

don't know, but real things as a model, but after you can't do a straight analogy to them.

In the sounds of words (for me language is very important) and the rhythms you have in a language I can't understand (I love languages I don't speak), you find this. Sometimes I note the rhythms of, for instance, every fricative, every sound—very percussive. In my way, I try to use this rhythm as a canvas for a piece, so it's a little bit the same thing. It's the difference between what is language and what is speaking, *entre langue e parole*. Because speaking, *parole* in French, is something that nobody decided at any moment. It's common; it came with time. I think that new music has to go to the *parole* now, to go away from the creation of the language, which was important at a certain moment, but now we have to find something that is more integrated to—maybe it's a romantic word—but to something that is natural, something that comes from a model. For me, he was doing that without saying it. But why to choose this kind of noisy sound which was a wave, is for me a mystery.

THE IRRADIANT FORCE OF SOUND

Iancu Dumitrescu

Concerning my work, what can I say, very rapidly?¹ Generally, I refuse to speak about my music, basically because I need too much time to explain, to résumé anything that would clarify even a small detail, and because music in my conception—even if inevitably made with sounds—is at the same time something irrational, which transcends the small reality of the sound. The acoustic space is very small compared with the infinite space of musical creation. It seems complicated for me to describe this long artistic adventure through spectralism, so I will try to present my work as briefly as possible, providing the information I guess you are looking for. I will also give you some examples: some fragments of several works belonging to different periods of creation, some on CD and some live, in world-premiere performances.

First of all, I must say that three different periods can be distinguished in my work. The first is the one with a spectacular entrance in the ideas—then very new and almost unknown all over the world—when the incipient spectral trend was prepared. The second one, in my opinion, should be the period of maximal development of the spectral evolution. From this period, I would mention the series of works entitled *Movemur* (at the beginning of the 1970s), *Movemur et Sumus* (1978), the *Medium* series (1972-79), *Cogito - trompe l'oeil* (1980), *Sound Sculpture I-II*, etc., which were for me among my most important works of that period. Starting around 1990, there was a dramatic change in the evolution of my musical language, due to the use of the computer in producing sound. In a way, I would say I did not abandon the adventure with acoustic instruments, but I moved the center of my interest in experiment from instruments to the domain of computer sound, at least in its very experimental side. I extended the field of sonic adventure,

¹ [Ana-Maria Avram prepared the present text from Iancu Dumitrescu's statements given at the Conference.]

the forthcoming discoveries in the field of computer-assisted sound, as shown by the works I composed in the last five to seven years. My investigations are of a dramatic—I could even say tragic—philosophical speculation on the inside of the sound.

Let us, however, go back to the beginning, the first period of creation, and speak about the things that most influenced me, and about the ideas that guided me. Between the mid-1960s and the decade that followed, after a very difficult, closed, Stalinist period, the cultural life in Romania became little by little more open, through modern ideas and initiatives. Concerning my work, after a first combinatory/structuralist period—while still a student I composed my first pieces, influenced by the discovery of dodecaphonicism, integral serialism, and so on, which were the leading ideas at the worldwide level—my conception soon moved through a more transformational musical thinking.

From the beginning of the 1960s, I discovered the irradiant force of sound. The study of traditional Romanian folk music was for me of first importance, because in this very rich and diversified music I discovered something really new and fresh, and at the same time very old and ancestral, but also a particular and different musical attitude, an unknown musical world, another approach to acoustical phenomena. For example, the natural harmonics, as reflected in the music for alpenhorn, or for two or three alpenhorns in a polyphonic relationship, with an incredible richness in its harmonic space, formed my earliest experiences of the spectral dimension of the acoustic world. I first discovered the irradiant force of the fundamental sound, and the transformational principle in music, as opposed to the structuralist/constructivist principle. Music opposed to structuralism does not mean music without structure; on the contrary, it is a music that from the first contact seems very structured, but just differently, more secret, not yet evident, with very fine, refined details, and with a polyphonic dimension also.

My situation was very different from that of other composers. In the 1960s, when I was a young composer, my teachers were very strongly engaged in a modernist trend in Romania. In fact, they were applying discoveries that were already evident, made by the courageous leading figures of Western music that they admired, approved, and imitated with small personal contributions. After a few years, after this contact with folk music, as just mentioned, I meditated on this very simple idea: that it is necessary to discover my own way, my own direction, as I did not think it was of any importance to do the same things that others were doing. I tried to discover what could be done, what was acceptable for me, what was truly

profound and original. I was searching for an alternative to this exceedingly “written” music, the one preached by my teachers, adepts of a structuralist modern musical thought. Little by little, I discovered freedom in music—my own freedom. This was going together with the discovery of the importance of being, at the same time, not only composer, writer of musical signs, but also interpreter, player. I was a piano player, and a little bit later, I began to play other instruments too. After this, I discovered the solution of conducting and it was the beginning of my ensemble, Hyperion (very famous today); and so, working with Hyperion, I built my own laboratory of musical thinking.

Then I discovered and contacted the great conductor Sergiu Celibidache, one of the greatest thinkers in conducting, perhaps one of the greatest thinkers in music, of all time. He explained to me the perspective of phenomenological thinking in music. Evidently, music is nothing. Music is irrational; it is impossible to conserve music. Music is a way, if you accept as in mysticism, through transcendence. The score, the paper is not the music. This was the idea that most strongly impressed me, a strong attack against usual musical thinking, and it was the beginning of a new, truthful perspective for me. Then, music does not exist. It is a perpetual becoming, nothing fixed. After years, when little by little I was more and more able to follow Celibidache’s way of thinking in music, and to apply it in my own personal way, I developed a truthful phenomenological composition—not interpretation, composition—which became the basis of my musical thinking. It means to assume the acoustic, to assume all the conditions of the birth of the music, the whole, the quality of the players and the instruments, to exploit at maximum all the concrete qualities of the material, of the sound. Today it seems that my master, Celibidache, becomes forgotten little by little. What is on the way to becoming lost is something essential for spiritual meditation, not only for music. The act of thinking does not exist as something—it is just a trajectory, something in evolution, a perpetual becoming—and music too. Music is born, it develops, and then dies. Infinite births, developments, and deaths: only that adventure matters.

Coming back to the works of my first period of evolution, one of the emblematic works belonging to this creative stage of my musical development, when I progressively moved away from structuralist musical thinking, is called *Apogeu*, a piece for large orchestra. I composed it in 1971-72 (premiered in 1973), a piece that is a concentration of spectral energy, force, and spirit. Even though the work is still made with real sounds, I mean with fundamental sound, not with harmonic sounds, multisounds, or overtones, it is an obvious attitude towards sound that

transgresses the appearance of the sound, searching through its inner being. It is a meditation through sound, in a huge mono-structure. Here is one of the first times I tried to concentrate my musical thought through the meditation on the sound, which evolves in successive strata from a unique sound to a cluster, a totality of sounds. The cluster here does not have the significance of the whole result of a combinatory, but the conquest of an acoustic space. The work is meditative, concentrated, non-evolving, and slowly transformational. In the middle of the piece, the climax, there is an important percussion section strongly contrasting with the general evolution of the work, a sonic and rhythmic explosion that crowns and at the same time contrasts with the mono-structural evolution of the entire work. This piece, I think, illustrates the better this point of my musical evolution, where elements of constructivism/structuralism, still somehow present, appear together with new ideas connected to a primitive approach to a spectral sonic world.

It became more and more clear for me that my music should not be a combination of sounds, not a construction with sounds, nor a combinatory similar to the dodecaphonic (serial) technique. The central idea of my search then became the way of discovering **the intimate power of transformation in sound, the evolution of the spectral sound matter in time** (the transformation of the sound, the transformation of the spectrum). According to that, I generally refuse repetitions, in the classical way; I refuse variations, the classical developments, the classical contrasts between textures and structures.

I will now try to discuss a few of my most important works of this second period, which often are grouped in more general series or classes of composition following a particular musical idea and principle, such as the *Movemur* series and the *Medium* series. *Movemur* is a paradigm of many compositions, a series of works, a family developing the same musical ideas, which I began in 1972-73, and is still in progress (I plan to complete this series with new works), dedicated to string instruments or string ensembles, going from solo to string quartet and orchestra. The central, cardinal compositional concern is connected to natural and artificial harmonics and spectrum. It was a pioneering period, compared to what happened in these years, the early 1970s, at the international scale. Now, I realize something very interesting: that spectralism appears in music in a sort of synchronic way, even with the inherent decay specific to music, but still synchronically, with other similar research in spirit; Bertrand Russell said somewhere that the most amazing thing in modern science is its return to Pythagorism!

Concerning *Movemur*: on each free string of the instrument, considered as a fundamental sound, are built up clusters of artificial harmonics, strictly enough deduced from the mathematical theory of crowds, and respecting the symbolic and expressive value of number. The work requires a particular skill of the bow, which constantly changes its position in relation to the bridge, in the goal of a permanent transformational sound, and harmonic spectrum. Harmonic sounds are produced also by a constant change of finger pressure of the left hand. Vertically, the music is based on heterophony: voices disseminate, spreading in swarms of harmonics, then assemble in unisons—the free strings themselves.

In this period, I extended my musical experiences with the Hyperion ensemble to some of the greatest soloists dedicated to contemporary music to the research in modern music, such as the unique double bass player Fernando Grillo, and so I could develop my strongest musical ideas of this second period of my work. The virtuosity, skills, and dedication of musicians such as Grillo and others made this evolution in sonic adventure possible for me.

In addition, in this second period, my music notation changed, evolved a lot, in connection with the research in the spectral sonic world and phenomenological musical development. Particularly in this period, my scores acquired a very unusual, accentuated graphic aspect, superposed to the indications of pitch, rhythm, and so on, as I felt the need to see the music as well as listen to and hear it. It was important to see it in order to feel the configuration of the music, the evolution in densities, and the gravitation of the lines of force. I am convinced that music evolves, or should evolve more and more decisively, from combinatory thinking through transformational. In my particular case, the transformational principle is omnipresent, I think. A sound is a being that is born, develops, and dies while perpetually transforming all of its components. So the problem of writing, of notation, became infinitely more complex, as you seem to be obliged to write down the imponderable.²

In the *Medium* series, there is more than simply the spectral idea; it has another specific reference to my musical thinking: acousmatics. Along with the spectral and phenomenological ideas, and in consonance with both, my music is based on an **acousmatic aesthetics** by virtue of which the sound is subjected to analyses and dissociations (harmonic multisounds, natura

² [At this point in the presentation, Cornelia Petroiu performed the world premiere of *Movemur X* for viola (1978). This was followed by the world premiere of *Medium XII* for double bass (1980), performed by Ion Ghiță.]

harmonics, artificial harmonics, diagonal sounds, and distorted sounds) which confer on it a genuine and primitive force. For other modern schools of composition, especially in electronic music, acousmatics means just the physical disguise of the sound—you cannot see the source of the sound. For me, however, of most importance is the metaphoric idea of this disguise: the fact that, whether you can or cannot see the sound source, you cannot and should not analyze it; it is a sort of alchemy that transfigures the sound, so you cannot recognize it anymore. To arrive at that result, as I have already said, I searched for and discovered new techniques, diagonal techniques; I developed new practices for string instruments and “invented” new sounds, also for woodwind instruments. For example, I developed the prepared bassoon in my work *La Grande Ourse* for two prepared bassoons, strings, prepared piano, percussion, and electronic tape, which was first performed in 1982 and broadcast by Radio France. My research on brass instruments resulted in the prepared trombone, with many funnels and handmade mutes, and another series of compositions, *Nimbus Solaris* (*Nimbus I-III* on the Generations Unlimited LP). In every case, I develop the use of truly spectral sounds: partial sounds, multiphonics, harmonic sounds, or overtones.

Coming back to *Medium*, referring to the very concreteness of the instrumental gestures, here there is also a phenomenological principle of feedback, a perpetual response to a primary stimulus of reaching for the limits of the possibilities of the instrument. It is a total adventure, where the player provokes his instrument, reacts consequently to the result, and so on. It is a simultaneous provocation of the instrument, the acoustics, and the spirit. The player finds himself in a transcendental state by concentrating for long periods of time on a unique sound generated by the free strings of the instrument. Various bowing techniques force the free strings to obtain most intriguing and electronic-like sound effects.

You would probably think there is a large amount of freedom, here, but it is just an appearance! Some can even imagine that it is a sort of improvisation, in the most trivial sense of the term. In fact, just the contrary, the player is chained to the inner physical laws of his instrument—completely obliged, step by step, and in each instant! His itinerary is absolutely obliged; any freedom would not be possible.

As we arrived with our discussion at this very point, I will now ask Ioan Marius Lăcraru to play for you another important piece I made in this period, *Holzwege* for solo viola. Because *Holzwege*, a German word and a title inspired by one of Martin Heidegger’s last works, means exactly that: an obliged itinerary, a way through the unknown—here in my piece through the interior of the sound. Moreover, I will show you how in this itinerary there

is no freedom, once you are engaged in it!³ Referring to what possibly seemed free or improvised in this music, if Marius played it again, a second time, you would see that even in tiny details he does it the same!

Here, in these fully spectral works, music comes from the intrinsic reality of the sound, as from its basic, essential phenomenon. The sound, however, is not the final reality of the music; as I said, sound is not yet music! The sound is here subject to analysis, dispersion, and spectral dissection. So we can find in its inner body an almost infinite world. Composing with sound spectra, natural harmonics, and other components requires a completely different point of view on the musical material, on the sonic matter. Sound is contemplated, heard with a very fine and great attention, in a sort of magical adulation, and obstinately repeated in particularly long values (and here we should emphasize the fact that spectral music needs and supposes a different apprehension of the time dimension). Then the ear becomes able to discern this inner world of natural harmonics, the interior of the spectrum.

We should conclude this discussion with some words about my actual work. The third period is characterized by a total adventure inside computer-assisted sound, where the acoustic space is pushed to the limits, to the last sigh. The discovery of the quasi-unlimited possibilities offered by the utilization of the computer in the world of the creation and transformation of sound was for me a new era, of a total engagement through a hyper- and post-spectralism.

I discovered and appropriated for myself a “cosmic” poetic zone, a “stellar dream”—intuitions that are for me essentials for the imagination of the artist of today. In its essence, this music—whether only for computer sounds or mixed with instruments—is, or at least I intended it so, as genuine as the map of outer space, which is at the same time abstract. I imagined as yet unheard sounds and produced them by means of special computer programs, as a cosmic reflection in which computer sounds are mixed with natural sources of transfigured acoustic sounds.

The work of this new period is a result of meticulous studies in the sonic domain of micro-intervals, and both harmonic and inharmonic spectra [CD 1:7]. The essential difference is, though, the discovery and the work with a new sonic dimension (and that in a consequent way), the distortion. When timbre, pure sound, by itself becomes the prime matter of musical speech, to advance and build up the music you need other formal principles, other means of contrast. Because contrast is one of the primordial principles that make possible a musical construction, you need different means to build up

³ [Marius Lăcraru performed *Holzwege* (1987).]

the music than in figurative music. I worked a lot on the opposition of harmonic sound to noise (inharmonic sound, distorted sound, etc.). Therefore, you can discover, beyond this constitutive principle of opposition between pure harmonic spectra and inharmonic ones (noises, distortions, etc.), a poetic level, the expanding-beyond-its-limits of the sonic universe, which often in these later works seems to be destroyed or burned, in huge explosions of sonic matter, after which comes a new birth.

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