

15. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS IN APPROACHING MUSIC

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Abstract: *Inaugurated as early as the 18th century (more precisely in 1722), with the birth of the journal entitled Critica musica - an important daily newspaper in which various composers of that time commented on their own creations - and continued by the attitude remarks and ideas on the validity of the value judgment of Romantic creators like Robert Schumann, Hector Berlioz, Franz Liszt, Richard Wagner, etc., music criticism developed in the 20th century as a branch of musicology. Being a form of pondering on the complexity of the sound phenomenon considered in its three-fold structure – creation-performance-reception – music criticism becomes a valid field when it begins to be practiced in the written press or in all the other media channels, by professional musicians in the true meaning of the word, with solid general-cultural and musicological training, capable of uttering well-substantiated opinions on the meaning or style of a piece of music in first audition, of apprising and judging the performance of an opus in a particular interpretative variant, and of contributing to the education of the audience and to the training of musical tastes in a coherent and responsible manner.*

Numerous comments, which appeared in English lexicographic volumes (Encyclopedia Britannica, The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians), in various papers in French encyclopedias (Musiques Une Encyclopédie pour le XXI siècle coordinated by J.J. Nattiez, in Paul Griffiths' work entitled Objectifs et impacts de la critique musicale) or in Romanian references (Muzicologia și Jurnalismul. Muzica clasică în media românească de după 1989 coordinated by Prof. Dr. Laura Vasiliu) and more, increasingly contributed to the individual development of this fascinating field. The purpose of our paper is not to achieve an actual history of music criticism, which would only be possible further to thorough research. Relying on the synthesis of relevant chronological and stylistic information related to the object of our research, we will attempt, by the transposition of this phenomenon in the teaching world, to prove the possible evolution of music criticism genres in a natural sequence and relation, from presentation – annotation – essay – review, to interview – opinion piece – column – portrait. In our opinion, this sequence contributes to their clarification, meaning that they may be immediately and professionally applied in music journalism.

Key words: *musicology, music criticism, music journalism, history, style, genre*

This study appeared after my personal involvement in the practical activities of students from the *Musicology* section of the *George Enescu* University of Arts on Iași. These activities became articles on musical journalism (chronicles, interviews, reviews, essays) and were published in specialized cultural magazines. As a coordinator of the discipline *Musicological Practice* and the designer of its syllabus, I have found that young journalists, aspiring to master the art of writing display some inconsistencies in the way they present a complex issue of the relationship between journalism and musicology. We refer to the role and importance played by the young musicologist-journalists within a sub-field *Music Criticism* that seems to be more and more affected by the ramifications and promotion of entertainment genres and subgenres many times of doubtful quality, and especially by the increasing number of amateurs involved in artistic management who ignore the opinions,

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value judgments of a specialized critic viewing them as being redundant or too scientific for current magazines.

Also, the low number of specialized publications, the space given to music chronicles, viewpoints or, even more, the modified content of rubrics as to present the specialized information in a more accessible and attractive manner in order to cover a larger audience have been only a few factors that definitely discourage a young journalist musician. A potential solution for learning and getting training in this field, very sensible in modernity, takes knowledge and keeping the tradition of music criticism, the subfield of musicology. Linked to the manifestation of the sound phenomenon in triple hypostasis – composition-interpretation-reception, music criticism presents to the public new meanings in interpreting famous works or comments opuses at first audition, promotes valuable creations and interpreters, educates the general public's taste in terms of accepting and cultivating high-quality music. *Therefore, the critic must be such a good musician so as to be able to get psychologically, aesthetically and (partially) technically under artist's skin. Having a solid musical education – a vocal/instrumental/ training, academic knowledge through readings, auditions and reviews – is the first condition in becoming a music journalist.*¹²³

Commenting the above citation in the Context of 21st century, we become aware that general cultural and musical education of a future journalist takes place in an extremely difficult time, dominated by a policy of consumerism, in which the success of the image comes before content, whose time of construction, synthesis and power seems to have lost its resources before being psychologically exploited. The taste of the past for reading, meditation on ideas, willingness to listen consciously to works in all styles and to make stylistic connections between them, the natural passion of a musician in training to study an instrument as to discover its resources and to overcome technical and expressive difficulties are replaced today by sluggish reactions, by lowering of a passion to look for spirituality, in favor for immediate solutions or temporary employment, which do not involve affective and effective involvement of a musician in achieving his goals.

One possible answer of the mentor, of any dedicated teacher of any discipline, involves an attitude of return, by selecting the most important moments in the history of music journalism to determine the critic to understand that his mission is to integrate and continue a beautiful tradition in the evolution of this phenomenon. Remembering some events, we stop at the beginning of the eighteenth century, at the figure of Johann Matheson, the representative of the theory of emotions, a polemical spirit of contemporary works *Critica Musica* magazine (1722-1725). In the same period, concern for the art of writing well and responsibly about music become more frequent, so, in 1798, Friedrich Rochlitz founds *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* in Leipzig. The nineteenth century, known as a time of great musical and poetic effervescence, dominated

¹²³ Laura Vasiliu – *Musicology and journalism. Presence of Calssic Music in Romanian Media after 1989*, Editura Artes, Iași, 2007, p. 8

by two fundamental concepts in the development of creative thinking - programatism and syncretism - brings together thoughts about music of writers, philosophers, aestheticians, performers or composers in different newspapers or collections of essays. So, we go through an extensive journey from E.T.A. Hoffmann's essay on Beethoven's *5th Symphony* published in *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* to comments of famous pages by Carl Maria von Weber or Nicolo Paganini, sometimes highly virulent of Hector Berlioz in *Gazette musicale* and *Journal de Debats* and value judgments and critical opinions on the design of scores or chronicles belonging to Robert Schumann published in *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (1834). The relationship between aesthetics, philosophy and music critic appeared especially in the second half of the nineteenth century.

*Another philosophical conception that stimulated music criticism was Hegel's idea of progress. , Wagner's, Brendel's and A.B. Marx's writings reflects the belief in a necessary and perpetual renewal of styles, seen in that moment in Wagnerian drama and in Liszt programatism. An unequivocal criticism of contemporary German musical culture was performed by evaluations of composing style, performing practice, musical and theatrical institutions that needed to be reformed.*¹²⁴ A model of presentations and summaries of music and literary comments was introduced following the vision of eminent musicologists, the founders of hermeneutic analysis: Joseph François Fétis or Hermann Kretzschmar. The abundance of metaphors, figures of speech, recognizable elements in the writings of the above mentioned authors will be disputed by the promoter of neoclassical aesthetics, Eduard Hanslick, who believed in the development of sound as such, pure music, without any programmatic descriptive details.

The twentieth century imposes itself in German music criticism through its polemical atmosphere created by the New Viennese School. There appeared conflicts of musicians with right-wing views appear who opposed atonal sonority from the nationalist or anti-Semitic perspective, or with left-wing views, like Hans Eisler, an outspoken critic of schönbergiene art. On the other hand, the promotion of entertainment music, seeking solutions to increase audience had been just some of the aims of publications in the UK: *The Times*, *The Observer*, *Morning Post*, etc. *After the First World War, favorite topics of British critics were: reaction against the German repertoire, Stravinsky's creations and the creation of composers associated with Diaghilev, French against German aesthetics, classicism against romanticism, Stravinsky's neoclassicism against atonalism and serialism of Arnold Schoenberg.*¹²⁵

In the second half of the twentieth century, musical criticism discusses around reception and understanding of avant-garde styles and techniques. Also, pop and jazz inserts in the creation of Western European composers was a warning on the increasing abstractization of academic compositions. There was

¹²⁴ Laura Vasiliu - *Muzicologia și jurnalismul Prezența muzicii clasice în media românească de după 1989*, Editura Artes, Iași, 2007, pp. 33-34

¹²⁵ *Idem*, op. cit. p. 53

a breakdown between chronicles of classical music concerts and entertainment compositions. Diversity and heterogeneity of styles and music was the cause of radical views as was the case of Theodor W. Adorno, who comments that *lack of individual freedom in modern life and music marketing do not give to anyone the opportunity to freely express their aesthetic views*¹²⁶.

The last decades of the twentieth century bring to attention preference for recording live concerts, pop industry is booming, the importance given to advertising, internet, predominance of the visual factor, most often at the expense of hearing. Under these conditions, a de-professionalization musical criticism takes place, sometimes coming down to simple comments records on CDs, DVDs, specialized books using simple, accessible, neutral language, and with short on event themselves. Moreover, appearances in music journalistic space are rare that become almost unnoticed, and seem to appear in a bad context of circumstances in a century of speed whose energy is lost in the swirl of everyday life.

Opinions of contemporary music receiver in relation to the informed opinion of the critic should be noted. Maybe he himself could make value judgments? Does he have the intuition and necessary education to have an opinion on a work of art or its interpretation without challenging the critical act itself? The answer is clear. Individual judgment is useless if it does not influence the more or less immediate consumption of a product, whether a live concert or recording. The way opinion is made or supported is of little relevance. The way in which a value judgment is sent in a clear message, is important in our decision to purchase or not a product. The purpose of a critical opinion is not to give a verdict, but to provoke a reaction. Of course, the entire reaction supports a verdict. Thus, the importance a critic gives to an event or a record tells from the beginning of his interest towards it. The receiver will be able to foresee a verdict even if it is not expressed specifically. But the critic's role is to provide in his writing an explanation.

If its text is limited to assessing the performance of a performer, although he may be included in the category of celebrities, this does not mean that we perceive it being critical.¹²⁷ Nationally, critical opinions, comments on the documents of the time can be found in the writings of Nicolae Filimon, TT Burada, Titus Cerne (founder of the *Arta* magazine), culminating in the publication of *Musical Romania* (1890-1904). If the first half of the twentieth century the *Music* magazine played a significant role in deciphering meanings of works at first audition, or in presenting meaningful comments of musicologists and composers of Romania opuses from multiple perspectives, aesthetic-philosophical or analytical ones, the second half of the last century saw the development of music criticism and the appearance of important chroniclers:

¹²⁶ Laura Vasiliu, op. cit., p. 55

¹²⁷ Paul Griffiths – *Les objectifs et impacts de la critique musicale (Obiectivele și impactul criticii muzicale)*, în *Musiques Une Encyclopédie pour le XXI siècle* coordonată de J.J. Nattiez, Actes Sud /Cité de la Musique, 2006, pp.1068-1069

Alfred Hofmann, Edgar Elian, Dumitru Avakian, Elena Zottoviceanu, Grigore Constantinescu, Luminita Vartolomei. These were critics who wrote periodically in various categories of general cultural and specialized publications founded before and after 1989 *Contemporanul*, *România liberă*, *România literară*, *Secolul XX Melos*, *Cronica*, *Actualitatea muzicală*, etc.

Locally, effervescent cultural and artistic atmosphere of the past in Iași stimulated the development of a school of music criticism, which began with highly intellectual presentations of the professor of music history George Pascu, whose enthusiasm and passion in promoting oral musicologists will be found in authors of other generations: Michael Cozmei, Paula Balan, Liliana Gherman, Melania Botocan, Alex Vasiliu, Laura Vasiliu, etc. Another objective of this discipline's mentor is to decide upon the place of musical criticism and on the features distinguishing it from what we call science musicology. To understand the fundamental differences between these fields, comments of the researcher and musicologist Francis Laszlo presented in an interview with Oleg Garaz a few years ago in *Music* magazine are relevant

*[...]Music criticism [...] all that is called popular music literature subsumes goes down to the concept of music journalism, not musicology, an autonomous discipline which has its own place in the junction between musicology and journalism. The difference between the two is enormous. The musicologist writes for few experts, for a handful of specialists, while the journalist for the overwhelming majority of citizens who are not musicologists or musicians. [...] The journalist does not "go down" to the level of common people, but contributes to raise it to some level of interest in music and its understanding. This is the role of all genres of musical journalism musical journalism, which is, therefore, a more difficult occupation than musicology. [...].*¹²⁸

By beginning with the place of critic in a tradition of style evolution throughout history of music and its role in relation to musicology, it is appropriate to recall some of the aims underlying the training of a journalist: we refer to the debate related to making judgments of value, establishing some principles by which music can be evaluated, discussed, either in terms of creation or interpretation.

Also, before taking up this career, the critic has to specify its role and function that he should play in society: he could be a milestone, by speaking truths about the phenomenon of sound he could become the representative of a school, generation by having a clear, objective attitude, manifested periodically and directly, or limit himself to be the link between the production of an artistic act and its reception as glue between issuing and receiving it through a neutral, comfortable position, creating texts only in circumstantial situations; he is able to do the job out of passion, feels a vocation, has openness, patience and ability

¹²⁸ Oleg Garaz – *De vorbă cu László Ferenc. Ars musicologica – mousike și logos, exerciții și experiențe de cartografiere a muzicalității*, revista *Muzica*, nr. 4, 2002

to specialize in a sub-field or a genre of sound art, or *flirts* with writing hoping to find temporary employment in a newsroom?

These are just some of the questions that we give to our students and discuss them in our courses and seminars of *Musicological Practice*, due to average general cultural or musical background of students, making me to change my approach to genres of music criticism. So, if in the traditional curriculum of this discipline, it started with the study of the chronicle from the first hours of the course, we came to the conclusion that we can achieve effective results if such we study this genre by making a summary of previous articles with a more differentiated specialized content.

If we recollect the genres of music criticism (chronicle, review, interview, debate, portrait, essay, editorial, note, etc.), we find that an article with an evaluative role is frequently, an article that is later used in writing journalistic texts: the presentation. An article, which seems at first glance easy to write, but by its typology (recital, concert, radio or TV opera presentation), through the content of information (synthesis of a concise bibliography, details about CVs of interpreters or the conductor), chosen language (accessibility in transmitting ideas, coherence in the review of existing information), type of presentation (we refer to oral presentation, generally free to have a more sensible communication with the public) contributes general cultural, musical enrichment, and, why not, even to the formation of personal attitude so needed in writing in a journalistic genre. In a shorter version, the same content of presentation can be transformed immediately after the musical event by a young journalist into a note.

The essay is another genre that refers to recording literary and musical ideas, their connections and personal opinions in an elegant manner (elevated style, numerous cultural references, extensive information). An article that naturally binds to above mentioned genre, making the young journalists reflect on thematic content expressed in an essay and other genres: chronicle, interview and review. Similar to essay in size, structure of ideas and reflection on ideas on the material is the book, CD or DVD review. It is published in general cultural or specialized newspapers, the writer should have literary and musical background, a developed journalistic style and accessible language, the purpose of the text being to incite the reader's curiosity, the curiosity of not only professionals but and of music lovers. Other genres that follow naturally in our view refer to *interview-viewpoint-chronicle-portrait*.

One of the most exciting genres for a journalist musician implies the existence of two partners (the author and the interlocutor) is an interview with a personality in the field (performer, conductor, composer, musicologist, and teacher). The journalist aims to study the details from the CV of the interlocutor, thus the questions will be developed progressively and after on the personality of the musician has been made. It is a sensible genre that requires a certain state and the creation of a pleasant environment making the interlocutor confess. *Any interview is the product of the relationship between two people. The quality of*

*the interview is closely related to the quality of the interpersonal relationships. Before being a method, the interview is a way of being.*¹²⁹

As we advance in the commentary on the music genre, we follow the formation and expression of the eloquent personal attitude of the author. This is a significant aspect that could be applied especially in the viewpoint. Such an article gives a greater freedom in the choice of topics and their treatment. It gives a guided freedom by the laws of professional musical journalism in every sense of the word. An article of this type is more developed if the idea, topic provides valid arguments in a personal manner. It combines the literary and musical and journalistic styles expressed in a language that borrows many expressions, formulations of the daily life that should be adapted to specialized language.

The chronicle belongs to tradition of journalistic genres, it is challenging for students in musicology, essentially located on the border between musicology journalism, complex due to summary of general cultural and music information. Its typology is a diverse (chamber concert, symphonic concert, opera or ballet chronicle, etc.), its main objective is to express a critical attitude based on personal interpretation of the comment. A difficult goal to achieve if the student has not previously learnt other genres, because there is a risk that he will produce mixed texts in terms of content. We think about one of the most common errors reflected in the in blending the features of a chronicle and a presentation. We often encounter articles published and assigned to chronicles abounding with information about the content of a recital or providing excessive details related to personality of performers. And this way of composing an article is typical for a presentation.

The chronicle however should be written immediately after the musical event in a spontaneous, personal language highlighting the essence of the article: a coherent and argued commentary on the interpretation. The journalist should have a longer general-cultural and music experience that would involve participation in numerous auditions in all styles and in various interpretations, vocal and instrumental interpretation practice, also developing a literary, philosophical, aesthetic background to be used in the demonstration and argumentation of the commentary.

In his career as a music journalist, an author may be asked to write a more demanding text, in which he should combine information on the personality of a performer, conductor, professor, musicologist with relevant moments in their lives and work, elements related to the evolution of the musician in that a particular event. An article that implies freedom in terms of genre: chronicle-portrait, chronicle-essay. A freedom that should appear in the richness of information similar to that of dictionary entry, with the precision of a chronology traced little by little, but written in a sensible manner that

129 José de Bouker - *Pratique de l'information et écritures journalistiques*, Ed. Harccover, 1995, p. 182, apud. Laura Vasiliu, *op.cit*, p.62

emphasized relevant aspects of the biography and work of the musician, translated into modern times, specifically reflecting current time.

In conclusion, this study to study, pedagogical implications music critics approach, from selection of landmarks in the history of music journalism, justifying the role of the critic today in the context of a tradition, remembering the scene from the musical critics, different traits of this discipline of musicology science and premises in the formation of a journalist, I have tried to demonstrate that unconventional approach to gender in a certain sequence, from presentation - note - essay - review, the interviewer should review article - chronicle- medallion is more relevant in our opinion, the teaching perspective and beyond.

In conclusion, the study *Pedagogical Implications in Approaching Music* started from the selection of landmarks in the history of music journalism that justify the role of the critic today in a context of a tradition. It recalls the place held by music criticism, various features of Musicology as a science and premises in the education of a journalist, we tried to show that an unconventional approach to genres in a certain sequence, starting from a presentation - note - essay - review to interview-viewpoint-chronicle-portrait, is more relevant in our view both for teaching and not only.

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