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The Triple Concerto *The Fever* by Dan Dediu: A Story with Musical Characters to Instrumental Performance*

Keywords: musical narratology, instrumental opera, fictionist method

The Triple Concerto for flute, clarinet, cello and orchestra, Op. 138 *Febra* [The Fever]¹ by Dan Dediu was conceived over a period of four years, 2009-2013, as an answer to what its composer considered a challenge: the problem of the concerto with multiple soloists. I am not referring here to concertos in which the multiplication of soloists is compensated by their timbral homogeneity (as is the case with concertos for multiple violins or pianos by Vivaldi or Bach). The essence of the challenge resides, in fact, precisely in the timbral heterogeneity of the soloists. The possible models – double, triple or quadruple concertos or concertante symphonies by Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Shostakovich, Paul Constantinescu, Tiberiu Olah – offer us a unique and inspiring solution to this challenge, as the soloists could be transformed into veritable characters, among whom relationships are established, as well as a sense of interdependence, which require careful management.²

* The paper was presented in the Musicology Symposium organized in the frame of Chei Festival at the National University of Music, Bucharest, April 6th, 2017, then published in Romanian as Lupu 2018.

¹ The first public performance took place in Bucharest, December 13th, 2013, with the National Radio Orchestra conducted by Tiberiu Soare, soloists Ion Bogdan Ștefănescu, Emil Vișenescu and Răzvan Suma.

² It is worth mentioning the Concerto RV 555 by Antonio Vivaldi, for 11 soloist instruments (two recorders, oboe, chalumeau, violin, two *viole all'inglese*, two violins *in tromba marina* – Robert King's interpretation of the score, which mentions "2 Trombe" in the finale –, two harpsichords) and string orchestra.

The possibility of creating a new genre, the “instrumental opera”,³ rests precisely on this aspect: the concerto would thus become a staging of a story with main and secondary characters,⁴ both heroes and villains, with tensions, intrigues, and connivances, with plot twists and more or less predictable endings.

The composer has confessed that the triple concerto *The Fever* was preceded, in his own studio, by two similar works: the étude duet *Pierrot solaire* (an answer to Schoenberg’s composition) and a sketch for a cello concerto. The result was a “concerto adventure” (Dediu 2013) whose interpretation calls for an approach inspired by musical narratology,⁵ as the composer gives shape to different characters among which a diversity of power relations emerge – relations which presuppose instances of influence, domination, subordination, invasion, and extinction.⁶ Moreover, Dediu’s own approach to music is highly compatible with narratology, since the composer defines his own method of composition as “fictionist”, grounded in the creation of “possible sonorous fictions, with utterances that are symbolic in kind”, with any type of music having the possibility of being “constructed with the help of images or deconstructed into images [that] synthesize music’s expressive and musical content, and are then expressed in a figurative manner through suggestive words or phrases that reflect sonorous actions, states or processes” (Dediu 2012: 16). This paper, of course, starts from the premise that there is an incomplete overlap between musical language proper and verbal language, which allows for words to grasp several aspects of music, but which, nevertheless, does not imply that everything can be verbally described, as Eero Tarasti well notes (Tarasti 1994: 4).

³ Discussed by Dan Dediu in the presentation of his work (manuscript, Dediu 2013). The possibility can be foreseen in works such as the Cello Concerto by Schumann: “The finale . . . changes the relation between soloist and orchestra established at the outset of the concerto. In the first movement, the cello and orchestra tend to occupy separate expressive places . . . In the finale . . . the cello and orchestra continuously intertwine” (Kramer 2007: 13).

⁴ Dediu’s preoccupation with the establishment of intersections between the genre of the concerto or of chamber music and that of opera, beyond the challenges of the concerto with multiple soloists, grounded several works composed more than a decade before the one that is the subject of the present study: *Prélude à l’après-midi d’un (grif)faune*, Op. 48, MikrOper for viola solo, 1994; *Gotische Melancholien*, Op. 49, Passion-KonzertOper for viola and 11 strings, 1995; *Don Giovanni/Don Juan*, Op. 53, SonatOpera for violin and piano, 1995.

⁵ See also Lupu 2017.

⁶ “Where ordering of passions occurs . . . we are approaching . . . narrativity” (Tarasti 1994: 73). We could argue that certain attitudes emerge through the ordering of emotions, and that concepts and ideas emerge out of these attitudes.

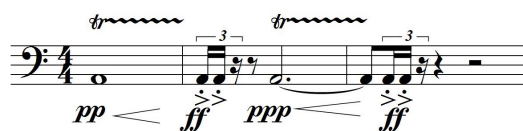
The concerto is divided into three parts, which investigate either pathological mental states (*Delirium*, *Paranoia*) or evanescent landscapes (*Mirages*). If we attempt to integrate them into composer's strategy of superordinating his works (Rădulescu 2002: 220), consisting of five distinct categories (*Personae*, *Visceralia*, *Solaria*, *Sacralia*, *Stilistica*), it becomes apparent that we find ourselves at a site of tension, at the intersection of two categories of contrary meaning: *Visceralia* (which comprises works such as *Vaier* [Wail], Op. 10, *Frenesia* [Frenzy], Op. 84 or *Spaima* [The Terror], Op. 86) and *Solaria* (which includes, among others, *Lumini tainice* [Secret Lights], Op. 24 and *Aurorae*, Op. 82) – yet another reason to anticipate a complex plot, one able to resolve the initial contradictions.

THE FIRST PART – DELIRIUM

In the first part, we are faced with a processual, transformational music, in which the structures undergo consistent transfigurations: they confront, dominate, and swallow each other whole. Everything revolves around a fictional plot.

Drawing on one of Tarasti's statements ("As musical actors I regard certain motifs or themes which . . . are clearly distinguished from the musical discourse surrounding them"; Tarasti 1994: 115), I have identified five musical characters, which I will present in the chronological order of their introduction.

The first character is a signal-motif (Ex. 1) with a rhythmic profile, performed by the entire orchestra. It starts from a sustained note, accumulates tension and then releases it through an incisive iambic⁷ rhythm, in *fortissimo*.



Ex. 1. The first character: the signal-motif (gran cassa, mm. 1-4).

The second character is embodied by the cello soloists and resembles a beast of prey, which ever more fiercely takes possession and dominates an ever-ex-

⁷ In this instance, I refer by "iamb" to a formula composed of one short and one long duration (the latter of which is perceived as such due to the rest).

panding landscape. Its associated melodic hallmark seems to be a motif derived from Enescu's musical cryptogram, but one which is more closely related to the motif of patricide in *Oedipe* (Ex. 2; see Cosma 2014: 13). The intrinsic ambiguity derived from the diatonic chromaticism gains a dramatic dimension through the dispersion of the register.



Ex. 2. *The second character, the cello solo (mm. 3-4, on the left), variant of the patricide motif from Oedipe by Enescu (on the right).*

The third character, a waltz, is built around one of the Messiaen modes (the sixth mode) and has the most noticeable profile – in part, due to the cultural connotations associated with the dance (in this case, it is much closer to the category of the melancholy, introverted waltz, rather than that of the dazzling, exuberant classical Viennese waltz). In this sense, Dan Dediu continues the direction of composers like Schubert (his 38 Waltzes, Ländler and Ecossaises, D. 145, has a few waltzes in a minor key, the most famous of which is probably the one in B minor), Chopin (particularly the Waltz in C# minor, Op. 64, No. 2, and the posthumous one in A minor), Tchaikovsky (*Sentimental Waltz*, the last of the Six Pieces, Op. 51), Sibelius (*Valse triste*) or Shostakovich (author of at least 14 waltzes, of which the best known is the Waltz No. 2 from the Second Jazz Suite).

On the other hand, the third character's salience is also a product of the melodic line, which undergoes melodic deformations, but whose rhythm – based on the pattern of the classical quadrature (4+4+4+4) – nevertheless remains firm. The frequent incidence of the diminished arpeggio (Ex. 3), as well as the only partial coincidence of several of the sounds in the melody with those from the homophonous support, give the waltz strong notes of strangeness and fragility, which buttress the sense of melancholy I have earlier described.

The fourth character is represented by a short, collective, descending gesture (in which almost all of the instruments are engaged), with very fast durations (thirty-second notes). It is slightly ironic, but also serves the function of reducing tension, as it takes on the role of the commentator, in a manner similar to that of the ancient chorus.



Ex. 3. *The third character: the waltz (mm. 33-48, piccolo).*

The last to arrive is the couple-character, made up of the two other soloist instruments (the flute and the clarinet). It is agitated, voluble, at times amusing, at times aggressive, and can be associated with the second part (*Gioco delle coppie*) of Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra (particularly because it develops primarily through parallel major seconds, Ex. 4), and with the idea of the double, of the shadow, or of the alter ego. It can also be associated with pairs from the world of animation or – as Dediu himself suggests in his presentation of the work – with the giants Fafner and Fasolt, the two brothers from Wagner's *The Ring of the Nibelung* tetralogy. The consistent placement of the couple-character in the high register lends it a tinge of the ridiculous, of the parodic, which is emphasized precisely in the character's attempts at swerving towards the dramatic or the *furioso*, which gives the sensation of a clumsy struggle whose result can never be conclusive, due to the discrepancy between its ambitious intent and its reduced size (symbolized through the high register).⁸



Ex. 4. *The fifth character (flute, mm. 100-101, doubled by the clarinet at a major second below).*

The chronological order of the introduction of the characters does not overlap, however, with the axiological one (see Table 1, for the schema of their succession and overlap in the 242 measures⁹ of the first part). We are faced with

⁸ Comparable to the Lilliputians who can never truly hurt Gulliver (the cello).

⁹ The number of each measure will be read downwards, on the vertical of the

three main characters – the waltz, the cello and the double-character – and two secondary ones, the signal-motif and the collective, descending gesture. Of the three main characters, the waltz is the dominant one, in part due to its easily recognizable metric-rhythmic-melodic profile, which places it at the center of the narration. Second is the cello, which is individualized mainly through its solos and through its unquenchable thirst to conquer new register territories, always going from low to high. Third is the couple-character (flute and clarinet), which is best identified precisely through this characteristic. The signal-motif seems to play the role of the frame, opening and closing the movement. Finally, the collective, descending gesture – even though it makes only two brief but dazzling appearances – is important enough to be read as a secondary character, whose purpose is to offer commentary and to thus reduce tension.

The movement's form seems to be that of a gradually augmented spiral, in which the dominant element is first that of the cello soloist. Soon though, the waltz takes over in the rising action, and the suggested scenario can be interpreted as an original synthesis of the plots of two famous works: *La Valse* by Ravel, on the one hand, which George Benjamin reads as a narrative that highlights the birth, decay and destruction¹⁰ of the dance that became in the 19th century the symbol of an age of elegance and *joie de vivre*, and Shostakovich's Symphony No. 7 (*Leningrad*), on the other, in which the theme of the march, at first fragile, ingenu, and playful gradually reaches crushing, overwhelming dimensions.

The narrative sequence of the first movement takes the following shape, as such: the waltz, the main character of the first movement, situated at the border between object and subject, becomes a kind of anthropomorphized object, which grows like a tumor and gradually consumes the other characters. A few interesting correspondences can be identified between the narrative sequence of the first movement and some of the symptoms specific to delirium,¹¹ such

first row. The characters are designated with Roman numerals and each character is associated with a different color.

¹⁰ “Whether or not it was intended as a metaphor for the predicament of European civilization in the aftermath of the Great War, its one-movement design plots the birth, decay and destruction of a musical genre: the waltz” (Benjamin 1994: 433).

¹¹ Delirium is “a mental disturbance marked by disorientation and confused thinking in which the patient incorrectly comprehends his surroundings” (Editors 2016). “Delirium is a diffuse or generalized intellectual impairment marked by a clouded or confused state of consciousness, an inability to attend to one's surroundings, difficulty in thinking coherently, a tendency to perceptual disturbances such as hallucinations” (Andrews 2018).

as a state of confusion, a distortion of perception, or the presence of ghosts or hallucinations, which are chiefly suggested by the development of the main character.

In the first surface (mm. 1-73), the cello soloist asserts itself with increasing self-assurance over the course of three interventions. The first (mm. 3-6) is preceded and followed by the tenebrous signal-motif (mm. 1-3, 6-13), which the composer has likened to a “muffled earthquake” (Dediu 2013). The cello’s second solo (mm. 13-32) is marked by its conquest of the high-low sonorous territory, but also by self-reflexive withdrawals (similar to having thoughts about having thoughts). It also slips in, starting with its first five notes, the diminished chord characteristic of the upcoming waltz (mm. 13-15), while the final persistence of the D – B notes forms a kind of suture (Ex. 5) with the same first notes of the waltz (which presents itself to us, in this first appearance, in a manner that is innocent, harmless, fragile, strange and melancholy – mm. 33-51, see Ex. 3).



Ex. 5. *The diminished chord characteristic of the waltz (mm. 13-15, cello) and the transition towards the first exposition of the waltz (mm. 29-30).*

Yet the cello’s impetuous élan proves unstoppable, as it reenters the stage with an even ampler solo (mm. 52-73), whose climax is relieved by the appearance of the short collective, descending gesture. The insistent emphasis on the iamb in the end of the solo (mm. 72-73, Ex. 6) calls for the signal-motif to return to the stage (mm. 74-77), which creates another imbricate connection between the two surfaces, as well as a cause-and-effect relationship grounded in the workings of memory.



Ex. 6. *The iamb in the finale of the soloist intervention of the cello (mm. 72-73).*

The uproar of the signal-motif is suddenly stopped by a second appearance of the waltz, which had already introduced the idea of a double character (the melodic arc and its shadow) through the exposition of the theme in seconds on the oboe and on the piccolo flute (mm. 78-99). The fact that the waltz is

the one that has an unexpressed kinetic potential is suggested by the interrupted debut of its second exposition (mm. 96-99). And indeed, despite the boisterous appearance of the last character (the “twin” soloists, the flute and the clarinet), the waltz is the one that will gradually control the following two surfaces (second section, mm. 74-189; third section, mm. 190-242). Its influence past the borders of its own structure is manifested immediately, through the persistence of the idea of a double contour, thoroughly “acquired” by the two soloist protagonists (mm. 100-107).

The third exposition of the waltz (mm. 108-127) amplifies the idea of a development in seconds, reaching a quadruple contour of the theme, similar to an image that becomes less and less clear. The progressively accelerated tempo (from M.M. $\text{♩} = 94$ in the first intervention, to 108 in the second and the third) and the spectral, eerie, otherworldly tinges, added by the lotus flute, flute and by the flexatone further emphasize the movement of the discourse towards a zone of hallucination, of phantasm, the only stable elements being the rhythm and the melodic contour.

The following surface appears to be repossessed by the quarrelling soloist instruments (the flute and the clarinet), which are briefly dominated by the cello (mm. 128-141). In fact, their attempt is brought to naught by the intrusion of the waltz; first in the shape of episodic disruptions, of one or several measures in size (mm. 142, 147, 152-156, Ex. 7), the waltz seems to be similar to a malevolent, indestructible, unstoppable character who reshapes itself in any conditions (including in metric frames opposed to the initial one, such as the meter of four eighth notes).



Ex. 7. *The disrupted exposition of the waltz (mm. 142, 147, 151-154).*

Furthermore, its defining structures (the diminished arpeggio and certain melodic configurations, Ex. 8 and Ex. 9) penetrate and invade the discourse of the flute and clarinet soloists and, gradually, that of the whole orchestra (mm. 156-189).

The same iamb that can be found in the opening of the movement signals the beginning of the process by which all other characters are engulfed by the elements of the augmented waltz (m. 156). The only one that seems to resist this dissolution for a while, preserving a unique identity, is the cello soloist (mm. 159-183), but it too disappears, much like the others, in the shapeless

magma of the “shards” of the waltz (mm. 183-189). After a paroxysmal climax (mm. 181-189), as a logical and ineluctable consequence, a final development of the waltz ensues (mm. 190-221), this time in a *tutti*, in a more and more vertiginous tempo (M.M. $\text{♩} = 116, 124, 144, 156$) that also encompasses the soloist instruments. The waltz reaches the dimensions of a tsunami that sweeps away everything in its path in a “full-grown, measureless, dancing delirium, which grows to be more and more torrential . . . a sharp rush” (Dediu 2013) that ends abruptly in order to make room for the final cover (mm. 222-242), which brings back the signal-motif in a new aspect (progressively multiplied attacks: 1, 2, 3, 6). The inexhaustible, frenetic energy of the cello soloist, also manifested in these last pages through an uninterrupted array of sixteenth notes, is gradually put out in a murmur that suggests “the background noise of the Universe” (Dediu 2013), or the post-cataclysmic silence, referring to the epilogue of the final act (the invention on a perpetual movement of eighth notes) in *Wozzeck* by Berg.



Ex. 8. Structures that are typical of the waltz (highlighted in mm. 5-14) also appear in the discourse of the flute and clarinet soloists (mm. 163-173).



Ex. 9. Diminished arpeggios, typical of the waltz, in the design of violin I (mm. 166-182).

THE SECOND PART – MIRAGES (INTERMEZZO)

The middle part represents an oasis of equilibrium and harmony, as the general expressive direction is *estatico*. According to the composer's description, "we find ourselves in a charming land, where sonorous mirages emerge out of nothingness" (Dediu 2013). If in the first movement the main character (the waltz) animated the whole orchestra, succeeding in gradually engulfing the characters represented by the soloist instruments, the situation is the other way around in the second part. The diatonic, suave melodic designs take center stage, performed by the clarinet and flute soloists.

The clarinet debuts with a quasi-parlando exposition of an intensely lyrical melody, built on an anhemitonic "hyper-diatonic" pentatonic scale, which is gradually transformed into various other musical scales (diatonic hexachord on D; a minor mode with degrees II and VI being mobile, within a distant chromaticism, with no chromatic half-steps as such) (Ex. 10).



Ex. 10. The volutes of the melody of the clarinet (mm. 2-4, 8-11, 21-26) and the corresponding musical scales.

The flute soloist is seconded by the celesta and by the harp, which parallel or hieratically sketch out the diatonic melodic path (initially a hexachordal scale on G, then extended to a diatonic heptachordal scale, with a mobile degree VII, Ex. 11).

The orchestra has a double role. On the one hand, the woodwind instruments (and the horns towards the end) fulfill the role of a collective character, represented through an isorhythmic chorus, that "consistently and talka-

tively” (Dediu 2013) comments on the designs of the clarinet soloist. On the other hand, the strings create discrete harmonic canvases, in *pianissimo*, in the medium-low register, much like fuzzy, low-level clouds that lightly support the contours traced by the soloist instruments; the transformation of these harmonic canvases in predictable structures is avoided by adding more and more consistent anacrusis, which gradually grow from one to four successive notes, in a symmetrically convergent or divergent course (mm. 7, 14-15, 20, 23-24, 30 etc.), which offers to the canvases the optimal dose of inscrutability, of an inner life, without endangering the general calmness.



well as the diminished arpeggio, typical of the waltz; at the same time, surprisingly, the cello, apparently following the previous monologue (the translation of the anhemitonic pentatonic scale in the low register, mm. 51-53), actually performs the lightly deformed beginning of the waltz (Ex. 13). Everything, however, is grafted on the meditative mood of the middle part.

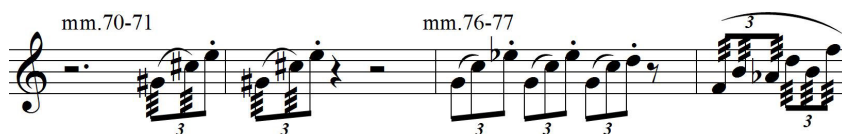


Ex. 12. *The iambic signal in symbiosis with the waltz (the diminished arpeggio) and with the motif of the cello, condensed into a chord (mm. 60-62).*



Ex. 13. *The deformed exposition of the waltz (mm. 62-63), compared to the initial version.*

From this change of direction in terms of expressivity, a new cadence of the clarinet arises, within which the bass flute soloist inserts what at first sight seems to be the accompaniment of a waltz, following the allusion of the cello from measures 62-63. We gradually realize that the waltzing rhythm is in fact a motif from the *Moonlight Sonata* (from various measures within it, to be more precise: mm. 1, 4, 32), first presented right in the original register, with the original pitches, then transposed by an augmented prime (mm. 70-71, 76-77, Ex. 14).



Ex. 14. *The quote from the Moonlight Sonata (mm. 70-71).*

Paradoxically, in the middle part, in spite of the discourse being obviously dominated by soloist instruments, through the melodic designs each of them is attributed, the waltz from the first movement still holds a determining role in the process of charting the expressive trajectory, and it is its very reemergence that triggers a new array of associations that lead to the famous motif of the *Moonlight Sonata*.

Everything that ensues until the end of the movement is marked by this expressive mutation. The commentating collective character, represented through the choral of the woodwinds, is shifted when it comes to the register and to the tone color, being assigned to the horns, which brings in a tint of mystery and haze. The hieratic melody of the flute is now touched by the suspenseful incertitude and sense of waiting, appearing in *tremolo* (and *sul ponticello* at the cello) and being distributed in *stretto* on all three soloist instruments, with a consistent register shift towards the low pitches. The movement ends with the discrete reiteration of the motif of the *Moonlight Sonata*, on harp and on celesta, foreshadowing the main subject of the following part.

THE THIRD PART – PARANOIA

The final movement brings back most of the mood of the first movement. We could consider it a new, subtle and imaginative investigation of the means by which music is capable of suggesting symptoms associated with certain pathologies or temporary disorders.¹² Though delirium and paranoia are related pathologies, there are also differences that set them apart. Paranoia is characterized by the absence of hallucinations,¹³ some of the main symptoms that differentiate this type of pathology from normalcy being the presence of obsessions and of a way of thinking that lacks flexibility.

These are the very features that Dediu points out and exploits in the first surface of the movement, by shifting the hectic kinetic energy and the hardened ostinatos into an extremely extrovert zone. The cello soloist returns to the main stage, obsessively and exuberantly reiterating the interval of the major third in a dynamic manner (mm. 1-30, Ex. 15), accompanied by the signal-motif from the first part (which takes the form of the percussion's violent attacks, which are predominantly iambic in nature). Obsession proves to be viral, as it infects more and more instruments within the orchestra.

¹² “Paranoia is a very human feeling. Nearly everyone has experienced it at some or another time, to varying degrees. Paranoia exists on a continuum, ranging from a feeling of distrust due to an occasional misinterpretation of cues that can be appropriately dealt with and reinterpreted, to an overarching pattern of actual paranoia that affects every interpersonal interaction.” (Carson-DeWitt)

¹³ “[T]he delusions develop slowly into a complex, intricate, and logically elaborated system, without hallucination and without general personality disorganization. A chief contributing factor is an exaggerated tendency to self-reference.” (Editors 2018)



Ex. 15. *The cello soloist's insistence on the major third (mm. 10-12).*

Following a brief escape from the perimeter of the minor third, closely watched, however, by the signal-motif (mm. 31-42), the obsession of the third returns, now shifted towards a more pensive area of the expressive register (mm. 43-56), as a doubting pendulum between a minor and a major third (Ex. 16), that could refer to another symptom which is typical of paranoia: doubt or suspicion. The unseen threads that tie the first and the last movement together are multiple: alongside the reemergence of the signal-motif (which was, as we can remember, performed in the very beginning of the first part), the minor and major thirds have come together to make up the hall-mark motif of the cello soloist (see Ex. 2).



Ex. 16. *Pendulum m3 – M3/d4 (mm. 43-45, 53).*

The window to the past remains open through the reemergence of various reminiscences, this time stemming from the second movement: either brief veiled designs of the flute and clarinet soloists (mm. 56, 58, 60, 65), or fragments of the choral of the commenting wind instruments (mm. 57-65). The deformed incipit of the waltz (mm. 63-64, Ex. 17) – the “ogre” character that gradually devoured all other characters in the first part – discretely makes its way to the cello soloist.



Ex. 17. *The deformed incipit of the waltz (mm. 63-64), compared to the initial version.*

All these allusions to the calm of the middle part are however crushed by the bursting return of the powerful, obsessive reiteration of the major third, as

the cello soloist drags along more and more instruments of the ensemble, and the signal-motif (predominantly iambic in nature) has a decisive contribution through its repetitive interventions with regards to the salience and incisiveness of the discourse (mm. 67-79). Following a cadence within which the three soloist instruments fight over supremacy, congruously ending in the same tyrannical iambic signal, the whole tension is condensed in a first climax (mm. 93-97), which is itself brought to an end by the domineering intervention of the iamb.

The landscape suddenly changes, and the three soloist instruments get dragged along by the rush of a fierce dance, with medieval connotations, built on a Dorian scale (mm. 98-123, Ex. 18) and permanently infused with the energy of the signal-motif.



Ex. 18. *Dance with medieval connotations (mm. 98-101).*

The abrupt intrusion of the motif of the “moon” (mm. 124-125, 127-128) seems to seriously disconcert the soloist instruments. Bewildered by this “derailment”, they frantically look for a new path, quickly returning to the womb of the obsessive major third (mm. 126, 129-142). Barely having embarked on a common trajectory (mm. 145-148), the three soloist instruments are confronted with the invasive reemergence of the waltz from *Delirium*, whose force insuppressibly attracts them (mm. 149-170). “We find ourselves in the broad night time of the Walpurgis”, says the composer (Dediu 2013). Though absent for a long period of time, the waltz, abandoned in the dark corners of memory,¹⁴ returns to unabatedly continue the dazzling spiral of the acceleration. It is then brought to an end by being absorbed by its own circular movement and by dissolving into a second appearance of the climax.

The peak, however, is neighbor to the abyss. The dramatic climax, flooding the external territory, is countered by an introvert retreat: the waltz is sung in a slower tempo (M.M. $\text{♩} = 180$), as if it belonged to a different time, by the flute soloist, accompanied by the clarinet and by the cello. Its resources seem to have been depleted, as it is periodically infiltrated, either by the motif

¹⁴ “Relations *in absentia* are . . . at least as important as relations *in praesentia*” (Tarasti 1994: 11).

of the *Moonlight Sonata* (mm. 194-199), or by the signal-motif from the beginning of the first part (mm. 203-204, 211-212, 214-215, 217-218).

The *coup de grâce* is brought by an apparently new character, which leads the process of general disaggregation in an authoritarian manner: the ascending perfect fourth, associated with a dotted rhythm which recalls the funereal march, annihilates through its crushing appearances (mm. 223-224, 234-235, 244-245, 256-257, Ex. 19) any attempt by the previous characters to reassert themselves (the double-character from the first movement, the obsessive major third of the cello from the last movement, the medieval dance).



Ex. 19. *The cadential perfect fourth, a messenger of the eschatological (mm. 223-224).*

Of course, the cadential perfect fourth has become – in the musical tradition – an archetype of the end times, a messenger of the eschatological, compared by the author to the frightening guard in Kafka's *The Trial*, or with the Commendatore in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. As we will soon see (mm. 165-166, 272-274, 276-279), though, the character is not new at all in the sonorous economy of the work. The new arrival is in fact the incipit of the selenic motif, a filiation which is highlighted by their juxtaposed appearance (mm. 165-166, 272-274, 276-279, Ex. 20).



Ex. 20. *The symbiosis between “the motif of the moon” and the ascending perfect fourth (mm. 272-274, excerpt).*

Extremes come together, alpha meets omega, the beginning and the end are joined, the circle closes . . . The Beethovenian musical phrase proves to be “the keystone of the whole edifice” (Dediu 2013), bringing together in one single character its own meditative reverberations, the triple of the waltz and the symbol of death. In a last and futile attempt to stop the irrefutable disintegration, the debris of the waltz reemerge (mm. 262-269, Ex. 21), dissolved, however, in a shapeless magma. According to the suggestive description of the composer, “The Voice Beyond inevitably annihilates all that has come to be. The metaphysical takes its toll and leaves us perplexed.” (Dediu 2013)



Ex. 21. *Remainders of the disintegrating waltz (mm. 262-264).*

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The triple concert *The Fever* represents an original solution to the challenge raised by the creation of a concerto with multiple soloists,¹⁵ as the form chosen by the composer was that of a unique narrative, in which the main characters can be classified into two types: on the one hand, the soloists themselves become genuine characters; on the other hand, musical structures loaded with cultural meaning (the waltz, the quote from the *Moonlight Sonata*, the cadential perfect fourth) become dynamic actors, characters that dramatically change the course of events.

The work can also be considered a very interesting and successful experiment through which Dan Dediu fruitfully investigates (possibly for the first time in his oeuvre, which spans over 150 opuses) the possibility of suggesting, through musical means, pathological mental conditions.

In spite of the fact that unexpected situations and last-minute plot twists dominate the narrative, the stability and coherence of the whole work remain infrangible. Having a remarkable sense of time and of the proportion between what is predictable and what is a surprise, Dediu proffers – precisely when

¹⁵ The idea of the opera concert was recently embodied by Dan Dediu’s work *Wagner Under*, Op. 157, Concerto Opera for oboe, horn, trombone, viola and orchestra, whose premiere took place in 2015, in Denmark.

needed – the hints, references, and traceable causal connections through which the theatrical path, though sinuous, firmly adheres to an audible logic.

The work is impressive due to the presence of the dramatic dimension (which sometimes reaches the tragic), the reverberation of the significations on an intellectual level, the consistency of every gesture, its authenticity and its lack of any effectology. There are no ineffectual notes, the surfaces are clear of any unnecessary thickening, and the compositional intention is embedded into the sound with the highest proficiency. *The Fever* fascinates through its exuberant imagination, through the intensity of the expression and through the force with which it convinces.

English version by Dragoș Manea

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