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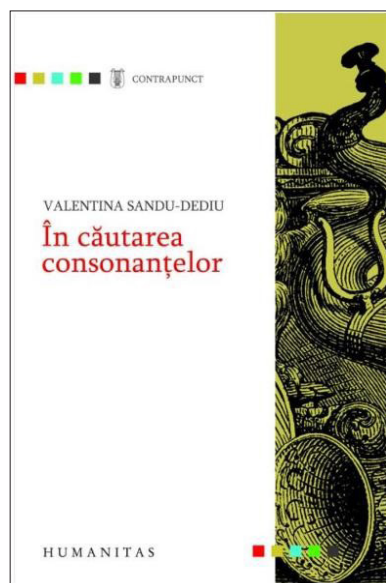
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În căutarea consonanțelor
 [Looking for the Consonances]
 by Valentina Sandu-Dediu

Humanitas, Bucharest, 2017



Have you ever looked at the horizon from the top of a mountain? That overwhelming feeling that the world belongs to you and the mysteries, the unknown hitherto hidden from view, clear off; the thrill of an unanticipated force of the heights nurtures you. There's that sweeping view of what stretches before you, the world is infinite and still within sight . . . Sometimes the thrill is there, too, when you look at a known past; yours, your experiences, the past of those books which had lit up your path. The mirage of a sweeping view is there, you can see and understand events simply because they happened and you recognize them. The history of music

has always given us the feeling of a road, broad and well paved, destined to cross eras more somber or more permissive. And yet the road, until recently, seemed to be even, like a freeway going across more or less risky landscapes. With the 20th century, the seemingly safe direction made way for an atomization of attitudes, itself of course a consequence of there being a view over things and a possibility of choosing. I can go back to the past I know and which I seem to own and I can opt for what represents me, in order to have the power to show myself as a creator, today. Browsing Valentina Sandu-Dediu's book *Looking for the Consonances* we have the same feeling of a sweeping view. Choosing to travel with Valentina Sandu-Dediu is like an intoxicating and wild experience. It is the speed of a driver for whom the road no longer holds any

surprises. It is the journey alongside the erudite with a broad view, familiar with minute details, and able to decide where they will step as they go over the abyss. Are you wondering what Mozart and communism have in common, or Max Reger and early music? If you choose to go on this quest with Valentina Sandu-Dediu you in fact adopt her vision, her ability to zigzag between books, opinions, experiences. The consonance is only a stratagem to draw us into the whirlpool of her own thoughts. It is the author's attempt to delude us into thinking that there is an answer to every question.

Starting from the assumption that the meaning of music is "based on the tension between consonance and dissonance" (p. 10), Sandu-Dediu sees things beyond "prejudice and cliché" (p. 10), breaking down, successively, the myths of "ideological dissonances" (p. 11). Structured in three broad sections – *Imperfect Consonances*, *Dissonance as Political Subversion* and *Consonance as Affinity* – Valentina Sandu-Dediu's book brings together some of her musicological considerations and writings, some of them brand new, some of them already published in such cultural and musical magazines as *România literară*, *Dilema veche*, *Actualitatea muzicală* or *Acord*, as well as papers or studies in foreign languages.

The imperfect consonances give the reader the occasion of a complementary view on music and musicians. That sweeping view even sees an out-of-the-common-road Mozart: transparent, aquatic, devalued by globalization, at the crossroads of bureaucratic references or reduced to a marketing strategy or a film subject. Obviously Sandu-Dediu surprises by a deliberately aggressive angle, destined to pull the alarm face to face with tradition and values, yet without devaluating the force of reality and the fashion of a changing society. Even the recourse to the flavor of early music, irrespective of if you are under the spell of historically informed performances, is subjected to radicalization, leading the reader into the abstract and justifying them into admitting an idealization of the past similar to a sliding towards a psychological comfort zone, at the same time challenging them to keep up with the author's smooth progress among the most diverse of landmarks. With the feature on "Troubled Times and the Ideologized Music of Romania between 1938 and 1944" we step onto a manifestly favorite territory of analytical research. With a good knowledge of events and characters, Valentina Sandu-Dediu transcended long time ago the event historicization barrier, looking for the motivation and the real driving force determining the twists and turns of a masked history. The play of eschewing censure, the dance of avoiding the mobile in the hope of making possible in practice what theory forbade give birth to a series of "political opportunisms" (p. 61) and, simultaneously, to a history of memo-

nable failures. “The synchronization with the Western model” (p. 61) and, at the same time, the search for an individual voice specific to a national musical philosophy, fighting censure and the inventing of stratagems to hide the real meaning, all bring to the mind of the reader the witch hunt of the early modern Europe, when any well-concocted denunciation could destroy a destiny or build up a power. The verve and clarity of opinions the author offers render this moment central to the whole book.

The figure of George Enescu – such as it survives posterity – is not protected from divergent attitudes, either, especially by weighing his local and foreign image. “The servile mask in regard to the communist rule” (p. 99) and the musician’s struggle to dissimulate between parody and the grotesque are apparent in the column dedicated to some of Romania’s essential composers – Aurel Stroe, Anatol Vieru or Tiberiu Olah. Being a creator in communist Romania – a “landscape of paradoxes” (p. 100) – basically rivaled with knocking on the locked gates of Aeschylus’s fortress . . .

The second part of the quest for the perfect dissonance leads us in the area of the “Dissonance [Seen] as Political Subversion”, a musical-geographic episode among “Music [as Composed in] the Ex-Communist Countries” after WWI. Starting in Russia and the Baltic countries, we journey to Hungary and Poland, crossing once more the author’s native soil and visiting the Republic of Moldova. Valentina Sandu-Dediu looks for, identifies, and names attitudes and similarities in artistic expression in a world beyond the world. Under the imposed rule of Socialist Realism and its specific ideology, under the dominance of oral tradition and the folklore, under the weight of censorship and fighting the avant-garde or inclining towards religion – the only shield left against losing one’s own spiritual identity – the artist’s one dilemma is: to leave or to stay? To reveal oneself, to imitate, or to obey? The answers are diverse, whether we read about Prokofiev, Paul Dambis, Viktor Kaminski, Ghenadie Ciobanu, Anatol Vieru or Aurel Stroe, Sokol Shupo, Vladan Radovanović, Alois Hába, György Ligeti or György Kurtág. A refined support of the unfolding of events stands out as the guiding thread, the atomization of the 20th century bringing as many destinies to an end.

In the last section of the chapter the author seems to want to make friends again with the consonance, which she equates with affinity. In fact the latter columns, of somewhat smaller dimensions, are the outcome of personal journeys experiences, or of those occasioned by the encounters with many figures which have refine her destiny (Alexandru Leahu, Dan Buciu) or which have made it to her recent reading list (Helmut Loos, Vlad Zografi, Melita Milin, Costin Moisil, Nicolae Gheorghită).

Will we really come across the consonances if we decide to take the road Valentina Sandu-Dediu suggests? Her offer is from the very start an imaginary journey, one without a destination. Because the dissonances are viewed as such in relation with one's sensitivity or with the era which strikes a chord. Valentina Sandu-Dediu's dissonances are rough, sometimes hard to swallow, disconcerting because of the razor-sharp opinions, bold. This is a journey which gives you the satisfaction of a dangerous climbing, the satisfaction of watching the landscape spreading afar, uphill and downhill, darkness and blinding light – a sweeping view. One endorsed by Humanitas publishing house, whose Contrapunct collection invites the reader in 2017 to dare look for the dissonances after having already discovered the charm of the *Parallele Octaves*.¹

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English version by Maria Monica Bojin

¹ The previous book by Valentina Sandu-Dediu, *Octave paralele*, published in the same collection in 2014 (Ed.).