ELENA BOANCĂ,
“PERSONALITĂȚI ALE
ARTEI MUZICALE: VASILE HERMAN”
[PERSONALITIES OF THE MUSICAL ART: VASILE HERMAN]
REVIEW

Professor Ph.D. GABRIEL BANCIU
National Academy of Music “Gheorghe Dima” of Cluj-Napoca

Gabriel BANCIU, musicologist, Ph.D. in Musicology – Musical Aesthetics (1999), university professor (Department of Musicology) and Ph.D. supervisor (since 2007). Books published in the field of aesthetics, musical rhetoric, musical forms and educational management. Specialized studies in professional journals and publications. Pro rector (2008-2012) and president of the Senate of the “Gheorghe Dima” Music Academy of Cluj-Napoca, since 2012.

The monographic volume by Mrs. Elena Boancă, a musicologist showing a particular interest in the investigation of both historical and analytical aspects, represents not only a profound and relevant enterprise, but also a highly necessary one.

Composer Vasile Herman is part of the elite of personalities who have consolidated the higher musical education in the city of Cluj and who have established a certain *ethos* and a particular tradition at the Conservatory of Music, based on rigour, standards, seriousness and commitment. The course in musical forms and analysis, which I myself attended, was conducted at a level of exigency that can be proven by the volumes and treatises left as evidence. Thus, a first duty of the historian-musicologist, guided by the awareness of the value and importance of the past, has already been assumed by the author. The most important facet of Vasile Herman's personality is that of composer, the list of over 130 titles composed over more than five decades being highly relevant in this regard. The stylistic-analytical part of the research focuses on these works, some of them performed on prestigious stages, others shrouded in the fog of contemporary ignorance. The author gives a detailed presentation of the most representative

scores, fulfilling another duty, that of highlighting the musical works of reference. The triad encompassed by this investigation also includes the musicological dimension of the research, a field in which Vasile Herman has also remained a paradigmatic figure.

Despite not being his student, Elena Boancă conducted several interviews with Vasile Herman, whose personality could be understood beyond his courses, treatises and scores. As a matter of fact, the research has led to the promotion of the musical works presented in the book, a meritorious fact that the author points out in its Argument, mentioning the fact that the Maestro's family has presented the library of the "Gheorghe Dima" Academy of Music with copies of all of his works, which were then made available to the interested performers and researchers. The initiative seems to have been fruitful, if we take into account the fact that some of the works, previously known only by title, are scheduled to be performed at contemporary music festivals.

The first of the four chapters of the book records the composer's biographical landmarks, providing relevant information regarding his career, musical and theoretical works and awards.

The second chapter is dedicated to Vasile Herman's activity as a musicologist. The author carefully justifies this option: "Although the musician's primary interest was composition, I preferred to focus first on the field of musicology. This arrangement of the material has allowed us to present in the first section certain elements that outline the musician's system of thinking, deduced and discussed based on his theoretical writings, while in the sections dedicated to his compositional creation we have noted the constancy with which these principles are reflected at the creative level. Thus, we have found that [...] the theoretical substantiation is justified by the practical application of the proposed principles".

Naturally, the work that takes priority is *Formă și stil în noua creație muzicală românească* [Form and Style in Contemporary Romanian Music] (Herman's doctoral thesis, published later), a volume analysed with great minuteness and admirable acumen, focusing on: the relationship between structure, morphology and form, the conceptual delimitation between form and style, form and pattern and form and means of expression, the ways of harnessing the hidden latencies of traditional singing in art music, the principles of musical analysis and the evolution of Romanian music. We note the efficiency and clarity offered by the punctual conclusions, a principle consistently followed throughout the research, but also the quotation of significant excerpts from the reports of the doctoral committee members (Sigismund Toduță, Octavian Lazăr Cosma), kept in the archives of the National Academy of Music "Gheorghe Dima".

"We can say that his musicological thinking fits seamlessly into the context of his time, and that the terminology and system he proposes are at European

level" – concludes the author, shifting her analytical focus to other, no less relevant volumes and studies (17 of which can be found in the series of *musicology papers*). The author also refers to the unpublished works or course materials on musical forms and analyses, as well as – and this is something entirely new – the programs written for the concerts of the Cluj Philharmonic (1962-68). Of particular interest and use is the table included in the text of these concert programs, comprising Herman's analyses of Romanian musical works.

A substantial chapter is dedicated to Herman's creative activity. The author delimitates the creative stages in a section that abounds in stylistic arguments and details, complemented by the ever-present and pertinent punctual conclusions.

The analytical corpus represents an extremely competent and valuable investigation of the composer's musical works, which the author sorts by genres (symphonic works, sonata, the concertante genre, quartets, opera, cantata, choral works, works for voice and piano, other vocal-instrumental works), using analytical algorithms based on their specificity. The topics discussed are related to: the dramaturgy of the symphonic cycle, writing techniques, the role of the sonata form, the principles of form, sound effects, timbral colour as a stylistic signature, stylistic elements etc., each rounded off with the habitual concluding halt.

The last chapter, proving the originality of the investigation, is entitled *Momente de interferență între creație și cercetare* [Moments of Interference between Creation and Research], and it is justified by the Maestro's own words: "Creation has helped me to analytically better understand the music, while the scientific research has led me to write musical works that posed special problems of language and form." Starting from this confession, the idea of "presenting the musician's main areas of interest, while observing the relationship between the musical creation and the musicological research" begins with a relevant table and materializes into a structured discourse that makes reference to: psaltic music, certain problems of the Romanian symphonism, form in the Romanian sonata, aspects of polyphony, specific melodic formulas.

The final conclusions reiterate the historical-analytical pathway, drawing, for a final time, a stylistic synthesis of Vasile Herman's oeuvre. "Our approach has aimed to highlight these complementary facets of the composer's musical personality, to provide an overview of his activity and to detect those elements that stand as his personal stylistic signature."

The appendices (the list of the composer's musical and musicological works, arranged chronologically) complement this extensive investigation, written in impeccable musicological language, with remarkable competence and commitment.

The musicology of Cluj proves once again, through this admirable volume, that the duty to keep in the collective memory the image of the personalities of the

past has been fulfilled, providing the younger contemporaries with models of thinking and of relating to values so far untouched by the perishable and ephemeral mirage of visibility.