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ȘI TEATRU**

**Teză de doctorat**

**THE EXPRESSIONIST OPERA**

**Summary**

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**INTRODUCTION**

An approach to the dilemmatic content of expressionism implies various interpretations capturing the tension of the general atmosphere from an esthetical - philosophical perspective – ‘the acceptance of the ego as it is, with its wounds and its magic’<sup>1</sup> or the particular artistic ambiance challenged by controversy, by translating the phenomenon to the stylistic area of a thickened romanticism, *exacerbating the same ardent participation of artist’s soul to the great issues of contemporaneity*<sup>2</sup>.

Unlike the first researches on the movement which were focused on direct, concrete approach with an unilateral character in relation with the philosophy, the esthetic, the politics of the Expressionism, during the last decades of the XX<sup>th</sup> century, the exegesis of this artistic experience reveals a panoramic vision with an universalistic content thus the non-conformism of the discussed tendency being inferred from the conflicting state of mind of the modern man.

Next to the foreign researchers that have thoroughly studied the problematic of Expressionism, such as Carl Dalhaus, M. von Troschke, Jost Hermand or Allain Poirier there are the Romanian authors whose studies and volumes have represented true reference marks for the present-day reception and understanding of the phenomenon: Clemansa Liliana Firca, Valentina Sandu-Dediu, Ada Brumaru, Ovidiu Varga, Radu Gheciu.

For a good understanding on a general level of the expressionist scenic creation’s integration in the context of the lyric theatre of the previous century, Philippe Albèra’s opinions are summarized in the next pages. Notice should be made that he is the author of a large chapter on the XX<sup>th</sup> century opera, inserted in the encyclopedia coordinated by J.J. Nattiez.

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<sup>1</sup> Rosenberg, Harold - *The Tradition of New York*, 1959, p. 28

<sup>2</sup> Grigorescu, Dan - *Expresionismul*, Ed. Meridiane, București. 1969, p. 199

Though his discourse is apparently presented as one-sided, by the end of the study Philippe Albèra manages to offer the reader a global image both of the contradictions and of the continuity elements of the XX<sup>th</sup> century lyric theatre, by focusing the attention on the thematic information. It is remarkable that the author does not interpret the Expressionist opera as a singular phenomenon but places it in the context of the dramatic creation of the past century. At the same time he is preoccupied not only with establishing stylistic particularities, differences from other scenic genres, but also with pointing out the interweaving, the subtle linking moments among the various creative attitudes.

Starting from the comments made by critics and musicologists about the affirmation of the nonconformist movement on a musical level and its reverberation within the scenic creation in the first half of the XX<sup>th</sup> century, we hereby state the purpose of the research entitled ‘ The Expressionist Opera’, which is that to present along its 4 chapters the problematic of the lyric theatre from this movement in the context of the modern show, stressing not only on the expressivity in the language elements but also especially on the extra-musical connections which allow general-cultural openings of the phenomenon.

## **CHAPTER I**

### **THE OPERA IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE XX<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY**

#### **I.1. NEW SYNCRETIC FORMS. THE INTERWEAVING OF THE GENRES**

In the attempt to realize a complete presentation of the opera in the XX<sup>th</sup> century there is the risk to become superficial because of the multiple aspects of the post-Wagnerian spectacle which has crossed a heterogeneous history, fragmented and impossible to cover in detail. Mention should be made that the multitude of this type of creations and their chronological continuity along with the modifications on the perception of the syncretism (the diversity in terms that designate the genre – lyrical drama, musical story, monodrama, musical theatre or instrumental theatre, etc.) and the particularities at the level of relationships with the diverse thematic types or dramaturgy (Veristic, post-Romantic, Impressionist, Expressionist, Neoclassical), the language (tonal, modal, atonal, serial or combinations of these), the interweaving of vocal (cantata, oratory) or instrumental (poem, fantasy and structures that are typical for the autonomous music such as: invention, fugue, sonata, etc.) genres are just a few elements whose finality means a new variety of scenic productions as well as of their reception.

It is notable that the newly-emerged forms of syncretism in the opera and ballet in the first half of the past century are the result of both traditions and innovations – surprising combinations of genres developed in the Italian, German and French spaces.

In accordance with the mentioned aspects we find again that the traditional vocal scenic genres – opera, drama, comedy, tragedy – inspired by the problematic of theatre in classical acceptance (Antiquity, mythology, medieval legends, *commedia dell’arte* etc.). Little by little, the opera as a stand-alone genre together with the other mentioned categories will become reference marks generating derived subgenres, depending on the changes in the world of theatre (symbolist, in Maurice Maeterlinck’s vision or expressionist – in Franck Wedekind’s) and of language as well as on the appeal to

folklore, mythology, the exotic space, archaic in relationship with the characterization techniques for the characters - oscillating among leitmotivic style, thematism, symbolism. Thus, the fundamental esthetic categories such as comic, dramatic, serious have multiple meanings leading to different ways of exploiting the syncretism.

## **I.2. ASPECTS OF MUSIC DRAMATURGY**

The new conception on dramaturgy has its roots in Romanticism, emerging from the idea of unity among art forms, the total Wagnerian drama constituting a role model for the creators of the XX<sup>th</sup> century who, most of them as librettist musicians will provide new solutions by emphasizing the aspects regarding the relationships libretto - music, melody-recitative, open or closed forms, vocal - orchestral, in the context of several opera traditions developed in the Italian, French or German spaces, thus contouring different perceptions on the spectacle, in the line of Veristic, Impressionist, Expressionist, Neoclassic tendencies – in fact echoes to scenic or language principles of the Bayreuth master.

During the first decades of the XX<sup>th</sup> century, the German was under the sign of the Wagnerian drama's continuity – the symbolic librettos bearing philosophic significations, the study of leitmotiv with symbolic and symphonic role, the excessive enrichment (chromatisation) both on melodic and harmonic level, the massive orchestration used with illustrative purpose as well as with that of depicting characters, the instrumentalized study of the voice, the presence of *arioso* to which the partial influence of Verism is added – especially Puccini's opera – where the authors accentuate the psychology of the protagonists through subjects and melodrama-like sonority. These are elements that will be found again with a different use in the scenic creation, depending on the traditions and the accumulations on various levels – thematic, esthetic and of language in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, in relationship with the tendencies of the European music and in accordance with the typology of the proposed theatre or with the interweaving of entertainment intonations in the cult genre and not least, depending on the sound and scenic vision of each creator connected to a composing school or on the vanguardistic orientations of experimental value, so characteristic to the epoch we are referring to.

## **I.3. THE THEMATIC**

As far as the continuity tradition in the European opera is concerned, the relationship between music and thematic may be divided in about 4 styles that would be integrated by composers in their scenic creations. It is worth mentioning *the Italian Style* personified by Giuseppe Verdi, whose main features would be later rediscovered in Veristic works belonging to Pietro Mascagni, Ruggiero Leoncavallo, Giacomo Puccini etc., depicting real people in real life situations and also their noble facing of sufferance.

Mythology, reiteration of Antiquity problematic, exceptional characters found in ultimately symbolic situation are related to the German Style dominated by Richard Wagner (and carried on in drama and tragedy by Richard Strauss and hand Pfitzner).

## CHAPTER II THE EXPRESSIONIST LYRIC THEATRE

### II.1. THE GERMAN AMBIANCE IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE XX<sup>th</sup> CENTURY'S CULTURE

#### II.1.1. Philosophy and plastic arts

The succinct development of events shows that in the end of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century and in the beginning of the next, the German space was fighting the scars of negativism emerging from the philosophic thinking of Schopenhauer and revived through the attitude of protest and revolt promoted by the Nietzschean nihilism, the discovery of psychoanalysis, the cult of the Wagnerian mythology and the pessimism in some realist works bearing the influence of French and Belgian symbolists.

From a general perspective the Expressionism is seen as the modern artistic and literary movement born in Germany before World War I (1885-1900) and declining during the last 5 years of the 3<sup>rd</sup> decade of the XX<sup>th</sup> century (1925-1930), featuring a strong tendency to spontaneously express inner emotions (anguish, pain, astonishment, exacerbation of feelings) by means of ecstatic tension with accent on subjectivity and irrationality.

It is remarkable that numerous exegetes of the movement constantly try to explain in their works this exaggeration of sensibility – a true opening of the artists to fatality – by considering that the Expressionism is *a manifestation of the Northern or of the Germanic temper*<sup>3</sup>. The fact remains that the Northern Expressionism along with that expressed in other cultural areas, despite the fact of representing a characteristic of some groups, mainly remains an attitude of those individualities preoccupied with the ideas of *Urmensch* (the original man) and *Urtlieb* (the primitive instinct) as primal display of the subjective conscience rebelling against the objective reality, of dream-reality antithesis, normal-pathologic, love-hate, life-death, body-soul, individual–society, conscious-subconscious, logic-absurd, mysticism-hallucination.

Thus we must notice those violent contrasts between white and black in *The Shout* of Munch (1895) which - turned in strong Kirschner-like chromatic accents – prepare (with the purpose of a more elaborate communication of a affective mood) the first abstract experiences where the synthesis between visual and sound emphasized in the Kandinskian improvisations is followed by **Oskar Kokoschka**'s visionary metamorphoses of reality and continuing to the categorical rejection of Surrealism by the definitely Expressionism-oriented group named *Neue Sachlichkeit* (*The New Objectivity*). In order to simplify and concentrate techniques and elements of language, a different orientation starts developing based on direct plastic transposition of feelings by brush strokes and graphic or pictorial signs (**Hans Hartung**, **Pierre Saulage**, **Mark Rothko**) very similar to seismograms that reach the peak in the action painting of the American artist **Jackson Pollock**.

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<sup>3</sup> Grigorescu, Dan – *Expresionismul*, Ed. Meridiane, București, 1969, p. 19

### II.1.2. Theatre and Literature

The Expressionist ambiance was anticipated in literature by realistic works and naturalist tendencies already appeared from the first half of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century featuring a strong degree of subjectivism (*Woyzeck* by **Georg Büchner**) on one hand and on the other hand by influential texts written by authors such as **Emile Zola**, **Feodor Dostoevski** and **August Strindberg**.

Observing the works of writers and poets of different trends and orientations – whether anachronistic or diachronic – 2 main directions are contoured: the first resulted from an attitude of protest or literates grouped around some literary magazines such as *Der Sturm* (The Storm, 1910) and *Die weissen Blätter* (*White pages*) represented by **Ernst Toller**, **Lyman Franck Baum**, **Walter Hasenclever** who were focused on actively influencing the people, while the second had a passive metaphysic character, being promoted by the *Die Aktion* (1911) magazine, having as representatives the following: **Kasimir Edschmid**, **August Stramm**, **Herwarth Walden**, **Gottfried Benn** and favoring a skeptical, fatalist and irrational attitude.

## II.2. THE MUSICAL EXPRESSIONISM

### II.2.1. Esthetic Particularities

The notion of expressionism in painting and literature represented a dilemma for the musicians who became preoccupied with developing possible definitions as well as with identifying its characteristic aspects.

In the first half of the XX<sup>th</sup> century René Leibowitz and Th. Adorno were discussing 2 compositional directions – those of Arnold Schönberg from the dodecaphonic school in Wien and Igor Stravinsky from the Russian period; however, exegesis from the second half permitted the appearance of a new type of Expressionism in the Germanic area, illustrated in operas by Richard Strauss entitled *Salome* and *Elektra*.

### II.2.2. Expressionist Opera: Genre, Themes, Language

If the Wagnerian model of stage production can be found under an enlarged form in the drama and tragedy works of Strauss, revealing a psychological expressionism, Arnold Schönberg is more into synthesizing, concentrating the problematic of syncretism, being also preoccupied by the abstract expressionism in monodrama or music drama. On the other hand, with *Moses und Aaron* - initially intended as an interweaving between opera and oratory and later turned lyric - the author amplifies the genre, prefiguring Alban Berg's scenic syntheses.

If, from the genre's perspective, tragedy is predominant in the Expressionist opera, on thematic level composers appeal to subjects loaded of Antic or biblical signification that are treated either with emphasis on elements contoured during Romanticism and favored in the XX<sup>th</sup> century – solitude, nightmare visions, desperation, hysteria (*Salome*, *Elektra* by Strauss) or in a grandiose, philosophic manner (*Moses und Aaron* by Arnold Schönberg). At the same time notice should be made on the abrupt shift from Arnold Schönberg's image of the superficially treated modern society (in the farcical comic opera *Von Heute auf Morgen*) towards the tragedy of Alban Berg's

characters in *Wozzeck and Lulu* – victimized by war's horrors – symbols of a degraded world in decay, lacking salvation.

On language level, the first half of the XX<sup>th</sup> century, the development of the musical thinking and that of compositional techniques revealed the interaction of several directions – some with innovative character, some showing tradition continuity - however both groups originating in the system and esthetic conception crisis produced by late Romanticism through Richard Wagner and enriched tonality. As a natural continuity, some solutions to this crisis determined the formation of two antagonist systems of intonation: *the serialism* and *the enlarged (expanded) tonality*. The stylistic options were determined by the modification in the perception of dissonance on one side and by composer's sensibility in search of new structures that would correspond technically as well as esthetically to an expressive situation.

### **II.2.2.1. Post-Romantic Tonal Expressionism**

If *Salome* inspired from the play written by Oscar Wilde develops a well-known biblical episode while *Elektra* – Hoffmannsthal's tragedy taken from Antiquity (both symphonic dramas with voices being transformed by the thickening of elements in the pathologic area), their sound transposition shocked the audience with amazing contrasts between lyric passages in diatonic language and dramatic, intense chromatic passages reaching atonality. Reminiscence of Bayreuth master's drama is also present – the circulation of the leading motive, the arioso – above which the expansion of tonality, melody, harmony, orchestral apparatus are added, Strauss striving to describe in a realist manner each moment of the action or every feeling of the characters within the poematic structure.

### **II.2.2.2. Atonal and Serial Expressionism**

Analyzing *Erwartung* monodrama we can easily notice Expressionist features such as: targeting the emotions of an unnamed character, projection of the most intense feelings, absence of any structural conventions, violent contrasts, rapidly unfolded text. Arnold Schönberg manages to bring the audience closer to the musical score with the help of text and scenic indications.

These reference marks will be found again in *Die glückliche Hand*, where they fascinate the listener with beautiful correspondences between Kandinsky's chromatic and the sonority of the work, particularized by Schönbergian nuances of crescendo and decrescendo. Noticeable enough, together with the score of *Die glückliche Hand* opera, the structural elements make their comeback in Schönberg's work, having a frequent use from this point forward.

Unlike Arnold Schönberg, Alban Berg chooses not to turn to monodrama but to building real stage productions in post-Wagnerian manner with segmentation in acts and scenes based on the circulation of the leading motive, in a synthetic language adapted to varied dramaturgy.

If, in the case of Schönberg, themes did not bear very important meaning, in *Wozzeck and Lulu* the composer gets inspiration from texts of important dramaturges like Georg Büchner and Franck Wedekind and by concentrating them, achieves progressive accumulation of tension in portraying the characters.

On the language level, Alban Berg is concerned not only with the tonal – atonal – modal synthesis, but also with the anticipation of the dodecaphonic serialism which, at the time of *Wozzeck's* composition, was consolidating in Viennese works.

The serial technique used by Arnold Schönberg in *Von Heute auf Morgen* as well as in *Moses und Aaron* reaches a climax in *Lulu*, a masterpiece of the musical theatre. Alban Berg extends the concept of vocality through his work, the voice being subjected not only to rhythmic declamation but also to a different manner of expression. In order to exemplify this statement reference must be made to belcanto technique in *Lulu* and to its alternation with *Sprechgesang*, *Sprechstimme*, *spoken-song* and *spoken-voice*.

### **II.2.2.3. The Expressionist Lyric Theatre from Psychological Perspective**

Though the authors focused on the same genre, differences appeared in the treatment on thematic nuances: the disequilibrium, the neurosis, the grotesque, the murder. More than that, different language techniques were preferred in order to accentuate the subjects on sonority level; either expanded chromatic and tonality (*Salome*, *Elektra*) or atonality (*Erwartung*) was used. The exceptional creation, the fulfillment of musical Expressionism is embodied in Alban Berg's *Wozzeck* as the author achieves the transgression of the action sequences into sonority using a synthetic language with the tonal-modal-serial pattern. There is remarkable interweaving of subjectivity and realism revealed in the integrating vision of this masterpiece with deepened tension that becomes a reference mark between the pathos, the extroverted character and the psychic forces unleashed in *Salome* and *Elektra* on one hand and the introverted attitude, the abstract character in Arnold Schönberg's *Erwartung*, on the other hand. Thus, a state of loneliness manifested under a neurotic form in post-romantic works or with the help of a singular character in monodrama becomes the tragedy of a whole world in *Wozzeck*, gradually descending from the myth universe in reality, as a reminder that Friedrich Nietzsche's devastating ideas on master-slave morality deepened in the conscience of humanity at the beginning of the XX<sup>th</sup> century are now transforming, the differences between the privileged and the humble becoming barely perceptible in the implacable road to death.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **THE EXPRESSIONIST OPERA IN GERMAN LANGUAGE**

#### **III.1. SALOME by RICHARD STRAUSS**

##### **III.1.1. Semantic Aspects of the Subject**

*Salome*, opera written by Richard Strauss after Oscar Wilde's homonymous play evokes a scandal taken from musical life in the beginning of the century. Even today there is still doubt about its ambiguous value as neither specialized literature nor general opinion have managed to state a positive, widely accepted point of view about this aspect.

Though the biblical episode depicted in *Salome* is renowned and found even in religious painting, in Oscar Wilde's variant this subject is dealt with by means of extracting real aspects of the epoch with stress upon the decadent character, especially with the help of paroxystic accentuation of the erotic side.

Should we follow Wilde's play in detail in what inflexions, hints and idea associations up to discovering even the resources for psychoanalysis are concerned, we find that Strauss uses the text selectively, rebuilding its dramaturgy. At the same time, he composes music with preponderance of gradations, contrasts, symbols, which leans more towards the Expressionist side, rather than Romantic.

The work is a musical drama with one act only, with 4 scenes of unequal length. The characters that take part in the action of the opera are: *Herod Antipas*, tetrarch of Judea (tenor); *Herodias*, his wife (mezzo-soprano); *Salome*, her daughter (soprano); *Jockanaan* (Saint John the Baptist – baritone); *Narraboth*, a young captain of the guards (tenor); people, soldiers, slaves. The action is placed in Galilee, the year 30 AD.

### **III.1.2. Salome's Musical Dramaturgy**

Salome represents an important step in the evolution of post-Wagnerian opera music, being ascribed to a certain genre entitled *Literaturoper* by the German critics - which means giving up a verse libretto in favor of a prose one in order to provide a more clearly exposed social and moral issues or the time. This prose libretto - not serving realism but under the mask of Maurice Maeterlinck's symbolism and Oscar Wilde's poetic infantilism in what concerns how Herodias's story is treated – helps Richard Strauss adopt modernist esthetics which will later be conveyed general proportions.

### **THE SYMBOLIC AND SYMPHONIC ROLE OF MOTIVES**

We have come to the conclusion that, just like Wagner - who in *Tristan and Isolde* avoids Literaturism while treating the musical motive, in Salome Strauss develops the technique of context transformations, often more concluding than the free, poematic, symphonized structure, based on variation.

### **III.1.3. Elements of Language**

#### **ASPECTS OF RHYTHM AND TEMPORALITY**

The expressiveness of the musical rhythm in all its aspects - *particular rhythmic formulas, agogic changes and oscillations* – are the focal point in this section of our study.

Speaking of *tempo*, the oscillations are generated by the attitude changes in characters along with the development of the action in the first place but also by the musical conception that the composer has about the text's dramaturgy, which implies scenery, atmosphere and character changes.

The great variety of rhythmical and construction aspects of the tempo is decisively influential to the fragmented, free, apparently improvisatory character of the sound development of action. Even if the rhythm and tempo's expressivity has always been a fundamental element of music language in numbers, we consider that in *Salome* - though without precise numeric delimitation - the changes mentioned earlier reach a climax of virtuosity.

#### **ANALYTIC OBSERVATIONS ON HARMONY**

In *Salome*, Richard Strauss achieves a musical equivalence of the subject in the spirit of a descriptive programmatic style through step by step observation of the action, at the same time producing moments of shifting backwards in time - with evoking purpose as well as forward – with anticipative role.

As music unrolls, three systems of sound organizing are identified: the classic type of **diatonic tonality**, **the chromatic, expanded tonality** of *post-romantic* origin and the **free dodecaphony**.

These systems are employed with expressive purpose, fulfilling a symbolic function.

If the consonant diatonic harmony is an established particularity for John, the chromatic harmony will be used in the majority of scenes and relationships among characters, especially Salome being personified with her entire aspirations, restlessness and desires.

The development of the musical discourse in this opera has an unusual harmonic mobility. However, Richard Strauss remained permanently attached to the notion of tonality by using polytonality up to atonal dodecaphony with expressive role in limited areas. The elaborate harmonic analysis results thus in a music thread of romantic spirituality, whose evolution as a process surprises us with a wide range of moments, from balanced to intense culminations – true Expressionist shouts.

### **MELODIC AND TIMBRAL EXPRESSIVENESS**

Richard Strauss makes use of shaping procedures for the musical language in a programmatic sense, achieving an equivalence of extra musical elements (sounds, shapes, colors, lights) in a direct manner, without implying the composer's feelings towards them through intervals and their direction, registers, timbres and vocal densities.

Carrying out this analysis targeted the relationship established between the poetic text and the melodic line. Though the proportion between word and sound might seem the main difficulty of the opera, the same problem appears in approaching any vocal genre. With the opera there occurs a new factor, of utmost importance, which is the action unrolled on the stage. When elaborating and presenting an opera, the greatest challenges is to satisfy musical, word and scenic action requirements at the same time, in so as to allow these elements to contribute in building the dramatic action (as opposed to the divergences in opinion of earlier composers about music being subordinated to word or on the contrary, about word being subordinated to music).

### **ORCHESTRATION**

At the level of sound chromatics, the composer Richard Strauss deals with a process of symbolization of the musical language throughout the opera entitled *Salome*.

Thus, Narraboth's pure love is suggested by flute and oboes timbres while the seriousness of Jokanaan and his heroism – by brass and a *tutti* orchestral, entrusting the dynamics of Salome's inner emotions to be personified by the fluidity found in the use of strings and wood instruments. This technique comes as an anticipation of timbre leitmotivic in the music of the XX<sup>th</sup> century.

### **III.1.4. Musical Form**

Richard Strauss approaches the dramaturgic form by borrowing Wagnerian elements in his operas, which means renouncing the traditional principle of closed numbers (airs, duets, choruses, etc.) and affirming a permanent thematic development.

Even though *Salome* consists of one act divided in four scenes, a very clear formal structure at first glance, after detailed analysis we have reached the conclusion that the musical discourse in what temporal articulation is concerned proves to be

fragmented to the extreme and more than this, the delimited scenes do not represent sure formal reference marks.

On a general level of form a clearly elaborate structure must be taken into account, as it can be showcased in the relationship established between the tonal plan of scene I and the general conception of the work. If in scene I the delimitation of the subsections (sections) is marked by harmonic relations with semitone ((*do# ~ re ~ do# ~ Do# ~ Do*), the end of the work presents a succession of two harmonic cadences following the scheme met in the first scene: the first is in *Do #*, suggesting Salome's triumph over John – even if all she gets is his head while the second, after a free chromatic development in Minor *do* suggests implacable destiny and the tragic sentiment that characterizes the entire opera.

### **III.2. ELEKTRA by RICHARD STRAUSS**

#### **III.2.1. Semantic Aspects of the Subject**

The first meeting between the German composer and the poet Hugo von Hofmannsthal was not one of the most successful. In the beginning, the Viennese poet had hopes that the master would compose music for a ballet. Being turned down by the composer, the librettist focused then attention on the Greek tragedies that were being reiterated in various theatres of the early XX<sup>th</sup> century. Preoccupied with Greek subjects about the morbid psychology of the tragedies, the writer will surprisingly notice the absence of purity in classic conventional Greece. He is confronted thus with *the Nietzschean vision about a demonic Greece whose sins, hatred and passions stained in blood and stopped by laws had given birth to tragedy*<sup>4</sup>.

Unlike Oscar Wilde's *Salome*, Hofmannsthal's *Elektra* reaches a climax of dementia (madness) through abnormal words expressing the torment or the terrible desire to kill Klytemnestra and Aegisth.

In order to produce this legendary drama that had taken place in 1500 BC, Strauss intended to create scenic as well as musical imagery in an *accurately realistic* manner. With this purpose in mind, he eliminates all spoken roles from Hugo von Hofmannsthal's text. Presented in one act, the opera is to continuous hours long, during which Elektra will never leave the stage.

#### **III.2.2. Musical Dramaturgy**

Segmented in two parts in conformity with the tonal and dramaturgic clarifications, the opera contains still some elements that are common to both divisions: the modulation between tonalities (*Minor re – Major Do*) and also the characters engaged in discourse together with their respective motives. Mention should be made that a difference should be noticed on the level of main character dramaturgy: the first part is focused on the evolution of the following characters: *Elektra – Chrysothemis – Klytemnestra* towards a culminating point, the protagonist revealing the cruel and painful truth to her mother – Klytemnestra will be killed in order to revenge the death of her father, the peace of the palace being reestablished this way, while the second part is dominated by Klytemnestra's removal from the discourse but also by Orest's appearance and involvement in the course of action along with the other protagonists.

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<sup>4 4</sup> Tuchmann, Barbara– *Trufaşa citadelă*, Ed. Politică, Bucureşti, 1977, p. 430.

### **SYMBOLIC AND SYMPHONIC ROLE OF MOTIVES**

By careful analysis of the motives we noticed the importance conveyed to the process of variation and development of all sound entities through traditional techniques of motivic extension or concentration, segmentation but also sequential accumulation in the context of main moments of action unfolding along with particularities from the proper evolution of character dramaturgy.

#### **III.2.3. Elements of Language**

##### **ASPECTS OF RHYTHM AND TEMPORALITY**

It must be stated that the means by which different moods (balanced – unbalanced), attitudes (acceptance – rejection), physical and psychical features of the characters and their tempers are illustrated is the rhythm. At the same time, we noticed that rhythm not only has a **descriptive** role but also an **anticipative** one.

At the metrical level modifications are generated by the appearance of a character or by its comeback in the discourse, in relation with prosody (the placing of word accents and syllables in a measure), in accordance with the dramaturgy of characters' emotions or due to the alteration of the proper action.

There is permanent mobility in the indications given by the composer both in metrical and agogic direction.

##### **ANALYTIC OBSERVATIONS ON HARMONY**

Richard Strauss imagines in *Elektra*, as he did in *Salome*, a musical equivalence through means of gradual unfolding of action.

In this case he describes – relying on harmonic means – moments, characters and relationships in the libretto along with their attitudes, moods and emotions.

A score analysis reveals the evolution of sonority from diatonic and consonant harmonies passages to atonal, intensely chromatic areas. Being used with expressive purpose, these systems of sound organization fulfill a symbolic function.

Tonal harmony particularizes the invocation of the father in Elektra's wakefulness moments as well as Chrysothemis's freedom feeling, fragments of Orest's sound appearances and also Aegisth's death. The chromatic harmony is pointed out in the psychological evolution of the protagonist's conflicting moods – ranging from depression and agitation to rage and madness – in Klytemnestra's nightmare and in Elektra's condemnation by a servant, as well. The extended chromatics up to atonalism can be observed in certain passages from Elektra's monologues but especially in the climax of the score: Klytemnestra's death.

##### **MELODIC EXPRESSIVENESS**

The affirmative, the exclamative, the interrogative or culmination senses of the text are marked in music with the help of phonology elements related to word sonority and rhetoric.

#### **III.2.4. Musical form**

It is possible to analyze the score of *Elektra* on the structural level if certain criteria such as: the unfolding of the main moments in the proper action, the appearance and the dramaturgic evolution of the characters paralleled with reference marks for tonal

clarification, the agogic contrast, the dynamic contrast, the tempo contrast, the appearance of new motives, the presence of orchestral interludes having a conclusive, transitional or descriptive role are taken into account.

After analyzing the score there are several particularities concerning semantics, sonority, dramaturgy and structure.

Just like *Salome*, the musical tragedy entitled *Elektra* appears as an evocation of a historical subject presented in modern vision. William Mann, in a study on classic tragedy in vanguardist vision, pointed out the direct connection established between Elektra's psychological approach by Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Sigmund Freud's theories.

The composer himself offers a possible answer in the end of the score right after Elektra recites the verses – *and in this hour I am the flame of life and my fire burns the darkness of the world*. The pain smothered up to that moment in the thirst for revenge is released through the dance of vengeance and joy.

On the level of structure, in the succession of the moments each section and subsection brings new rhythmical, motivic or melodic elements but also unusual techniques of varying or of processing the previous material. The second part represents the echo of the first one by the resumption of motives in a transformed perspective, without creating a special segment for that.

In what sonority is concerned, Elektra by Richard Strauss constitutes a reference mark for the end of late Romanticism and the beginning of Expressionism through the synthesis of composition modalities: the enlarged, the tonal suspensions, the extended chromatism and the unusual harmonic moments, all these anticipating the free atonalism of *Erwartung* (Arnold Schönberg) and *Wozzeck* (Alban Berg).

### **III.3 ERWARTUNG by ARNOLD SCHÖNBERG**

Starting from the summary of **Philippe Albèra's** research we get the idea that the tensioned atmosphere described in *Erwartung* is not revealed based on gradually established correspondence between text and sonority in its traditional form. The attempts to release recurrent structures with motivic or intervallic value that are inferred from statistic (Jean Maegaard, 1972) or structural (Carl Dalhaus) analyses diminish the complexity of relationships and rationalize compositional structures. Naturally, these analyses may be able to locate some passages from a score, as already established, from the synthesis of some general observations made by Ovidiu Varga. But the coherence of an opera that belongs to a nightmare originates in an analysis that has the purpose – just like in psychoanalysis – of reporting the apparent disorder of a discourse to a subjacent coherence. In this case, as far as the musician is concerned, the unconscious lies within figures which send us to exact feelings and defined impulses.

We must keep in mind that this monodrama that pushes the principle of non-repetitive musical idea up to athematism is the first declared creation in the history of music that has an essentially psychoanalytic content.

Focusing on the association between language and expression, it is obvious that the complex polyphony leads to a condensed form of the dream, unfolding itself as a transposition of subjectivity into the musical form and composition. The motives and the melodic lines are not only limited to the surface structure, they are to be found through

the entire musical texture. They contain a certain melos of romantic essence in contours, inflections and incipits but are invented out of an expressive impulse.

#### **III.4. DIE GLÜCKLICHE HAND by ARNOLD SCHÖNBERG**

Understanding the syncretism as totality of scenic modalities subordinated to music, Arnold Schönberg conceived in *Die glückliche Hand* an art of representing the previous movements where the artistic effect became inseparable from the psychic one.

The interweaving of color and sound, the theories marking the descent in the unconscious, the research in the direction of a new sonority grammar are just few of the aspects that led Arnold Schönberg in the creation of the introverted musical drama.

Another important element related to the Schönbergian introverted syncretism is the text, which is not presented as a proper libretto; the composer synthetically follows significant moments of strange universe characterized by irrationality transformed in a pretext for cipher monologues by the mere presence of the surreal element which holds the mystery of unconsciousness. In this respect he imagines an erotic subject impregnated with philosophical symbols, contoured on two levels. We are referring to the interlaced indications of scenography (lights, colors, projections, backgrounds) and details of a text with ambiguous sense (shadowed plot, grotesque constructions, paradox crossing and insertions of cold, bare fantasy) which come to create a heterogenic mass. This is interpreted as a projection of the unconscious for the secondary level of segmented words that accompany the vocal line of the protagonist (the man, a spirit subordinated to a drama that can be inferred from apparently simple situations but which get more complicated through the accentuation of the anguish feelings in a static theatre where silence is more important than spoken words) depicted while expressing moods, emotions, contrasting attitudes (astonishment, happiness, beatitude, loneliness, despair) in connection with the imaginary relationship with the ideal woman.

It is important to notice that the audition and the understanding of this work implies breaking the boundaries of a psychological threshold, of some intended discrepancies – rough sound – autonomously, which sometimes come in contrast with the text heavily charged with symbols and also with the delicate tones applied in subtle degrade – as the musician painter encourages a synesthesia of senses, thus creating in *Die glückliche Hand* a favorable environment for the global perception of arts.

#### **III.5. WOZZECK by ALBAN BERG**

Fascinated with **Sigmund Freud's** writings as well as with **Oskar Kokoschka's** paintings, opened to the epoch's representative authors (**Henrik Ibsen, August Strindberg, Frank Wedekind**) but also to the music composed by **Robert Schumann, Richard Wagner, Gustav Mahler**, known as an analyst of his own composition – Alban Berg, even though guided by his mentor Arnold Schönberg in his quest for innovative language techniques stands out in the context of the Viennese triad because of his inclination towards lyrical sound content of post-Romantic essence, surprisingly pointed out even in works from the serial dodecaphonic period. He remained in the conscience of the audience as a creative spirit of synthesis extremely refined.

We intend to accentuate several aspects of dramaturgy and language in a masterpiece of extraordinary theatricality – *Wozzeck* – which included the fundamentals of the lyric tradition of this genre and whose extreme novelty still produces an almost

shocking impact after almost a century since creation. Furthermore, we conducted a synthetic approach on the vast bibliographic material (Th. W. Adorno, Mosco Carner, Jean Pierre Jouve and Michel Fano, Alban Berg) as well as on its Romanian sources (Doru Popovici, Grigore Constantinescu, Ovidiu Varga, Ada Brumaru, Roman Vlad) that has the role of deciphering the opera, especially retaining the relevant comments by Valentina Sandu-Delciu, correlated with actual observations of some critics (Philippe Albèra and Michel Imberty) with the purpose of accentuating the importance of Alban Berg's conception on the genre together with his role-model value for future scenic creations.

Though numerous exegetes of his creation surveyed very carefully the way in which the composer – out of his desire of not entirely depending on the text and of concentrating to the essence the expression retrieved from the theatrical and sound dramaturgic symbiosis (construction, timbrality - language) – envisioned the opera by adopting and synthetically adapting the traditional structures characteristic to the instrumental – symphonic music, there are controversial opinions regarding this aspect.

Philippe Albèra and Michel Imberty bring to discussion – in their recently published writings – the connection between the structure of a scene and its extra musical content, meditating on the following question: is the form free, or only apparently free? What do we really understand when we think about the type of refraction through music?

In Philippe Albèra's vision, the traditional constructions either savant or popular condense within their structures expressive forms thus becoming affiliated to the general dramaturgic construction that allows music to become theatrically significant, being entirely autonomous and contrasting with the essence of imitation proposed by Igor Stravinsky's stylized scenic formulas.

This scenic creation of large proportions is characterized by constructions elaborated in detail which are in deep relationship with the function of some pitches or chords, with leitmotifs, with the various modalities of vocal expression along with the synthesis of harmonic language (tonal – modal – serial) and even with instrument and number symbolist value. Berg's expressiveness is born out of this accumulation of structures and significations in which music and theatre create a whole.

Though Alban Berg is the representative of the Austro-German space – reality proven by the rigorous of the general and detailed construction as well as by the importance attributed to every element either theatrical or sonic – *Wozzeck's* proposed syncretism has an universal value that transcends Expressionism's historical and esthetic boundaries, influential by different coordinates for some stage representations belonging to creators of various musical cultures of the first half of the XX<sup>th</sup> century.

### **III.6. *LULU* by ALBAN BERG**

Though the representation of *Lulu* may seem fragmented by the intervention of cantabile moments through entertainment music insertions, the work has unity on the level of correspondence between the libretto closely following the stages of *Lulu's* step by step degradation as well as elements of micro and macro structure, where leitmotifs are chained in traditional forms or instrumental genres (Act I – sonata, Act II – rondo, Act III – theme with variations).

A different aspect proving the unity of this score is the repetition of some musical moments with a dramaturgic purpose. We thus make reference to the use of Viennese

waltz in acts I and III, where the author's intention was that of pointing out joviality, frivolity and even the apparent unconscious state of this character on one side and on the other side there is *Lulu's* song in acts I and III through which moods of reflection and consciousness of the protagonist's drama are exposed.

To sustain the idea of unity, mention should be made about the creation itself of a lyrical theatre formula, adapted to special language that the composer will use throughout the entire music. Based on the close relationship between the changes on the level of series used to underline a leitmotiv or an idea related to one character's dramaturgy, the composer proves that within this creation, the problem is defined not only by how a musical sense may be organized but also by how the organization may achieve meaning.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **INFLUENCES OF EXPRESSIONIST OPERA ON OTHER CREATIONS OF THE GENRE**

#### **IV.1. INFLUENCES OF THE EXPRESSIONIST OPERA IN THE RUSSIAN MUSICAL CULTURE**

##### **IV.1.1. Expressionist Trends in Igor Stravinsky's Opera**

We must observe that from that *stille barbaro* revealed in creations realized by appealing to the telluric force of the folklore, the expressive virtualities from the deep roots of ritual as well as to the importance of the quote or the play element such as: *Petrushka*, *The Firebird*, *Sacre du printemps*, Stravinsky transfers in the hybrid scenic genres some diluted expressionism, in which the asymmetry, the modal language, the distorted timbral colors and willingly blended in an unsuitable manner, in relationship with the heterogeneity of the librettos - burlesque story (*Renard*) or parable (*L'histoire du soldat*) with the purpose of obtaining surprising effects of irony, parody, comedy and grotesque.

##### **IV.1.2. Expressionist Trends in Sergey Prokofiev's Opera**

At first glance, the connection between Igor Stravinsky and Sergey Prokofiev in the lyric area may seem almost impossible to achieve because of the different ideas that the two composers have on syncretism. If Stravinsky favors the approach of the opera as a hybrid scenic genre of reduced dimensions, related to ballet from the structural point of view, then Prokofiev is a continuator of the Romantic opera's dramaturgy by enlarging the spaces for the stage productions as well as by diversifying the themes used in his librettos (history, psychoanalysis, everyday life), the composer turning in the same time to the cinema footage in order to convey originality to his creations.

Situated between tradition and innovation, Sergey Prokofiev's stage creation is characterized by lyrical, dramatic or ironic singability on one side and by content made up of expressionist suggestions inferred from librettos dramaturgy with transformations, thickenings in the psychology of characters from the Freudian or *commedia dell'arte*'s universe.

##### **IV.1.3. Expressionist Trends in Dmitri Shostakovich's Opera**

If Stravinsky's creations point out mixed sonic images taken from the fantastic world of legends and fairy-tales in an ironic, satiric manner and Prokofiev favors the realistic or symbolist theatre then Shostakovich culminates with the dramaturgy of the

absurd (*The Nose*), focusing on the feminine character's psychology revealed in unconventional hypostases in *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*. In order to better illustrate from the musical point of view a libretto of such caliber, Shostakovich needed a thickened reality - following Berg's model - along with the use of the national epopee's resources in the direction traced by Mussorgsky, these being aspects that bring the work closer to the German Expressionism as far as atmosphere but also language (the tonal – modal – atonal synthesis) is concerned, thus the work becoming a reference mark not only in the context of the Russian creation of the genre but also in the universal scenic domain.

#### **IV.2. INFLUENCES OF THE EXPRESSIONIST OPERA IN THE CZECH MUSICAL CULTURE - LEOŠ JANÁČEK**

The general stylistic climate inferred from the romantic impressionist atmosphere built on the ethnic character's emotionality in operas such as *Jenůfa* (1903) or *Katja Kabanova* (1921) which prefigure - by side accentuation in the main moments of action as well as of tragic ends - the non emotional Expressionism in *The Makropoulos Cases*.

#### **IV.3. INFLUENCES OF THE EXPRESSIONIST OPERA IN THE HUNGARIAN MUSICAL CULTURE - BÉLA BARTÓK**

The Expressionist ambiance created in the opera *Bluebeard's Castle* is inferred from the tensioned content of the libretto as well as from the abnormality of characters, from the slow leading of action towards the fatidic finally and partially from its sonority. It is the moment for orchestral introduction which will impose through simple diatonic sonority with descending profile, thus creating an impression in continue evolution from static to austerity and bleakness.

By integrating *Bluebeard's Castle* at the general level – a masterpiece in the Central and Western European scenic context (Debussy, Dukas, Janáček) – we tried to demonstrate the Expressionism inferred through the line of thickened symbols in Romantic-Impressionist works within typically Bartókian musical structures.

#### **IV.4. INFLUENCES OF THE EXPRESSIONIST OPERA IN THE ITALIAN MUSICAL CULTURE – LUIGI DALLAPICCOLA**

If, thematically speaking, the accentuation in the reality of the facts brings about profound emotionality – an extension of the romantic expression situated outside of any shadow of pathetism – on musical level, though the authors create similarities with the German Expressionism, these appear masked in the context of the Italian lyricism and singability. It is the mark of some composers such as Luigi Dallapiccola or Goffredo Petrassi to depict lyrically – intended Expressionism in their works (*Volo di Notte* or *Morte dell'Aria*).

#### **IV.5. INFLUENCES OF THE EXPRESSIONIST OPERA IN THE ROMANIAN MUSICAL CULTURE**

The presence of the Expressionism in the Romanian music from the beginning of the XX<sup>th</sup> century is no longer regarded as novelty, thanks to minute researches made by the musicologist **Clemansa Liliana Firca** – a study entitled *Rezonanțe ale esteticii expresionismului în creația muzicală românească*, the subchapters included in *Direcții în muzica românească (1900-1930)* or *Modernitate și avangardă în muzica ante - și*

*interbelică (1900-1940)* – that proved the viability of this phenomenon in certain conditions from orchestral or scenic sphere (the suite and the ballet) whose echoes have been partially noticed also in the opera genre.

Starting from pertinent observations made by the researcher we intended to point out the adaptation of the European movement's trends to the Romanian scenic space from the first half of the XX<sup>th</sup> century, following the exacerbate direction of *Năpasta* (Sabin Drăgoi, 1927), *Făclie de Paști* (Alexandru Zirra, 1937) along with Stravinsky's influence through his dissimulated *stille barbaro* that can be observed in *O noapte furtunoasă* (Paul Constantinescu, 1934) and continuing to the musical-dramatic particularities stating the sublimed Expressionism present in George Enescu's masterpiece entitled *Oedip* -1931.

## CONCLUSIONS

Though this movement came to an end as a historical period in the first decades of the past century, the Expressionist ambiance is to be find again in the second half of the XX<sup>th</sup> century in the context of different usage of syncretism by musical and extra musical elements transformation: chorus, pantomime, sound and light projections, etc. We should nominate here the complete representation entitled *The Soldiers* (Bernd Alois Zimmermann, 1965) or the opera *Le Grand Macabre* (György Ligeti, 1996) – a scenic synthesis in which symbols and composing gesture come together offering an innovative system of correspondences between music and philosophic concepts of existentialist inspiration.

We thus understand that the scenic Expressionism - manifested through the continuity of some masterpiece from the Austro-German space (*Salome – Elektra - Erwartung - Die glückliche Hand – Wozzeck – Lulu*) as well as through the diversity of influences in creations of the genre in other musical cultures – turns from a controversial reality of the past century into the fundament of nowadays grand scale stage representations.

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