My musical affective interferences with Eminescu's poem
Se bate miezul nopţii (Bell chimes midnight)

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Abstract: My work for piano *Bell chimes midnight...* is a sincere tribute to Mihai Eminescu and his poetic universe, with insertions and subtle echoes reminiscent of George Enescu's solo piano piece *Carillion nocturne*. The work, built on three interchangeable sections, chains traditional chords with clusters and symmetrical, geometric chords and harmonic constructions and combines the harmonic world with lyrical moments and movement passages. Based on resonance, the piece pays pious tribute to some professors I studied with, who recently passed away. Eminescu's poem, through its poetic images, represents the starting point as a poetic and musical universe, but it will be transcendentalized and complemented by modern compositional techniques. My analysis of this piece will include the relationship of music with the text, as well as some considerations on important details that can be revealed thanks to self-analysis and which can constitute nodal points regarding new compositional approaches.

Keywords: modes of analysis, self-analysis, resonance, structure, agreement, symmetry, the text – melody relationship, creation.

1. Introduction

> *Se bate miezul nopţii în clopotul de-aramă,/ Iar somnul, vameş vieţii, nu vrea să-mi ieie vamă./ Pe căi bătute-adesea vrea mintea să mă poarte,/ S-asamăn între-olaltă viaţă şi cu moarte;/ Ci cumpăna gândirii-mi şi azi nu se mai schimbă,/ Căci între amândouă stă neclintita limbă.//*

> *The cooper bell chimes midnight and stirs my peaceful soul/ Yet sleep, the life's old keeper, won't come to take its toll. / On beaten paths my mind will take me without strife, / To make me understand that death resembles life;/ And nowadays my thoughts in balance are already/ Because between the two the pointer's always steady.//*

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This is Eminescu's poem. The echoes of this poem haunted me for a long time. Communication (communion) with it, immersion in its meanings, led to the creation of a sound layer not intended to be an identical reproduction of the text artistically, but a subjective interpretation, a continuation, if you will, in one's own sensory–affective interiority of nocturnal (we remember Michelangello's sonnets), existential, philosophical and linguistic meanings.

In this sense, it is useful to remember the artist who, painting a landscape, doesn't faithfully reproduce it like a photograph, but humanizes it, reinterprets it, ennobles it with his own feelings. I did the same, starting from the poem. This, for me, was a gateway to a world of essence, revealed by the sound of bells at midnight. The creation of this work took place over time, the sounds expressing the beats of my soul in my own search for identity and depth of the artistic self. Relative to the phenomenon of creation, the words of Liviu Rusu seem appropriate here:

> Our essential conclusion is that the work of art results from an attitude through which the deep meaning of existence is revealed, in the form of a vision of the world. This meaning can have various aspects according to the appropriate types of vision of the artist. Due to the meaning contained in the work of art, the latter has a spiritual life, the discovery of which must be the main goal of studying artistic values.[2]

This sense of existence, both of the creator and of the work of art, has been constant among my concerns, both spiritually and creatively. The question remains: does the work of art have a life of its own after it has been created? This aspect will perhaps constitute the motive of a future research.

2. What and how we analyze in the artistic field. Modes of analysis. Self-analysis, an effective way of working?

Analysis within art can be done in several ways. Thus, we can make the difference between analyzing the process of creation having the artist as an object of study, with his/her inner mechanisms that trigger the creative act, or consider only the work of art, correlated more or less with the artist and his/her era.

In music, the most common method (of analysis) is the formal one, from the motive component to the large articulations of form. In this type of analysis, subsequently broken down on levels such as melody, rhythm, harmony, cadences, orchestration, an accurate radiography of all musical components is considered. Starting from this way of putting things under the microscope, the analytical field can be broadened to philosophy, psychology,

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[2] Liviu Rusu (1989), *Eseu despre creaţia artistică* [Essay on artistic creation], Editura Ştiinţifică şi Enciclopedică, Bucureşti, p. 317.

structuralism, a quantitative analysis of the number of notes used (statistics); there are connections with fields such as acoustics, mathematics, geometry, physics and more. We even mention areas far removed from the world of music, but related to it, such as the geological analysis done by Ryan Raul Pañagale in *Arranging Gerswin*, where he compared music to a crystal, or as a novelty, the Schenkerian analysis done by David Schiff in *Gershwin, Rhapsody in Blue*, both relative to *Rapsody in blue.*

In terms of the musical analysis, strictly speaking, it is worth mentioning the opinion of musicologist and composer Valentin Timaru:

> There are consequently several types of analysis: analysis of musical writing with all its connotations (structure, harmony, polyphony, orchestration or sound organization), interpretive analysis (detailing the elements of agogics and rhetorics that can be extracted from the writing), aesthetic analysis (with emphasis on the elements of expression discerned from the musical creation subject to observation). [...] In the analysis of musical structure (improperly called form) we distinguish two planes. The morphological plane in which the musical language structures its semantic units and the syntactic plane, where a certain pattern is articulated (generally in the same movement unit) or several formal patterns are brought together in the different movements of a genre.[3]

Another type of analysis is that of rhythm, which can be applied both to music (starting from the rhythmic formula of two or three values, to the totality of movement, the displacement of all musical parameters[4]), but also to other arts. We can speak of rhythm relative to a painting, a building, a performance or a film.

Depending on the type of creator, self-analysis can have a major weight in the development and refinement of the compositional process, especially if it is guided and viewed through a critical eye by other elite musicians. Through self-analysis, creators discover interesting areas of confluence of the self with the world, with themselves in terms of revealing inner areas of their own shadows and phantasms on which, with the help of investigation (we are moving towards psychoanalysis) light can be shed.

The road to betterness, efficiency and depth, can also be generated by ideological discussions; see the *golden school* in Bucharest, and here we will mention Ştefan Niculescu, Tiberiu Olah, Miriam Marbee, Anatol Vieru and Cornel Ţaranu – who, in his youth, went to Bucharest almost monthly to see the aforementioned. In a private discussion, when I was writing the article

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[3] Valentin Timaru (2002), *Dicţionar noţional şi terminologic* [Notional and Terminological Dictionary], Editura Universităţii din Oradea, Oradea, p. 8.
[4] Constantin Rîpă (2002), *Teoria Superioară a Muzicii* [The Higher Theory of Music], Vol. II, *Rhythm*, Editura MediaMusica, Cluj.

about his film music, Cornel Țăranu confessed that Tiberiu Olah (the author of the famous film score for the *Mihai Viteazu*), was one of those from whom he had a lot to learn about film music. This would not have been possible without communication.

Thus, we can look at the work of an artist in the context of his entire creation, as a stylistic paradigm of relations with other creators by belonging to a school or a generation, by connecting to a historical time.

> So, we come to establish the rule that, in order to understand a work of art, an artist, a group of artists, we must accurately represent the general state of mind and customs of the time to which they belonged. Therein lies the ultimate explanation; the primordial cause that determines the rest, too. This truth, gentlemen, is confirmed by experience; and indeed, if one goes through the main epochs of the history of art, one sees that the arts appear, then disappear along with certain states of mind and morals to which they are attached.[5]

3. An homage to Eminescu, echoes of Enescu (*Carillon nocturne*), emotional interiority, the atmosphere of childhood, relationship with nature

The work *Bell chimes midnight...* for solo piano, composed in 2022, having its first audition at the *Musical Autumn festival* in Cluj the same year when I performed it, is intended to be a sincere tribute to Eminescu and his poetic universe. Eminescu was for me a cradle for the formation of my personality and spirituality, as a teenager who opened the vibrations of his mind and heart to the world, with amazement. In this sense, the universe where I grew up, in Sîngeorz Băi, including hills, mountains, forests, emerges from the sonorities of this work as a reminder of the *eternal* moments spent on the plains full of flowers, hay stacks, animals, corn and potatoes crops, harvest days, where I continued to go on holiday even eleven years after, (when I went to study in Cluj) to work the earth, in a beneficial symbiosis, unaware of at the time, with this universe. Returning to this wonderful space now, however, also includes the route traveled, which is revealed by the music and the inherent tensions that life offers you.

To complete the atmosphere, there are subtle sound echoes reminiscent of George Enescu's *Carillon nocturne*, one of my favorites piano pieces in Enescu's creation (see example 1, the beginning of *Carillon*, and my own echoes of Enescu).

Through these inserts, an emblematic fresco of suggestions is completed. In fact, there are other musical personalities I thought of while working on this

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[5] Hippolyte Taine (1973), *Filosofia artei* [The Philosophy of art], Editura Enciclopedică Română, București, pp. 8-9.

piece, (some being my teachers) such as Ede Terényi, Ștefan Angi, Dan Voiculescu, Francisc Laszlo, Ileana Szenik, Vasile Herman, Voicu Enăchescu. More recently, even if the work was written before, I added Cornel Țăranu and my colleague Bianca Temeș.

Thus, working on this piece can be compared to delving into the past, to reminiscing about childhood and adolescence, to regaining the scent of youth and the color of an Edenic time to which I feel I need to return more often, as an important moment of intense feeling. Thus, we have not only a self-analysis of form and work, but also of the emotional context in which this piece was created.

4. Resonance as a sound phenomenon (without reference to spectralism), cluster chords in grave – the sonority of bells

Based on the phenomenon of resonance (in the sense of letting sounds sound, without necessarily making references to spectralism), which makes us think of the sonority of bells (especially in the grave register, reminiscent of programmatic music), the piece exploits the grave sonorities of the piano. In this way, time recalibrates and creates the opportunity for long-gone moments to return to the mental screen in the listener's mind (see example 2, chords in the grave tone referring to the ringing of bells).

In a world of constant Brownian motion and often useless running, getting carried away by the wave, then breaking away from it, it is a pleasure to find time to listen to and enjoy the echo of sounds, strings of sounds and chords. To savor it by creating it, letting it resonate inside as well as in the ether of relived time. Recollections are beneficial for the soul, in a world where being anchored in a present without past is more and more extensive. All these things I had the chance to live thanks to Eminescu's poetry, in an ascending spiritual movement, which reminds me of Plotinus. "The man of a philosophical nature is ready to ascend, and, as it were, is winged; he does not need separation / from sensory things / like the others spoken of before; He has moved upwards, but, being in trouble, he *needs only a guide to guide him...*"[6]

With regard to the grave register of the piano, I am reminded of one of my favorite philosophers, Schopenhauer, who in *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (*The World as Will and Representation*), considers that grave tones express the tendency of non-organic nature or mass of the planet, from which the other tones are born, forming the harmony with them, in which lies the key to spiritualization through high sounds.[7] It is desirable that, during the audition of my work, twelve bell tolls should be heard (cluster on the last three sounds

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[6] Plotinus (2002), *Complete Works I*, Humanitas, București, p. 438.
[7] Arthur Schopenhauer (2020), *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. I, II, Humanitas, București.

in the grave), three at the beginning, three at the end, and two more groups of three, between sections one and two and two and three.

5. Three sections, which can be sung in the preferred order of the performer, with the first interchangeable structures that are the basis of the work

The work, built based on three sections (which can be interpreted in random order), whose first structures are interchangeable, chains traditional chords with clusters and symmetrical, geometric, chords (see system five of the score, beginning) and combines the harmonic world with lyrical moments and movement passages, all mixed in a retort of a cantabile that refers both to the atmosphere of Eminescu's text and to Enescu's melodica (see example 3, first structure). Along with the first structure, the others are easily visible due to the graphics of the score (see score).

The first structures within each section are complementary, one ascending, one descending and the other in a fan. The performer can choose the order, depending on how the moment and affectivity dictate. The order in the score follows the logical path but is not mandatory. Moreover, within the piece, there are many moments where the pianist can decide on the interpretive variants.

Improvisation is allowed, provided that in general the structures are respected. The last movement moment in S3 can be amplified, even doubled, at the repetition of each group of 12 sounds, by singing the sounds in the parentheses.

Depending on the interpreter's mood, the work can begin with the quotation from Enescu (*Carillion nocturnes*), (0) in the economy of the formal scheme or directly with the first part of chords, the Enescu quotation, which can be repeated by the interpreter in other places during the evolution, if they think fit.

6. The structure of each section: terraced chords, their transformation into melody, echoes of Enescu (Carillion echoes), spraying the chord-melody, bell chimes

Each section is subdivided into three structures: (a) terraced cluster chords (*do#-re-sol#-fa#-sol*) at the beginning, which will also become melodic support through horizontal transposition, (b, b1) would be the first, echoes of Enescu reminiscent of Carillion Nocturne, (c) followed by the spraying of the melodic element on the piano keyboard, (b2), the second, respectively motoric elements based on the toccata sound, which have us thinking about the *Todutian* universe but treated in a different way (d). The middle structure also contains a moment of melodic development, (e), welcome in the economy of

the affective means used. This melodic fragment can be repeated (transposed, modified, improvised) also at the end of the piece. For the finale it is desirable to use the four chords from the beginning of system two, perhaps an element, or more and the three bell clusters, as the finale.

A scheme would look like this:

Enescu quote(0) – optional   Ac. Cluster (3x)

A a: 5 chords, b melodic: b, b1, c (interj. Enes) b2 fan, d (movement)
                                    Ac. Cluster (3x)
                        I   II   III
A' a': 5 chords, b'melodic: b', b1', c' (2x)   b2', e'   d'   f (arm.)
                                    Ac. Cluster (3x)
                        I   II   III
A''a'':5 chords, b''melodic: b'', b1'', b2'',   c'' (3x)   d''   f'(arm.)

Finale, e (2-3x)   Ac. Cluster (3x)

Thirteen sections can be delimited in this way, approximately, with repetitions and underground communications, which give us a chain shape.

The length of each sound and chord within the first structure of each section remains at the discretion of the performer, the one expressed by the author being only indicative. The same with regard to tempo and agogics. The piece can unfold in a great rubato, which mostly characterizes Enescu's music, juxtaposed for contrast with giusto moments.

7. The relationship between poetry and current composition techniques. The diversity of writing, the chordal layering, the relationship between verticality-horizontality, spraying-spacing, post(neo)romantic chordality

Eminescu's poem, through its poetic images, represents the starting point as a poetic-musical universe, but it will be transcendentalized and complemented by modern compositional techniques, such as chordal layering, the transposition of chords in a horizontal plane, the arching of melodic slopes over a large stretch of piano registers, references to the atmosphere of post-romantic music, polystylism as well as the diversity of writing.

I felt the need to use several composition techniques, because the poetic images, of an emotional depth, are diverse. The ringing of the bell, the sleep that does not come, the thoughts, all gathered to glorify the permanence and importance of language, as an exceptional element that makes the spiritual connection between all things and thoughts.

Inserting the text into the score, almost randomly, is another modality specific to modern music, but without *being textmusik.*

8. The relationship between text and melody. Self-analysis as inner investigation and a starting point for the renewal of creative (compositional) work

About the relationship between music and the text, we only mention the fact that the text created a deep state of mind which, after a period of contemplation, of fermenting as is with good quality old wines, blossomed into musical ideas. The poetic idea of the night, together with the metaphor of the bells, combined with the memory of the carrillion seen at Esenach in Luxembourg, had a big impact on my emotionality.

I can say that every word of the poem carved in my poetic-artistic identity an affective state of transcendence, of elevation, of desire for communion with the forces beyond us. This poem, whose words transpose you into the metaphysical, reminded me of Blaga and the *Great Anonymous*, whose vigilance feels like an emanation in the vibrating air released by the bell.

Thanks to self-analysis, as a means of self-knowledge, nodal points can be seen in the inner landmarks; the investigation can include both the spiritual level, through psychological, emotional, sentimental and artistic introspection, as well as that of manifesting a craft (composition techniques, structures), thus opening new doors to future compositional endeavors.

9. Instead of conclusion

You are probably wondering why twelve bells? Because the numbers twelve, along with three and seven, are magical, influencing thinking and artistic expressions over time. It is easier to think of twelve months, or the twelve apostles. So, in summary, twelve is a "number of grace, perfection, measure and governance". The sum-combination 6+6 also suggests the fact that this number is the representation of "cyclic perfection" and the "perfect balance of forces", as well as the "manifestation number", and that it "shows the liberating, saving process, not the creative one". Thus it identifies with the final judgment itself, as well as with the "tree of reunion", the cross, the sacrifice as redemption for sins, with the "crucifixion and communion, with Christ" – as "part of the earth", which martyrdom elevates, "transports it and makes it merge with spirituality"[8].

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[8] Paulo M. Virio (1971), *La sapienza arcana,* Sophia, Roma, „Dodici", pp. 83-96, *apud* Solas Boncompagni (2003), *Lumea simbolurilor* [The World of symbols], Humanitas, Bucureşti, p. 135.

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Music section

Fig. 1 Ioan pop, *Se bate miezul nopţii (Bell chimes midnight)*