

Book Review

Hans Peter Türk: ***Contradominanta în creația lui Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart*** [The Double Dominant in the Work of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart]

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It is common for a book, especially if it is a piece of scientific research of interest to the field, to be published shortly after it has been written. In this way, the author's efforts succeed in bringing the results of their work to readers who have an interest in the topic. In this case, however, we find ourselves in a rather peculiar situation: composer, musicologist and professor Hans Peter Türk's book *Contradominanta în creația lui Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart* [The Double Dominant in the Work of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart] waited 41 years before being published in 2019. It was born in the era of the Socialist Republic of Romania, the culmination of a sustained effort that spanned between 1970 and 1978 and was in fact the doctoral research of the maestro; at the time Türk was a young academic teaching harmony under the capable guidance of Romania's first PhD in music Sigismund Toduță, the composer, musicologist and professor. The work was published on the 100th anniversary of the Gheorghe Dima National Academy of Music by their publisher Editura MediaMusica, a book launch taking place on 20 January 2020, an occasion at which maestro Hans Peter Türk confessed to me cheekily that "this book ate up ten years of my life, years in which I could have composed more...". In the preface to the book, Hans Peter Türk recalls the difficult conditions under which he wrote this extensive musicological study, conditions largely unimaginable to a young person today: "in 1940 I had neither the benefit of today's archival sources nor the permission to consult a library in Vienna or Salzburg", as it was well known that trips abroad

were rare and often placed him under a cloud of suspicion about his dealings with the powers that be. In the preface to the work, he adds that "publishing it was out of the question, as other topics were prioritised". It would be presumptuous to guess exactly which "other topics" the author is referring to, but we can safely say that a book about the way a Viennese Classicist uses a specific family of chords was outside the concerns of those who directed musical life in Romania at the time; one interest bordering on obsession, for example, was how Romanian music supposedly originated from the music of the Dacians - a music about which we know very little - and this Dacianism ("Dacomania" to its critics) was a running theme of the ironically titled Golden Age.

Even without considering the resistant atmosphere of the time, it was an extraordinary act to devote eight years of sustained work to analyse the minutiae of the oeuvre of one composer, additionally so considering that the focus is on one single category of chords, those serving the function of the double dominant. I don't want to turn this brief review into a lecture on harmony, but I do want to mention that tonal music is essentially based on the relationship between tension and release, a tension best expressed by pairing the two most significant harmonic functions (the dominant creating tension which requires resolution, and the tonic being the chord that follows it, bringing release). The author first investigates this harmonic category's type, then proceeds to discuss the use of these chords in a stable, tonally non-modulant context, then in a modulating, unstable one, and outlines some particular harmonic features, such as deceptive cadences (where the double dominant is introduced after the dominant, a progression which, instead of releasing the tension, creates an even greater tension and a powerful surprise effect), the use of the pedal point, and the emergence of the double dominant (more precisely the liberation of this chord from the "duty" of leaning towards the dominant, leading it directly to the tonic chord, a progression that usually adds a modal character to the context, etc.) The work concludes with a detailed discussion of the placement of chords belonging to this chord family within its formal structure.

One of the book's most engrossing topics of discussion concerns the so-called "Mozart fifths". As is well known, in tonal harmony moving in parallel fifths is the hallmark of the unprofessional, and

young people who study harmony and invest much effort in learning to write music for four voices have to develop the ability to avoid this mistake as their central challenge. In the second half of the nineteenth century, German musicology unfairly coined the term "Mozart fifths" to describe a harmonic phenomenon where parallel fifths supposedly appear during the resolution of the double dominant to the dominant, but this phenomenon is hardly specific to Mozart's works even when correctly identified, and many times the citations are actually inaccurate anyway. Parallel fifths, for instance, that appear in the piano reduction but do not actually exist in the original orchestral score, or that occur due to the incorrect enharmonic equivalence of a note in the double dominant chord, etc. On closer inspection, when analysing Mozart's works, it emerges that one observes far more often efforts made to avoid these fifths than a willingness to use them, and therefore, since they are exceptions, they are ill-suited to bear Mozart's name.

Beyond the strictly technical aspects of harmony, reading this book also offers an opportunity for cultural enrichment. The work abounds in musical examples (mostly of Mozart's works, but also pertaining to some of his contemporaries), in references to the elements of Classical or Romantic style, or, more precisely, to the stylistic elements that characterise the works of Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven and their successors.

This doctoral research was an endeavour carried out at a time when Türk, while still a young teacher, was also creating the course material for the discipline of Harmony, published in 1973 in three volumes as an internal university course, later reissued in 2002 after careful revision. Of the book presently discussed within this review, the author humbly confesses in the preface:

Today, of course, I look at my earlier text from a different perspective. I have made no revisions, leaving the door open for all possible comments. I have tried to make a modest contribution to our understanding of Mozart's style, with regard to the role of the double dominant in his musical architecture and expression, and not least with regard to the 'myth of the Mozart fifths'.

Finally, one last remark: while reading this book (which is ultimately about the stylistics of musical composition, about the way

in which the masters of Viennese Classicism used the double dominant), the famous phrase *le style c'est l'homme* [the style is the man himself] came to mind. The phrase applies perfectly not only to Mozart's stylistic subtleties, but also to the literary style in which this book has been written: with full scholarly authority, but without excess, with cautious, sober phrasing, reflecting the author's serious and modest manner, qualities coupled with a rare sense of generosity. Anyone who knows the composer and professor Hans Peter Türk personally will recognise in the pages of this book his unique "voice"; his restrained tone, almost timid, is as impressive in its professional breadth as its consistency.

Alongside the university course on Harmony, which is in fact a proper treatise reprinted in two volumes, *Contradominanta în creația lui Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart* [The Double Dominant in the Work of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart] is not just a must-read for anyone who wants to understand the musical style of Viennese Classicism as reflected in Mozart's music, it is a seminal work for any musician, or anyone who wants to understand the subtleties of tonal harmony in general.

[Translated from Romanian by Juliánna Köpeczi]