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Music and Discourse

The notion of musical discourse has been with us since the beginnings of writing about music, and it has intensified towards 1600-1700, when, for composers, rhetoric and music were in an organic fusion. Sounds followed closely the affect of the texts on which oratorios, operas or other vocal works were based, in a rational, well-organized way. Rhetorical-musical figures inevitably migrated towards instrumental music, determining certain performing practices, given the fact that the musical discourse was supposed to be persuasive, to convince and move the audience. The twentieth century was pleased to rediscover these gestures, and one of the great conductors with an interest in the Baroque period, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, is also the author of theoretical works that are key to understanding the past of musical performance (*Musik als Klangrede*, Salzburg: Residenz 1982).

However, the notion of “musical discourse” is used in abundance (maybe even excessively) by us, musicians, in the most diverse contexts, from the unfolding of music in time to its formal development. In this issue we would like to propose to you a few other possible interpretations of musical discourse, starting from a broader, interdisciplinary framework, that of the encounter between literature and music.

Thus, Maria Grăjdian analyzes the subtle musical strata in the novels of that Japanese writer well-known for his musical competence (see the recent publication of the conversation between Haruki Murakami and Seiji Ozawa – *Absolutely on Music*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf 2016): from the musicale-setting elements to their polyphonic, symphonic implication in the structure of the novels.

Once again, here we come across the idea of narrativity in a purely instrumental work, even though it is programmatically directed towards hybridization, like an “instrumental opera” with characters, tensions, intrigues, shifts of situations and surprises. This is how Olguța Lupu presents the Triple Concerto for flute, clarinet, cello and orchestra, Op.138 *Febra* [The Fever] by Dan Dediu, relying on a rigorous and detailed score analysis.

Two other discourses come either from the perspective of the anthropologist, or from that of the performer. Speranța Rădulescu focuses on discourses on music in twentieth-century Romania to analyse the national ideology, associated either with modernization and Europeanization, or with totalitarian political projects. Continuing previous research, the author refers especially to folk musics, to find in them the respective ideological accents.

In his turn, Răzvan Suma writes about the performer’s trajectory through the Suites for solo cello by Bach, seen as a whole recital programme. The cellist’s discourse has to be finely tuned to the needs of contemporary concerto life, bringing together technical and historical details, but also by the concrete organization of a tour or recital.

Literature, composition, musical anthropology and performance theory: here are the fields of discourse gathered together by this issue. In older (Bach) or newer (Dediu) scores, in oral traditions or in literature, musical discourse reveals its potential for persuasion. After all, this is its ultimate goal – to communicate with its audience.

English translation by Maria-Sabina Draga Alexandru