

## 7. THE DISCIPLINE OF HISTORY OF MUSIC: POSTMODERN CONSEQUENCES AND DEFORMATIONS

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**Abstract:** *Today, the discipline of music history does not seem to be, and indeed is no longer, what Guido Adler and Hugo Riemann formulated in their writings. The difference lies both in the structure and in the understanding of what is, in fact, and history, and music, then and now. If the intention of both inventors of modern musicology was a founding-recuperative one, then both the structure and the postmodern understanding rely exclusively on the recycling procedure with the meaning of rewriting. Hence the set of conflicts between, on the one hand, the new understandings and contents of more and more histories, and, on the other hand, the resistance to preserve the scholastic methodology, which generally refuses to evolve, forming new generations of students in terms of already anachronistic didactic contents.*

**Key words:** *deconstruction, deformation, metanarrative, reformulation, fragment, recycling*

### 1. Introduction. What it is?

Seen from the postmodern actuality, the historical past shows to be one distorted by multiple metanarratives "focuses"<sup>37</sup>. The latter acted as true differential installations, dividing images and identities into multiple antithetical structures: the dominance of men (the patriarchal-misogynist narrative), as well as androcentric religions (Christ, Abraham, Mohammed and Buddha), but also the superiority of the monotheistic cult (Christianity) on polytheistic "paganism" (Scandinavian, Celtic, Greek or Roman), the superiority of the white race (the colonialist and implicitly racist narrative), i.e. the superiority of the frozen North (the European "Hyperborean" race) over the tropical-equatorial South (the Negroid race), or of the "Aryan race" (the Nazi narrative) over any other (including within the Europeanoid racial group), the primacy of European culture (Kipling's *The White Man's Burden*)

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<sup>37</sup> What is a metanarrative? The term is introduced by the French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard in his famous writing *La condition postmoderne: rapport sur le savoir* (Paris: Minuit, 1979). Thus, the appearance of the term metanarrative is born with a triple meaning. The first, the proper sense, is about a totalizing narrative scheme – the grand narrative/grand narrative or, more precisely, the master narrative/dominant narrative – with a legitimizing function both for the idea of authority and for a set of beliefs and habits induced and deep embedded in the collective consciousness. In other words, it is about "stories" or "stories" that serve as a foundation for understanding existence and for understanding (explaining) the surrounding world. The most important metanarrative typology is the religious one, defining the depth picture of reality, one shared, without exception, by all members of several social groups. A second typology is the Enlightenment one, narrating the idea of progress (especially technological-scientific), the only way that would guarantee emancipation from the specter of inanity, illiteracy, and poverty. A further metanarrative, the third, is the Marxist idea of social emancipation through class struggle, and in opposition to this, another refers to the idea of militant patriotism, with metanarrative (mobilizing) consequences in the idea of supremacy – gender, ethnicity, nation, race and religion. The second meaning consists in the exclusionary function that any type of metanarrative exercises as a tool of control, manipulation and, importantly, domination. In all types of meta-narratives – religious or progressive or Marxist emancipation – the idea of supremacy is present and, therefore, of the exclusion of all those who do not enter as characters in the dominant narrative for various reasons: female sex, black race, non-Christian religion, belonging to social classes other than the proletariat, the Jewish community, sexual minorities, etc. And the third meaning consists in the confirmation of the establishment of the postmodern type of mentality, whose fundamental characteristic is characterized by Lyotard as a distrust of metanarratives ("the scarecrow") with the meaning of suppressing any presence and metanarrative functions. In contrast to modernist metanarratives in their capacity as grand dominant narratives, in postmodernity emerges a strong interest in small narratives (daily life, particular habits, habits, subjectivity and many other particular details of human existence) with the censored dominant function.

and, implicitly, the superiority of scriptural culture (of the Book) over anonymous and oral cultures, the superiority of the urban industrialized society over artisanal societies (rural, nomadic or peoples of nature), master and slave (Hegel) and capitalist and proletarian (Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin), and finally the legitimacy of the class struggle to establish the socialist Utopia (in reality, a war between Kolima and Auschwitz, between the GULAG and the Third Reich), the superiority of the democratic and developed West over the totalitarian East (Soviet, Islamic, Maoist, etc.), so that everything is exponentially surpassing both the fantasy of Jonathan Swift and that of Zamiatin and Orwell combined.

Or, if the action of any culture can be formulated as a faithful emulation (symbolically mediated through the replication procedure in the plane of the artistic imaginary) of the totality of evolutions in the plane of social existence, then it can also be postulated that musical thought and practice as structure and substance will contain the totality of metanarrative distortions listed above. The evidence of this syllogism is implacable, all the more so because the science and discipline called music history presents itself as a demonstration.

It is understandable that after two world conflagrations accompanied by several local and regional military conflicts, the totalizing energy of the mentality and ideology of modernist substance showed its exhaustion and thus its definitive failure. Culturally, Theodor Adorno's questioning whether there is still art after Auschwitz is relevant. Hence the emergence of Postmodernity as a historical stage and Postmodernism as an ideology and practice in the cultural plane: no trust in any ideologue with metanarrative value, no credibility in mobilizing and integralist conceptions, only fragmentism and, in the end, only the recovery of all "victims", of all those wronged and excluded by the coercion and totalitarianism of the modernist period. Maybe even more. Namely, in postmodernity, as a technical form of recovery, the recycling procedure is initiated, which consists of the redesign of all "corrections" over the past so unfair and so lopsided. In other words, towards the postmodern actuality, no other past could lead than one that already contained its conceptual shipwreck and thus proclaiming the coming of the future era of generalized cultural common sense, and as a historical period of an identity egalitarianism on the horizontal of the present, but also on the historical vertical.

Deformations can be considered to be new and new diseases of childhood or diseases of maturation in terms of social existence, but only by overcoming them (a painful and equally bloody one) can the evolution towards more and more advanced states of identity and social balances occur, towards an increasingly dynamic interaction on a global level, and towards an egalitarianism of the erasure of differences, whatever and whatever the negative effects of such ideology and politics, respectively. In conclusion, the vector of evolution is oriented towards a progressive and increasingly intense denial and erasure of any intention and metanarrative structure.

There remain, however, two problems that continue to work unabated. Two types of distortions currently exist as constants in the plane of historical representation (historiography) and equally in the plane of the formation of these representations (pedagogy). The first refers to the impossibility of representing the historical past rather than as one distorted by its metanarrative substance as it was.

Recovery by recycling only causes the production of forms emptied of content and thus with the causal links suspended, obturated, or even destroyed. The second problem consists in the fact that the educational field preserves all these deformations, inheriting them from the pool of historiography and, implicitly, through the collective memory, but already in its own, particular and specific form. Thus, it is, on the one hand, about extrinsic deformations, that is, belonging to the objective process of social evolution, and, on the other hand, about intrinsic deformations, practiced in the didactic plan by its particular educational method.

## **2. The first antinomy, methodological: about the conflict between history and pedagogy**

The desynchronization is obvious – a fragmented documentary – historiography, the only one that takes the place of factual and eventful history, and the science of the formation of the human individual, as conceived by the Jesuits, the authors of the modern conception of pedagogy as a science of education. Even with an additional specification – the etymology of the word *historia* (old Greek) – research or knowledge acquired through research in opposition to the method of education oriented towards the social incorporation of the human individual. The fault lies between the phenomenon of progressive transformation (evolutionary, Enlightenment idea, but also with Darwinist-Marxist, utopian effects) and the method of formation, a gradual one conceived as a movement from simple to complex and, simultaneously, from concrete to abstract. Two methods of representation are not even contiguous and without intersecting points: a. a type of knowledge vitiated by an intrinsic fragmentation and another, however, desynchronized, by a graded accumulation.

The major problem of learning consists in the intrinsic quality of a deformation proper to the process of assimilation and formation of representations and skills, which positions the substance of knowledge of a phenomenon or object in a strict dependence on the specifics of the method used rather than on the substance and structure of the objective phenomenon ( in the given historical case) studied by learning. The material to be assimilated is portioned and served for assimilation under controlled conditions and in progressively larger doses. There will always be a deformation due to the specificity of the understandings (the content of the definitions). This distortion is characteristic of the entire field of knowledge – especially in humanistic fields such as philosophy, historiography, literature, poetry, painting, etc. – by a necessary mediation, given the obligation to report to a reference.

However this desynchronization manifests itself with a particular power in the field of musical formation, and this is primarily because music does not have strictly musical references in objective reality. It is about a method of thinking and representing reality (psychic or natural) that is non-notional (non-language), non-objective (invisible), and non-referential (as opposed to notional or visual-iconic language). And then, in the case of music, a whole set of deformations is articulated, (a) either by the ontological status of a sound phenomenon, (b) or by the "delay" (methodological a) of music compared to other fields of art and knowledge, (c) either by "obedience" towards the other fields of science (multiple borrowings –

history, psychology, sociology, acoustics, philosophy, aesthetics, etc.), (d) or by an advanced abstraction of the musical "language", for example, against the arts of the word – literature, poetry, dramaturgy, or of the image – painting, sculpture, architecture, and (e) either by the specific method – sound-acoustic – of mediation between the reference and the receiving consciousness. In visible opposition to photography and cinematography, two arts born from technology and still evolving, through scientific-technological progress.

Given this desynchronization, it is assumed that the process of forming the human individual consists of a gradual approach, with the role of accommodation, to the real state of things: learning a certain cognitive behavior, acceptances, conventions, procedures, definitions, and rules. But a legitimate doubt remains: what is learned in this way and what assimilation is involved? Is the objective reality or rather the group consensus of conduct, understandings, conventions, and procedures appropriate? The very method of teaching and appropriation imposes itself as an obvious metanarrative filter in itself, which just as exerts its coercion in terms of the contents with which it operates to form.

At the same time, both – both history and pedagogy – work with the exclusive focus on the mediation procedure and the modeling technique. And thus, both – both history and pedagogy – risk being left out. And if in the case of social, military, or political developments, as facts of group existence, history (as a scientific description, i.e. critically documented and with legitimized references) can be understood as a concatenation of events organized as an evolutionary string, then how to be understandable this history of art in general, but especially of music in particular? What kind of progression (especially an evolutionary one) can we talk about if we could add a mass by Machaut, Josquin, Palestrina, Bach and Beethoven, a symphony by Haydn, Mahler and Shostakovich, a sonata by Domenico Scarlatti, Beethoven, Brahms, Scriabin and Prokofiev, or the works of Porpora, Mozart, Meyerbeer, Richard Strauss and John Adams?

In the end, there are also two common criteria of these two disciplines divergent in orientation: training and actuality. If the history of music is a technique and science that deals with the editing (and re-editing) of the past as a function of current cognitive and axiological problems, then pedagogy deals with the editing (and re-editing) of the human individual himself as a function of the problems of social assimilation into the mentality, ideology, and the imaginary of the present. Actuality represents the absolute referential "anchor" – the signifier, while the editing process is articulated in its (equally absolute) signified quality.

### **3. The second antinomy, systematic: two antipoles – historiography and musical forms**

Among all the subjects of the music curriculum, only one stands out as an obvious alterity concerning the history of music – musical forms. As an object of study, these two disciplines are located on both sides of a dividing "border". On the one hand, historiography with its main reference – the document and the objective information. On the other side are musical forms, with their only reference – musical composition. On the one hand, is the descriptive and interpretable concreteness of

the real fact, on the other – the epistemological "ghost"<sup>38</sup> of reference to an equally logical and structural invariant<sup>39</sup>.

The understanding of this antinomy is reinforced by several antinomic relations that define the structure of the conceptual field of musical thought. This polarization becomes all the more obvious as, except the Interpretation and (Psycho)-Pedagogy<sup>40</sup> specializations, the composition and musicology specializations operate (1) only with notation – musical in the first case and notional in the second – and (2) through connotative (composers) and denotative (musicologists) procedures. In other words, composers write down and thus structurally and procedurally organize their sonic intuitions (rarely leaving instructions regarding the compositional process and the "content" of the works), while musicologists are responsible for assimilation (as complete as possible – diversified, essentialized and deep) of musical works in the multitude of aspects they involve – structural, aesthetic, psychological, sociological, philosophical, etc.

From the entire set of so-called musical disciplines, which in reality are part of the curriculum of the composition discipline – the history of music (rather, the systematics of stylistic typologies), harmony, counterpoint, forms, and orchestration<sup>41</sup> – these two disciplines – the history of music and forms – are subject to the most strong didactic distortions, unlike the practically applied character of the other three (harmony, counterpoint, and orchestration). The history of music presents itself as an endless succession of historical periods, while the forms hover in the suspension of definitions that are as diverse as they are confusing.

In the first case, the meaning of the phrase history of music is a double one, because for future composers this discipline presents itself as a series of models intended for emulation, while for musicologists the meaning of the discipline could be summed up in the development of the skill of value assessment, relying on

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<sup>38</sup> An appropriate example of a fantasmatic formulation is the following (chained) definition of musical form: "Musical form is an abstract notion that reflects, in a broad sense, a finite entity realized on the impulse of artistic creation; the realization of the creative process is the musical score, and the sonic realization of the score is its interpretation on stage. In continuation of this statement, form represents the way of ordering sound events in time, based on some patterns. From the paradigm of musical form, the notions of form-pattern and form-realization are not missing.", after which follows, in the same explanatory style: "Under the aspect of artistic creation, musical form is the structure of a composition in terms of a single unit of movement, as a result of the association of musical ideas into a whole, in which the ideas acquire specific functions in relation to the own principle of composition of the form"; in: Adrian Borza, *Musical forms and analyzes* (Multimedia course), Chapter II, 2011. The definitions can be found on the Internet at: <http://www.formesianalyze.com/genforma/gen-forma.html?i=1>

<sup>39</sup> Here a distinction is needed in two senses between structure as form and structure as sound organization. In the first case, it is about the organization of a framework for the articulation of large functional segments, and in the second, the morphological structuring of the sound material itself. Also, in terms of morphological structuring, the difference must be made between the type of sound organization (subformal) and the morphological elements structuring the sound process (cell-figure, motif, phrase, with the specification of subperiodic level) These understandings really work in the form of the form-content relationship, as a clarification of Hanslick's statement that "the content of music is the sounds". The binomial, however, should be reformulated as form-material, since the systems of sound organization – the level of sub-formal organization – serve as material for typologies of logical organization in various forms of consequence. "

<sup>40</sup> In opposition to the majors of composition and musicology, both in their hermeneutic essence - scripturally mediated, interpretation and music pedagogy can be considered as two practical ("artisanal") disciplines and closely causally linked - pedagogy as a science of learning, a stage universally valid for all majors, and the interpretation as a practical realization – sound-acoustic and equally conceptual-expressive – of a musical work.

<sup>41</sup> The string of these titles obviously refers to disciplines oriented towards the training of composers. And it is equally obvious that the disciplines, in their quality of courses formulated in an articulated way, intended for the training of musicologists – acoustics (musical sound), systems of sound organization (syntactic and tonal), genres, styles, as well as the canons of European music.

systematic criteria ( the scheme of the historical trajectory of European music) and comparative (hierarchization of musical works in several levels of value relevance)<sup>42</sup>.

In the case of musical forms, things are no different. The generative approach (composers) is based on the principle of stylistic modeling (emulation), while the hermeneutic approach (musicology) has as its reference both a systematic criterion (assimilation of the hierarchical-typological conceptual ensemble) and the procedure called a scenario of conceptual modeling of the musical works subject to the procedure analytical. In addition to the structure-oriented evaluative procedure, musicology also has a second strand – of critical evaluation in terms of value. By the documentary content of its object (but also of the method of critical approach to the sources), the discipline of music history presents its didactic distortions in a much more visible and thus easier to conceptualize way.

#### **4. The history of music between affirmed "paternity" and excluded "maternity"**

A first and thus fundamental deformation of historical-social substance arises from the dual physiological and hence mental-imaginary constitution of the human being. And it is not only about the possession or absence of the human reproductive system, but about psycho-somatics and, in general, about the male and female imaginary. They are two deep structures of human nature with archetypal value, as demonstrated by Gilbert Durand in his famous writing *The Anthropological Structures of the Imaginary*<sup>43</sup>. But both music, through its reference to masterpieces, and the history of music were written by men. And the music, and the history. The phrase music history refers to a male history of music. Moreover, in certain aspects not necessarily visible at first glance, it is about a patriarchal history of music. In this case, both the authorial aspect and the selection, organization, and presentation of the content belonged to the paternal component. This model imposed itself as a referential one with absolute value: in terms of cultural history, music composition was the field (almost) exclusively defined and dominated by men<sup>44</sup>.

It was only in the last century, and especially in the postmodernity of the last three decades, that the differentiation was formulated based on the two types of imaginary and, simultaneously, based on the physiological differentiation, which was slowed down by the English term gender<sup>45</sup>. Applied to the history of European music, this term revealed the (almost clandestine) existence of a parallel and in a certain sense alternative musical culture: musical compositions made in terms of the

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<sup>42</sup> The musicological approach is all the more exciting, since the musical works of the compositional tradition, without any exception, are faithful emulations of that past – the specific background of representing sensitivity and imagination, the inclusion in the structuring of the musical material of the very order and social hierarchy or of gender relations, the orientation and focus of musical compositions on a certain social segment of the receiving public, etc.

<sup>43</sup> Gilbert Durand, *Structurile antropologice ale imaginarului* [Anthropological structures of the imaginary], București: Univers enciclopedic, 1998

<sup>44</sup> With particular power of relevance, this situation presented itself in the case of the African-American jazz performer Bessie Smith, as presented by the American musicologist Susan McClary in her monograph entitled *Conventional wisdom: The Content of Musical Form*, University of California Press, 2001, chapter entitled *Thinking Blue*. The fate of the famous singer is defined by a double stigmatization: a. the field of jazz musical practice was dominated by men (discrimination against women) and b. racial minorities (especially the African-American) were also subject to segregation.

<sup>45</sup> In this sense, the monograph of the American musicologist Marcia J. Citron entitled *Gender and the Musical Canon*, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993, is referential.

feminine imaginary. The historical genealogy suddenly turned out to be no less consistent, even if to assert themselves in a consensual male field, the female composers had to assume a male posture, that is, social, and financial independence, above all, independence of thought regarding one's creative conception, one elevated to the power of creative will: Abbess von Bingen, Clara Schumann Wieck (wife of Robert Schumann), Lili Boulanger, Nadejda Rimaskaia-Korsakova (wife of Nikolai A. Rimski-Korsakov), Louise Farrenc, Ethel Smyth, Alma Mahler (wife of Gustav Mahler), Francesca Caccini (daughter of Giulio Caccini), Fanny Mendelssohn (sister of Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy), Cécile Chaminade, Germaine Tailleferre, Imogen Holst (daughter of Gustav Holst) etc..

In such a situation, however, the logic of substitution worked, because any artistic activity – the production of spiritual goods – assumed the bet on intuition as the source of creation, which in turn is a generative process. So that both – the irrationality of intuition and creative generativity – presented themselves as properties of the feminine imaginary, and not masculine. This substitution worked in both directions: a. men assumed the attributes of the feminine imaginary, while to assert themselves in the male-dominated space, women had to assume the attributes of the male imaginary.

However, as a source of inspiration for male composers, the images of femininity, as men represented them, served, not least. And just as the word genius does not have a feminine form, neither does the word muse have a masculine form. The image of the woman and the entire affective imagination linked to the face of the beloved served as an extremely fertile source of inspiration: the vocal cycle *Wesendonck Lieder* and the musical drama *Tristan und Isolde* (Mathilde Wesendonck) by Wagner, the vocal cycle *Frauenliebe und Leben*, the variations *A.B.E.G.G.* (dedicated to Pauline von Abegg), and the piece *Chiarina* (the musical face of Clara Schumann, from the piano cycle *Carnival*, op. 9) by Schumann, also Piano Sonata No. 2 by Brahms (dedicated to Clara Schumann), the vocal cycle *Die Schöne Müllerin* by Schubert, Piano Sonata op. 27, no. 2 (*Mondlicht*, dedicated to Julie “Giulietta” Guicciardi) and the vocal cycle *An die Ferne Geliebte* (To the distant lover), op. 98, Berlioz's Symphony *Fantastic* (the face of the beloved – British actress Harriet Smithson), as were Rebecca Schroetter for Haydn (three trios No. 38, 39, and 40), Baroness von Mekk for Tchaikovsky, Cosima Liszt (his daughter Franz Liszt, with the first husband, the conductor Hans von Bülow, and with the second – Richard Wagner), violinist Stefy Geyer (Violin Concerto No. 1 and Two Portraits, op. 5), Márta Ziegler, first wife (No. 1, Quarrel, from the cycle *Három burleszk*) or Edith (Ditta) Pásztory, second wife (interpretation of Sonata for two pianos and percussion), for Bartók, singer and composer Elsa Respighi, wife of Ottorino Respighi, violinist and composer Claire Delbos, first wife, and pianist and composer Yvonne Loriod-Messiaen, Olivier Messiaen's second wife.

Sisters, daughters, wives, lovers, muses, and pupils of male musicians, women, and, in general, the female imaginary, could only position itself as a niche, a cultural space complementary to the main one occupied by brothers, husbands, fathers, and their male lovers. In terms of identity, this deformation determined multiple processes of interference of the two structures of the imaginary – feminine and masculine, none of them being realized in its complete form and thus its own.

The choice of subjects, the compositional decisions of logical, narrative, and, in general, discursive substance, the organization of the musical material and the loading in an expressive sense, and the strategies for differentiating the psycho-affective typologies achieved through sonority, were representative of the male mentality, but of whose logic and will were heavily infused by the imperative of expressivism and thus by specifically feminine sensibility and irrationality. Imagining two musical cultures, or one, but this time integrated and balanced, represents a fatally utopian project. The postmodern recovery of the female figure and the female imaginary as an artistic imaginary can in no way serve to "correct" this deformation that has been active for centuries.

## **5. History of music: one or more? Confusions with didactic deformations**

Through an equally scientific and didactic consensus (both institutional), the history of the music discipline has as its object of study the art<sup>46</sup> of the European compositional tradition. That is, it is about a series of musical works of absolute value exemplary (canonical for European culture), whose authors are people who, by their vocational endowment, end up mastering the composition technique at a higher level of performance, to formulate a string of current contents for the collective consciousness whose representatives turn out to be<sup>47</sup>. At the same time, the phrase history of music also has the form of musical literature, an oxymoron, where the word literature could only be used applied to the book form of a score since in no other sense applied to the art of music does literature find logical legitimacy, but rather it confuses: are we talking about memoirs, letters, treatises, biographies romanticized or actually novels, short stories or plays? What could and, at the same time, what should the discipline of music history mean? The scholastic form boils down to at most three constituents:

**a.** Description of a chain of historical periods (from Antiquity to the third modernism of the 20th century<sup>48</sup>), with a possible internal phasing of each temporal segment according to either the significant political-military events (the Hundred Years War), an invention technological (Guttenberg's type, 1448), or a simple succession of generations of artist-musicians (three+1 generations of romantic composers, three generations of Viennese classicists, at least four generations of modernist composers): For example, the Musical Renaissance (1420-1600) is staged in at least three "steps" and, consists of a gradual geographical displacement from the territory of the duchy of Burgundy (Franco-Flemish area, Burgundian School – Dufay and Binshois), a second stage, Josquin des Prez and Ockeghem (thus succeeding five generations of Franco-Flemish composers, ending with Orlando di Lasso), all culminating in a third – a firm anchor in papal Italy – the stage of the

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<sup>46</sup> The Latin term *ars*, however, has the connotation of skill. In exactly the same sense as the Greek term *technē*, and without any reference to any aesthetic constituent. *Mousikē technē* meant nothing more than the skill of producing articulate sonority. It is well known that among the ancient Greeks art was sub-positioned to craft on the grounds that it is a copy of a copy.

<sup>47</sup> Despite the ambiguity that this wording displays, the clarification is a simple one if the case of Händel is approached – unlike Bach, a cosmopolitan composer with allegiances distributed between the country of origin (Germany) and the country of destination (Great Britain). In both cases, both in Hamburg and in London, the composer acted on the own terms of the community of residence.

<sup>48</sup> This historical "macrostructure" also includes non-compositional periods such as Antiquity (Greece, China, India), but also approximately the first five centuries of the Middle Ages (up to the 10th century).



Counter-Reformation (starting in 1517 – Luther's Reformation) and the creation of Palestrina. Monteverdi's creation has a transitional function between Renaissance and Baroque, although, by the title of his famous book, Manfred Bukofzer is of a different opinion – *Music in the Baroque Era: from Monteverdi to Bach* (1947).

The problem of the inner phasing of a historical period is accompanied by the problem of differentiation between the actual historical stages. For example, the Renaissance has at least five beginnings: 1420 – the insertion of the third and sixth intervals into contrapuntal writing, 1492 – the invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg, 1517 – the fall of Constantinople and the end of the Hundred Years War, as well as 1492 – the discovery of the World We by Columbus – a fan-like beginning of a long century – the 16th –, which absorbs the second half of the 15th century, but also the first half of the 17th century<sup>49</sup>.

**b.** The biographical study of a small group of representative composers for each historical period (usually in a more or less summary form): In turn, the biographies are also staged following various criteria: geographically, of travels and works written in various urban locations – Bach and Händel, Liszt and Wagner, or that of creation, as conceived by Wilhelm von Lenz in the volume entitled *Beethoven et ses trois styles* (1855), in a biological (the three ages)-stylistic key. Likewise, it could be about Schönberg's five styles and Stravinsky's three styles<sup>50</sup>. In opposition to both, whose conception can be called a continuous and tireless work in progress, comes Wagner's creation, which in terms of the Bayreuth canon, begins with Feuerbach's pantheism (*The Flying Dutchman*), continues with Schopenhauer's irrationalism (*Tristan and Isolde*) and concludes (or closes) his creation with the same Feuerbach, but strongly seasoned with Christian ideology (*Parsifal*).

**c.** And consequently, the nomenclature of the genres specific to the studied period is presented in an essentialized form: organum, hoquet or hochetus (technique and not genre), but also the mass and motet for the Middle Ages, the same masses and motets plus madrigal for the Renaissance, the suite instrumental, fugue, and sonata, cantata, concerto grosso, and opera-seria for Baroque, sonata, quartet, instrumental concerto, and symphony for Viennese Classicism, or symphonic poem, paraphrase, and character variations, along with the lied cycle and musical drama for Romanticism.

But what about the totality of the historical repertoires, which given this hyper-selectivity and consequently an absurd superficiality, remain completely unexplored? In didactic terms, the battle of formative-informative opposites is resolved in favor of non-assuming and non-engagement of informative substance. But already here another question arises related to the degrees of focus on a certain subject, the detailed study of which could provide much more in terms of training than simple and fleeting information about everything and everything. At least, at all three levels of higher education – undergraduate, master's, and doctoral. In this context, two cycles of lectures by the Russian musicologist Roman Nasonov (b. 1971, lecturer at the History of Music Department of the Moscow State

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<sup>49</sup> In opposition, we can talk about the short century – about seven decades –, which is the 20th, because already towards the end of the 1970s, something completely different from what it had been before - postmodernity - begins.

<sup>50</sup> Both composers are the „characters” of a famous writing by Theodor Adorno entitled *Philosophie der Neuen Musik* (1949), where the first part is dedicated to Schönberg – *Schönberg und der Fortschritt*, and to Stravinsky the second part – *Stravinsky und die Restauration*.

Conservatory) are quite revealing (and equally exemplary and representative): 27 conferences entitled *The liturgical year together with Bach* and *15 lectures Mozart's works*<sup>51</sup>.

However, apart from the irrelevance of the phrase musical literature (?), the other – the history of music – can be deciphered in a different way than just as the concatenation of (a) historical stages, (b) staged biographies of representative musicians, and (c) nomenclatures of genres. A third meaning (after musical literature and music history) could be the evolution of musical thought because, in reality, it is specifically about historical models of thought through organized sound matter. Only represented in this way, musical compositions as aesthetic objects reveal three additional, but fundamental, meanings of greater depth and relevance in equal measure:

1. the existential meaning on an individual level, because music is composed by an individual, and the psychological component is a determining one regarding mutations in the plane of musical thought (contents and expression),
2. the existential meaning in the social plane, because the music that the individual composes responds to a social command and represents an (artistic) replica of the group consciousness, and
3. the phenomenological meaning in both its meanings – both in the plane of the collective imaginary (faithful replica of the imaginary contents – the archetypes), and in the actual phenomenological plane as acoustic-discursive and, finally, "aesthetic"- "artistic" phenomena.

Studied as the history of musical thought, the history of music ends up being reformulated taking as references the deep structures that are the systems of sound organization<sup>52</sup>. This causes the understanding of evolution as a quotient of mutations in the plan of collective existence to provide a sum of answers, unlike the informative method regarding only historical stages, biographies, and masterpieces (as standardized typologies of genres).

Thus, for example, the Christian theocratic social organization – monotheistic – suits the monodic sound organization (Gregorian tradition), and with the institutional affirmation and the achievement of a higher level in the hierarchy, the mutation towards multiple monodies takes place – contrapuntal polyphony. Likewise, the homophonic and, implicitly, tonal-functional sound organization is formulated within the aristocratic social organization – the absolutist monarchy (Louis XIV period, the dancer-king and the Sun-king) –, the function of the Tonic

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<sup>51</sup> Among this conferencies about the cantatas of the Bachian cycle, we can mention titles such as *Early Cantatas and the Traditions of German Spiritual Music of the 17th Century* (Cantata BWV No. 4, Christ lag in Todes Banden, lecture No. 2), *Cantatas on the poems of Salomon Franck* (cantatas 12 and 21, lecture No. 4), *The unusual cantatas BWV 174 and 51*, or the turning point in Bach's work (the change of librettists – Birkmann is replaced by Picander, lecture No. 10), *At the end of the church years: Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme* (lecture No. 11), or two lectures entitled *Enigmas of Bach's magnificats* (BWV 243, Bach's Latin magnificat, lectures Nos. 16 and 17). The Mozartian lecture series excels with titles such as "*The Marriage of Figaro*". *Carnival Without Masks: Demons of Jealousy* and "*The Marriage of Figaro*". *Carnival Without Masks: Angels of Love* (Lectures No. 4 and 5), *The Harlot Punished, or "Don Giovanni"*. *The Moral Police and the Punished Harlot or "Don Giovanni"*. *Court of the Superior Court* (Lectures No. 6 and 7), "*Clemenza di Tito*". *Monarchic-monastic and "Clemenza di Tito"*. *Treason* (lectures No. 10 and 11). Both cycles are posted on the Internet and can be viewed at: <https://magisteria.ru/autor/roman-nasonov> (but only in Russian).

<sup>52</sup> Useful in an informative sense are the writings of Ștefan Niculescu: *Phenomenological analysis of the fundamental types of sound phenomena and their relationships with heterophony*, in: *Studies of musicology*, Bucharest: Musical Publishing House of the Composers Union, 1972, vol. VIII; *Eterofonia*, and *A theory of musical syntax*, both in: *Reflections on music*, Bucharest, Musical Publishing House, 1980

as the absolute hegemon in the tonal hierarchy representing a faithful replica of the social hierarchy. For its part, atonalism is the technical-artistic replica of the processes of progressive social atomization, increasingly pronounced, and which in the end, as a defense reaction (or consolidation of social cohesion), causes the emergence of totalitarian regimes.

This being the case with the group of syntactic organization systems, their evolution is consubstantial with the evolution of the group of tonal organization systems. Thus, syntactic monodic and polyphonic (severe, from Machaut to Palestrina) organizations are "backed" by the modal tonal organization (Middle Ages and Renaissance), while the tonal-functional organization corroborates the free polyphonic (Bach) and homophonic (by Domenico Scarlatti and Bach to Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven). The atonal tonal organization (Schönberg, the atonal, dodecaphonic, and serial subdivisions) brings back the counterpoint technique so that later, under the same atonal auspices, ultraserial, stochastic, aleatoric, micropolyphonic or sonoristic conceptions are formulated (the avant-gardes of the 1950s). Finished musical compositions are only late and punctual formalizations of deep processes at the level of conceptions of the organization of sound matter.

In this framework – the evolution of sound organization systems – complementary conceptualizations can also be admitted, such as, for example, the historical process of the invention of musical sound: pitch (Guido Aretino), duration (medieval mensural theory), intensity (from antiphony church music at the Mannheim School) and timbre (post-romantic, symbolist-impressionist music, and up to the establishment of timbre and writing as determining factors in the articulation of form and sound process – from klangfarben to Polish sonorystyka).

A completely different problem, one of connection to actuality, is raised by a title such as *The End of the Composers' Age*, belonging to the Russian composer Vladimir Martînov<sup>53</sup>. because at first it seems to be a reply to ideas such as the *death of God* (Friedrich Nietzsche), *the death of the author* (Roland Barthes, essay *The Death of the Author*, 1967), *the end or death of art*<sup>54</sup> (Martin Heidegger, *The Origin of the Work of Art*, 1950, and Arthur Danto, *After the End of Art*, 1997), the death of manual writing and the disappearance of book reading (Nicholas Negroponte), the end of history (Francis Fukuyama), the end of modernity (Gianni Vattimo, *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Postmodern Culture*, 1992) and here is the death of the composer (Vladimir Martînov), to which Leonard B. Meyer's idea of leaving stylistic thinking and abandoning gender criteria could be attached, but also in general, leaving humanism - posthumanism as an escape or even as an exit from the idea of anthropocentrism (Nietzsche, Foucault, Sloterdijk, or Katherine Hayles) as a privileged and thus metanarrative concept.

Now, current culture is a synthetic sum of all these endings, deaths, and

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<sup>53</sup> Vladimir Martînov, *Конец времени композиторов* [The end of the composers' age], Moskva: Классика XXI, 2019

<sup>54</sup> Susan Sontag's observation is important: "What we have before us is not the death of art, but a transformation of the function of art. Art, which was born in human society as a magical-religious act and evolved into a technique of painting and commenting on secular reality, has in our time assumed a new function - neither religious, nor serving a secularized religious function, nor simply secular and profane (a notion that disappears with its opposite, the "religious" or "sacred"). Art today is a new kind of tool, a tool for altering consciousness and organizing new modes of sensibility. And the means to practice art have expanded radically", in: Susan Sontag, *Against interpretation*, Bucharest: Vellant, 2016, p. 341.

abandonments, all contained in a single periodizing concept which is postmodernity<sup>55</sup>, and to which is added, finally, the recovery and positioning in synchrony of all era's previous histories (the case of sacred minimalism in the creation of Arvo Pärt and Sofia Gubaidullina, or equally the case of Schnittke's polystylism). This is the culture in which both the professors who teach music history and the students who take the course exist in equal measure. Thus, the paradox (if not the grotesque) of absolute desynchronization with actuality is not only detectable as one of the characteristics of contemporaneity but dominates as an absolute determinant of both the cultural context and especially the curricular situation. Postmodernity thus marks both the end of a cultural cycle and the definitive exit from the (almost idiosyncratic) replication of periods called, both erroneously and abusively, stylistic<sup>56</sup>.

And then, the scholastic desynchronization between the curricular contents and the topical contents could also be explained by the option for the simplest way, equally doctrinal-academic and anachronistic-traditionalist, but one in both cases dogmatic, of superficial information, which pushes this state of affairs towards amateurism through the skillful refusal itself camouflaged for administrative reasons or, even more simply, motivating an increasingly obvious deprofessionalization through the dramatic decrease in the level of pre-university training of students. In such a case, courses focused on a single genre (for example, the evolution of the motet and, implicitly, of motet-type writing), on a single technique (the evolution of counterpoint), or even on a single work as an expression of a whole become impossible historical-stylistic pool (the opera *Indes galante* by Rameau, the musical drama *Tristan and Isolde* by Wagner, the two operatic trilogies by Verdi, or the importance of Meyerbeer's creation in French operatic culture), with very strictly oriented thematizations such as the Specificity of piano writing in his creation Chopin, Schumann, Liszt and Brahms, Particular realizations of the concept of "orchestral polyphony" in symphonic works (from Beethoven to Bruckner, from Schönberg to Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Stravinsky and Britten, from Ligeti to Rihm), The role of the vocal constituent in the conceptions of orchestral substance (Schubert-Mahler genealogy), The "floating" role of contrapuntal technique in post-

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<sup>55</sup> In the study of postmodernity as a social-historical phenomenon, Jean-François Lyotard's volume – *The postmodern condition* (Cluj-Napoca: Idea, 2003) is useful, although the original title is somewhat longer – *La condition postmoderne: rapport sur le savoir* (1979). As a cultural phenomenon, postmodernity is analyzed in detail by the philosopher Fredric Jameson in his no less famous writing *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991). Regarding music in postmodernity, without daring to call it postmodern music, two sources are relevant: 1. Jean-François Lyotard, *Musique et postmodernité*, in: *Surfaces* magazine, Vol. VI. 203 (v.1.OF – 27/11/1996) and 2. Béatrice Ramaut-Chevassus, *Musique et postmodernité*, Paris, PUF, 1998.

<sup>56</sup> As a cultural phenomenon, postmodernity rather adopts the identity of a symptom, without claiming an equally precise and firm syntagmatic status, similar to that of modernism, which it rejects as a metanarrative entity. This symptomatology fully justifies its label – postmodernity –, by virtue of the coexistence of several tendencies that apparently exclude each other, but without the slightest intention of adopting the position of hegemon. Thus, "In the 2022 book *Status and Culture*, writer W. David Marx posits that contemporary culture is defined by 'Neomania', or our obsession with the new, which has led to what could be described as a 'weightless' age, largely devoid of historical connotation, fixated only on recent culture. [...] The late English writer and cultural/political theorist Mark Fisher signaled a «slow cancellation of the future» which predicted this malaise, as an inevitable horizon line for the imagination, which we see in constant remakes and IP-rehashing. This finds us stuck between Fisher's pal, the writer Simon Reynolds, and his concept of 'Retromania', or being beholden to the values and aesthetics of the rose-tinted glory days, and Neomania's own morbidity, which carries a whiff of corporate nihilism and a sense that we may not have much time left.", the quote is taken from the Internet at: <https://herbsundays.substack.com/p/the-death-of-canon-and-the-remaking>.

baroque music (Classicism, Romanticism, Modernism) and equally Recycling of contrapuntal technique in the dodecaphonic and serial conception, Italian opera genealogy during the 19th century Romantic century: conceptual transformations and evolutions (Bellini-Donizetti-Rossini + Verdi + Mascagni-Leoncavallo-Puccini) or, in the case of the creation of some universalist composers (in terms of the genres addressed) such as Bach (From Luther to Spitta), Handel (From Hamburg to London: The Equation of Cosmopolitan Genius), Haydn (The Problem of Late Style: From Vienna to London), Mozart (The Four “Critics” of Musical Judgment), Tchaikovsky (From Shakespeare to Pushkin and Beyond), Brahms (From Hamburg to Vienna: on the virtues of neoclassical Lutheranism in a Catholic country), – lectures focused on instrumental and vocal chamber, concert, and symphonic creation.

Moreover, the totality of the conceptual constituents of the science of the history of music is built up in as many research directions, starting from the most general problematizations regarding a single historical period, national school, group or artistic personality, and going in the direction of differentiation following concepts such as style, genre, forms, systems of sound organization, notation, orchestration, harmony, counterpoint, etc.

As an example here, already known texts with an obvious formative orientation can serve as *A History of Western Music* by Peter Burkholder and Donald Grout and *A Concise History of Western Music* by Paul Griffiths, *The Oxford History of Western Music* by Richard Taruskin and the monumental series *The Cambridge History of Music* (joined by *The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory + Music Criticism + Cambridge History of Music* in two volumes), *Music in Western Civilization* by Craig Wright and Bryan R. Simms, *A History of Musical Style* by Richard L. Crocker, *Romantic Music: A History of Musical Style in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Norton Introduction to Music History) by Leon Plantinga, *Music in the Baroque Era: from Monteverdi to Bach* by Manfred Bukofzer (who even today has not lost his from current affairs), following volumes with a focus on a specific issue – *Medieval Music and the Art of Memory* by Anna Maria Busse Berger, *Greek Reflections on the Nature of Music* by Flora Levin, *Music and Musicians in Ancient Greece* by Warren D. Anderson, *Musical Genius – Evolution and Origins of a Concept and a detailed critique of this text entitled The Apotheosis of Josquin des Prez and Other Mythologies of Musical Genius* by Paula Higgins or *Beethoven and the Construction of genius: Musical Politics in Vienna, 1792 -1803* by Tia DeNora, *Musical Style and Genre: History and Modernity and György Ligeti: Style, Ideas, Poetics* by Marina Lobanova, *Demystifying Scriabin* by Kenneth Smith and *Neo-Mythologism in Music: From Scriabin and Schoenberg to Schnittke and Crumb* by Victoria Adamenko, *Developing variations: Style and Ideology in Western Music* and *Deconstructive Variations: Music and Reason in Western Society* by Rose Rosengard Subotnik, *The End of Composers' Time* by Vladimir Martînov.

## 6. Conclusions

However, it is obvious that the university infrastructure continues to train in a false “universalism”, generality, and thus redundancy, and will neither be able to

form nor financially support specialists (even invited ones) capable of supporting (at least every semester) such courses. Thus, higher musical education gradually descends more and more towards the high school level of superficial information, just as gradually losing the ability to train specialists in the proper sense of the word<sup>57</sup>.

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<sup>57</sup> "Contemporary man tends towards flatness, towards remaining in the flattened existence of everyday life. We exist in the age of tired civilization. Yet our civilization keeps accelerating – and natural, natural processes simply cannot keep up. To appear in the world, a child needs nine months - and that's it! It is not possible faster. And a flower can't grow faster. In other words, anything is possible now, but it will never be the same flower. The acceleration trend contradicts the culture. We can say it more bluntly: civilization is hostile to culture, which is now all the more visible. It does not work in favor of man, but against him. And our problem is to oppose ourselves.", Sofia Gubaidullina – *On the causes of the decline in serious music* (interview); the text is posted on the Internet and can be viewed at: <https://aldanov.livejournal.com/665037.html>