

16. ACHIM STOIA – THE MULTIFARIOUS NATURE OF A PEDAGOGUE. MARGINALIA ON THE SKETCH OF A PORTRAIT

Anca Leahu⁸²

Abstract: *An essential generator of the artistic academic breath in Iași, Achim Stoia played a decisive role in the development and the thriving history of the Iași Conservatory. His activity is proof of a special passion for folk music, as he was a collector of folk songs, which he used mainly in his own compositional creations, of a selfless dedication to managerial activities, of a particular consistency in performing musical life, as he was a tenured conductor of the Iași Philharmonic Orchestra, and of strenuous efforts to research and attempt to create and discover meanings, translating them into a glass window stained with sounds. As to Achim Stoia's creations, he remained faithful to the soundness of the tradition that he acquired in Paris, as he managed to express himself best, most naturally and full of inspiration, in the choral genre, to which he devoted himself from the very beginning of his compositional career; he was clearly very attached to the inexhaustible resources of human voice, to the manner in which it met the needs of his creative sensitivity and to its capability to express folk music so genuinely. In his works, Achim Stoia made use of the simplicity of technical means, yet he expressed a maximum of semantic efficiency.*

Key words: *Achim Stoia, folk music, choral genre, semantics*

An essential generator of the artistic academic breath in Iasi, Achim Stoia⁸³ was born on the fertile soil of Transylvania and adopted permanently as a Moldavian.

He starts his life journey from Mohu, a village in Sibiu county; he attended primary school in his native village and subsequently began his musical studies at the "Andrei Șaguna" Teacher Training School in Sibiu between 1920 and 1927; here he was taught musical theory, solfeggio and choir practice by Timotei Popovici; his teacher further directed him to the Conservatoire of Bucharest, where he will study Musical Pedagogy between 1927 and 1931, acquiring substantial knowledge from his reputed professors: Alfonso Castaldi in harmony, counterpoint and composition, Dimitrie Cuclin in musical forms and esthetics, D. G. Kiriatic and Ioan D. Chirescu in musical theory and solfeggio, Constantin Brăiloiu in the history of music and folklore, George Breazul in pedagogy and musical encyclopedia and Ștefan Popescu in conducting and choir practice for ensembles.

He was a thorough nature, always eager to learn; in search for professional growth, Achim Stoia enrolls for the courses of the Schola Cantorum in Paris between 1934 and 1936, where he studies counterpoint with Paul le Flem, modal polyphony with Charles Koechlin, orchestral conducting with François Rühlmann and Gregorian chant with Edouard Scriotino; in parallel he studied composition at École Normale de Musique of Paris with Paul Dukas, who was after his death replaced by Igor Stravinski.

During the same period, he acts as the conductor of the Romanian Chapel Choir and in this position he consolidates through practice the knowledge he had

⁸² Lecturer PhD, "George Enescu" University of Arts from Iași of Romania, anca_leahu@yahoo.com

⁸³ Achim Stoia was born on July 8th 1910 and died on April 2nd 1973

acquired. He should also be credited for his efforts of introducing Romanian pieces to the repertoire of the choir; Achim Stoia turned the desideratum of promoting Romanian music and composers into a lifelong creed that was manifested during both his Parisian episode and throughout his career at home.

The two years he spent in Europe's musical capital were intense in terms of professional development and represented an opportunity for the young musician both in that it allowed him to experience the ebullient cultural life of Paris and it helped him establish direct contact with important personalities of the world of arts, among them his close friend and colleague Dinu Lipatti, then Paul Constantinescu, as well as George Enescu, of whom he remembers: "I feel great pleasure and honor to mention that I personally met the great Enescu on two occasions. First, Professor Brăiloiu introduced me to him on a visit he paid at the Folklore Archive of the former Society of Romanian Composers [...] The second time was in Paris, my colleague Dinu Lipatti introduced me at the end of a concert when Enescu played the sonatas for piano and violin by Beethoven; on this occasion I was also given the maestro's autograph on a photo of himself⁸⁴".

The thoroughness of his studies in France and the rhythm of the life in the capital will leave an indelible mark on the musician and will reverberate, guiding him along the path of his later career.

After he returns to Romania, he begins his career in **musical pedagogy** and for a while he teaches music in high school. Concurrently he conducts the choir "Carmen", publishes collections of folklore; after a time of hardships on the front during World War II, he takes a position at the Iași Music School, where he teaches musical theory and solfeggio.

He will remain in Iași for the rest of his life and become the rector of this musical institution, on whose development and thriving he had great impact, as he himself confessed in an interview to his disciple, Vasile Spătărelu: "As a rector, I strove to ensure the good organization of the Music School and to create good conditions for the teaching activities. My main concern during this period was to create emulation and a good reputation for our institution, which would thus rise to do honor to the name of the great musician George Enescu that the Iași Musical School bears."⁸⁵

His activity is testimony of a special passion for folk music, as he was a collector of folk songs, which he used mainly in his own compositional creations, of a selfless dedication to managerial activities (as the rector of the Iași Art School⁸⁶ between 1949 and 1950 and then again between 1960 and 1973, or as the President and Secretary of the Romanian Composers and Musicologists' Society between 1949 and 1968 and as the Director of the *Moldova* Philharmonic Orchestra of Iași⁸⁷ between 1950 and 1959), of a

⁸⁴ Achim Stoia – Centenarul nașterii, Editura Artes, Iași, 2010, pag. 278-288

⁸⁵ Ibidem, pag. 288

⁸⁶ It was renamed Conservatorul de Muzică / The Music Conservatoire in 1960, when it was re-established after 10 years.

⁸⁷ The foundation of the "Gavriil Musicescu" State choir within the "Moldova State Philharmonic Orchestra of Iași and it is owed to Achim Stoia and his colleague George Pascu.

particular consistency in performing musical life, as he was a tenured conductor of the Iași Philharmonic Orchestra starting 1948, and of strenuous efforts to research and attempt to create and discover meanings, translating them into a glass window stained with sounds.

The Iași Music School owes Achim Stoia its prestige for the talent and skill with which he managed to search for, find and attract the most valuable graduates of musical schools in the country by offering them the best conditions to develop and refine, thus founding and consolidating the tradition of the Iași compositional school. This is how, between 1962 and 1966, musicians such as Vasile Spătărelu, Sabin Păutza, Anton Zeman, Liliana Gherman, Gabriela Ocneanu, Cornelia and Adrian Diaconu, Iulia Bucescu were attracted and became connected to Iași spiritually and professionally. It is a crucial moment which will completely change the climate in the artistic world of Iasi in the theoretical area, but also in terms of musical creation: the presence of the three composers, Vasile Spătărelu, Sabin Păutza and Anton Zeman, who gradually managed to rejuvenate and innovate the musical life by their compositions and even influenced Achim Stoia, towards the end of his career, to experiment and to express himself in the new innovative style. "They did not initiate a group mentality and neither did they promote *avant garde* at all costs; on the contrary, they held esthetic views of a clearly delineated specificity; they did not try to be extravagant or to officiously imitate famous composers,"⁸⁸ as Melania Boțocan states.

Encouraged and supported by their mentor, the three composers will each develop their own creative personality in different directions, laying the foundations of the Iasi school of composition and establishing a tradition here.

As to Achim Stoia's creations, he remained faithful to the soundness of the tradition that he acquired in Paris, as he managed to express himself best, most naturally and full of inspiration, in the choral genre, in which he contributed an impressive number of pieces remarkable for their sincerity, expressiveness, a **simplicity of technical means** but with a **maximum of semantic effectiveness**.

As Melania Boțocan states about his choral creation, Achim Stoia "built a harmonic language of classical clarity, which he masterfully enveloped in the folk monody. Starting from classical tonal harmony, he advanced farther on the path of modal harmony with the aim of finding harmonic commentaries that suited folk song. He also cautiously approached the madrigal style of composition, being at the same time careful not to depart from the ontic savour of folk music in pieces such as *La fereastra spre livadă / Through the window to the orchard*, *De dor și de veselie / For yearning and for joy*, *Trei cântece de nuntă / Three wedding songs* and the collection *Coruri pe teme populare / Choir music on folk themes*"⁸⁹ collected from the village of Deleni.

⁸⁸ Melania Boțocan – George Pascu – Hronicul muzicii ieșene, pag. 374

⁸⁹ Ibidem, pag. 366

He approached **choral genre** from the very beginning of his career, as he was obviously attached to the inexhaustible resources of the human voice, to the way in which it responded to his creative sensitivity, and to its capacity of genuinely expressing folklore – the essential source from which he drew his artistic vitality; thus, throughout his entire career he will create more than 100 pieces for various timbres and structural components: mixed *a cappella* or accompanied choirs, female, children or male choirs, carols, religious songs. This is how he explained his affinity for the choir genre: “Since my primary musical education came in the form of the choral genre, the main place in my own creation was occupied by choirs.”⁹⁰ Thus, he composed the choirs *Liturghia modală / The modal liturgy*, *13 Colinde pentru cor mixt / Thirteen carols for a mixed choir*, *Şase coruri populare româneşti / Six Romanian folk choir pieces*, *Mândruliţă, noapte bună / Good night to you, my lovely lass*, *Cinci cântece de dragoste / Five love songs*, *10 Coruri pe melodii populare din Moldova / Ten choir pieces on folk melodies from Moldavia*, *Vino maică să mă vezi / Oh, mother come to see me*, *Ce-ţi doresc eu ţie, dulce Românie / What I wish for you, my sweet Romania* and others.

His love for the **folk treasury** was directed mainly towards the area where he was born and partly on his region of adoption – Moldavia; it was materialized in the collections of folk music, of which remarkable are *50 de jocuri din Ardeal / Fifty dance songs from Transylvania*, *234 de melodii şi texte populare / 234 folk melodies and texts*, *2000 de melodii populare / 2000 folk melodies*, *600 de colinde şi cântece de stea / 600 Christmas songs and “songs for the star”*). This love permeates his entire creation and was enhanced by the special meetings with Timotei Popovici, Constantin Brăiloiu and George Breazul. Resorting to folklore comes in the form of quotations, the adaptation of folk songs and the creation of melodies in the spirit of folk music bearing great similarities to the original source. However, he confesses that “the use of the quotation is not satisfactory any longer, I find this somewhat outmoded. What I have been concerned about lately is to find solutions that should bring into my future creations a sound matter in which elements of intonation, rhythm, modal structures can be recognized; all these materials should, however, be used in as personal a manner as possible”⁹¹.

His pieces of **vocal music** displayed a special lyricism and candour, enhanced either by the lyrics of famous poets, or by the faithfulness to the universe of the anonymous authors. Thus came to life creations such as *Mama mea / My mother*, to the lyrics by Carmen Sylva (penname of Queen Elizabeth of Romania), *A venit un lup din crâng / A wolf came from the clearing*, to a poem by George Coşbuc, *Inscripţie / Inscription*, *Inscripţie de bărbat / Inscription by a man*, *Zăpada / Snow* to lyrics by Tudor Arghezi, *Izvorul / The spring* and *Trei feţe / Three faces* to lyrics by Lucian Blaga, as well as *9 cântece*

⁹⁰ Achim Stoia – Centenarul naşterii, pag. 284

⁹¹ Ibidem, pag. 285.

din Ardeal / Nine folk songs from Transylvania, 5 cântece de nuntă / Five wedding songs a.s.o.

The folk melos can be also perceived in the other genres he approached; their variety was dependent on his practice as the conductor of various philharmonic orchestras, which stimulated his taste for the symphonic genres, of which he states: “Beside a few works dated during the beginning of my career, which I consider to be studies of the orchestral apparatus, my actual symphonic creations emerged as I was appointed permanent conductor of the Iași symphonic orchestra. I should remind you of the following pieces belonging to this period: *Trei jocuri din Ardeal – Suita I / Three dances from Transylvania – Suite 1*, the orchestral arrangement for *Coralului variat / The variegated choir* and the suite *În lumea copiilor / in the children’s universe*. I should also mention *Suita a II-a / Suite no. 2, Rapsodia moldovenească / The Moldavian Rhapsody* and *Suita a VI-a ardelenescă / Suite no. 6 from Transylvania*”⁹².

Therefore, in the area of **symphonic music**, although no symphonism can be mentioned, he created mainly suites and generally he expressed himself by means of free pieces and programmatic pieces in which his passion for the folklore can also be felt.

He also expressed himself with clarity, eloquence and candour, in rustic notes, in the **vocal-symphonic genre** (*Concert religios / Religious concerto – for a mixed choir and orchestra, Primăvara tinereții / The spring of youth – for a male choir, Mândruliță, noapte bună / Good night to you, my lovely lass – for a tenor solo, mixed choir and a string ensemble*) or **chamber music** (*Introducere și passacaglie pentru pian solo / Introduction and passacaglia for a piano solo, Coral variat pentru orgă / Variegated choir for organ, Vocalize pentru mezzosoprană și ansamblu instrumental / Exercises in vocalization for a mezzosoprano and instrumental ensemble*). His creation was awarded several **prizes**: here are some of them – 2nd prize for composition in the “George Enescu” contest, 2nd prize for radio creation and also the State Award.

Although towards the end of his career he attempted at a more **modern musical language** under the enthusiastic influence of younger composers, in pieces such as *Mica suită pentru orchestră / The small suite for orchestra, Zece ghicitori / Ten riddles for a choir* or *Vocalize pentru mezzosoprană și ansamblu instrumental / Exercises in vocalization for a mezzosoprano and instrumental ensemble*, Achim Stoia remained faithful to the universe of folk music and strove not to alter its ancient essence, as his credo was the authenticity of folk creation; as he himself declared, “I have always been heedful of the melody and the rhythmic elements I have borrowed from the most beautiful and original musical creations of the rural repertoire, to which I am bound by birth. I have adapted them with the greatest respect, without any intonational, melody or harmonic alterations induced by technical fads. My love of music and the love for those I envisage as the audience of my music has led me to a style which is

⁹² Achim Stoia – Centenarul nașterii, pag. 285.

clear and devoid of any obscurity. Maestro Enescu once said: «A melody that belongs to all needs a musical harmonic attire that is accessible to all».⁹³

Being always in a perpetual quest, Achim Stoia also animates his artistic activities through his **musicological research** which accompanies and supports his **pedagogical activity**: thus, he published articles and papers and delivered conferences, conducted educational concerts and appeared in various radio programs.

He expresses himself by simple means, in clear constructions, usually of strophic nature; the candour of his expression, the simplicity of his approaches often borrowed from the folklore (he often resorted to children's folklore, as in the suite *În lumea copiilor / In the children's universe*) are the constituents that converge to create a musical universe where the composer manages to retain the charm and the playfulness of folk sonority; moreover, he succeeds in maximizing it by using inspired harmonic and rhythmic expressions and transparent syntaxes. It results in high accessibility and an extensive audience for Achim Stoia's musical creations.

“In effect – as musicologist Liliana Gherman states – his naturalness, authenticity, sincerity, originating from a connection with his native land that was never severed, are the characteristics of Achim Stoia's musical profile.”⁹⁴

References

1. Achim Stoia – Centenarul nașterii, Editura Artes, Iași, 2010
2. Bâzgå, Costică - Abrudan, Lucia – *Achim Stoia*, Editura Muzicală, București, 1982
3. Boțocan Melania –Pascu George – Hronicul muzicii ieșene, Editura Noël, Iași, 1997
4. Cozmei, Mihail – *Existențe și împliniri. Dicționar bibliografic. Domeniul Muzică*, Ediția a 2-a, Editura Artes a Universității de Arte „George Enescu”, Iași, 2010
5. Liliana Gherman – Dimensiuni ale creației și interpretării. File de cronică muzicală vol. I (1966-1976) și vol. II (1977-1986), Editura Artes, Iași, 2003
6. Sandu-Dediu, Valentina – Muzica românească între 1944-2000, Editura Muzicală, București, 2002

⁹³ Achim Stoia – Centenarul nașterii, pag. 289.

⁹⁴ Liliana Gherman – Dimensiuni ale creației și interpretării. File de cronică muzicală I (1966-1976), Editura Artes, Iași, 2003, pag. 99.