African rhythm and the toccata style are put together to create an impetuous musical whirl.

The play with fiction implies its fusion with reality, in a form of non-reality agreed by the receiver: “the reader has to know that what is being narrated is an imaginary story, but he must not therefore believe that the writer is telling lies.”³⁹ The entire process of creation and reception takes place under the sign of dissimulation – the author dissimulates reality and the reader accepts the story as plausible or even real (in the fictional world). Dediu brings the *cantabile* nature of Mozart's music into the world of contemporary music, and the development of Mozart's melody changes, adapting itself to his various musical scenes. Although in most movements it is only musical fragments, bits of expressiveness that are preserved from Mozart's theme, the movements that bookend the work present the theme in its entirety. Compared to the first movement, in which the

³⁸ Dan Dediu, “Die Ästhetik des Imaginären in der Musik”, in: *New Europe College Yearbook* 1, Institute for Advanced Studies, 1997, p. 78-79.

³⁹ Umberto Eco, “Possible Worlds”, in: *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge – Massachusetts – London, 1994, p. 75.

theme moves in parallel with contemporary music, without engaging in any dialogue with the style of new music (instead contemporary music “bends down” with curiosity to this relic of the past, imitating or accompanying it, but stays far from creating the *cantabile*, tender expression of Mozart's theme), the last movement offers a totally different scenario: Mozart's theme is presented through a pointillist technique, through fragments of musical cells, with repeated, tangled stops; it is a disfigured image of the theme trying to put itself together, merging with the style of new music and integrating itself into a musical style that unsuccessfully tries to coagulate the sound material. The transformation of Mozart's theme takes place as a result of its passage through contemporary music.

The richness of images generated by the music, which Lessing regarded with rational, logical scepticism, is deliberately included in the score by Dan Dediu, in order to arrive at ideas that the music upholds almost synesthetically. Dediu's version of the Hamlet character minimizes the tragic side of the story and highlights the turmoil aroused by the hero, often with humorous and grotesque tones resulting from recourse to American entertainment music. Here, we can identify the three stages formulated by C. D. Georgescu in relation to Dediu's opera: 1) Hamlet has a particular significance in the history of European culture, 2) the tragic dimension of his character is taken and distorted by allusions to light entertainment music and by the “electrifying” contemporary image of the character, and 3) elsewhere, in “Stravinskyan Baby”, the percussive, harsh instrumental sonorities which we associate with Stravinsky's music are intentionally “thinned” and infantilized.

With each of his works, Dan Dediu seems to conceive the score based on new extra-musical starting points that can be regarded as artistic experiments, but the erudition of his approach relies on old and new ideas alike, even if the old ideas are regarded as new, or the new ones were conceived long ago under different names. Thus, each work can be considered – as Mozart did with his fantasy genre – as being the result of a “specially planned artistic skill” in postmodern style, at the micro-narrative level, probing into the depth of each cultural image borrowed, in search for the substance that allows its recreation in a new context.

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