

**Dan Dediu**  
***Siluate în mișcare. Eseuri despre compozitori români*<sup>1</sup>**  
**[Silhouettes in movement. Essays about**  
**Romanian composers]**

LAURA-OTILIA VASILIU  
 “George Enescu” National University of Arts Iași  
 ROMANIA\*

The *silhouettes in movement* of the twenty-two Romanian composers, selected by the author from all the generations after 1960, were profiled in time as a consequence of repeated artistic perceptions and sensible human contacts; but especially in virtue of a unique skill of penetrating reflection doubled by a passion for relevant, singular literary expression. Testifying this is the following introductory paragraph: “Any book is the result of more or less astral congregations. The book you are holding in your hands makes no exception. It comes out as the fruit of subjective reflections, worked out in hours of listening and meditating, understanding and formulating, refining and stylising, which the author of these lines spent in the last thirty years in the company of Romanian musical works.” Dan Dediu refers to the debates of the Bureau of the Section for symphonic and chamber music of the Composers’ Union from Romania, “a live school of composition and life” (p. 88), which he has participated in uninterruptedly since 1994, next to the makers of the modern school and other creators with vision, audacity and talent.



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Dan Dediu’s essays, overflowing with ideas and remarkable literary tropes present a stratified addressability in a torrent of significant messages pointed towards all categories of readers. The interest of advanced musicians is maintained by privileging certain aspects of each composer’s thinking, beside semantic interpretations of recent works – physiognomies represented emblematically in memorable titles. Young composers and

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\* vasiliulora@gmail.com

musicians can discover each name's general outline, while the relation between technique, sense and eloquent literary expression, professed by Dan Dediu, can constitute a veritable school and a fertile source. Even the portrayed authors can be surprised by the revelation of their minds' meanders, by the mark stuck to their image. The stratum of non-musician intellectuals can also be found among his readership, in virtue of an essential attribute of new music, reformulated along mathematical certainties, adapting modern scientific theories, philosophical ideas, images/techniques from other arts or extrapolating features belonging to known musical traditions; but also by virtue of Dan Dediu's openness towards a wider cultural area, constantly present through the practised analogies and the starting points he initiated in debating on the compositional ideas.

The first chapter – **George Enescu's *Symphony No. 4: the history of a symphonic Oedipe*** – is occasioned by a new edition of the score, completed and orchestrated by Pascal Bentoiu in 1996. Dan Dediu's enthusiasm in deciphering this almost unknown music, his insight into all the reminiscences, especially those pertaining to *Oedipe*, are infectious, inciting one to (re)listen to the work: “it flows like a stream of hot lava, filling all the nooks of perception with its melodic-harmonic incandescence” (p. 13). Placing a new figure related to Enescu at the beginning of the book reveals a certain strategy. We are shown the criteria of choosing the following portraits: the visionary composers, who asserted themselves in the Romanian musical environment, those with a notable stylistic identity and/or international prestige, performer-composers or musicologists who heightened the knowledge of new Romanian music.

Situating Ștefan Niculescu (1927-2008) as the first one of the personalities in the post-Enescu era is self-understood (**Ștefan Niculescu or on the tectonics of the soul**). The composer and professor influenced the art of many generations of creators, emitting models of thinking with a strong “memetic” impact. Heterophony is at the centre of discussion – a technique of overlapping the original melody with its versions, naturally, involuntarily practised in old traditions of the globe, including in Romanian folklore. Through its theory and implementation in the contemporary sonic context by Ștefan Niculescu, heterophony, underlines the author, will become “a viral writing technique” (p. 22), a respectable dissidence to the avant-gardist dogma preached at Darmstadt. The musical sense incorporated in heterophony – “*the mechanics of waking up and the joy of finding*” (pp. 28-29) – seems tangential to the religious spiritual flow. In the same measure – the aesthetics of his art: “Ștefan Niculescu's music can be assimilated to a music of the lithosphere, with volcanos and sonic precipices, which configure tectonics of the soul, a prayer turned into stone, floating between heaven and earth...” (p. 21).

The essay dedicated to Tiberiu Olah (1928-2002), a composer who reached a wider audience due to his film music (who has not remarked the artfulness of the soundtrack from *Michael the Brave*?) is mysteriously entitled **With Tiberiu Olah, about “the symphony of foreboding” and the “wandering bass”**. The meaning appears in the commentary to *Symphony No. 3 If you cross the Selena River. Metamorphoses on the Moon Sonata* (obviously, it is Beethoven’s notorious work). Written in 1989, on the threshold of postmodernism, this work conveys an intense feeling of the tragic. The successive fragmentations, the gradual hiding of the source “wears heavily on this music like an obsessive presentiment, which, towards the end of the symphony, becomes almost unbearable reality...” (p. 34). Having absorbed such poetic expressions, one tunes better into Olah’s meanings.

**With Aurel Stroe through the nooks of the mind and the bizzareries of music – morphogenetic essay** – is a famous study of the author, which requires re-reading. The intellectual level of Stroe (1932-2008), fed by the physics of Ilya Prigogine, René Thom and Alexandre Grothendieck’s mathematics, the philosophy of Parmenides and Martin Heidegger is almost untouchable for musicians. His music, conceived as “a medium through which thinking is expressed, ideas and not emotions were first of all formulated” (p. 49), is difficult to accept by music lovers. Listening to contemporary music necessitates another psychological mechanism, different from the subjective perception that classical opera has accustomed us with. Contemporary music requires *pure perception*, Dan Dediu stipulated in an older essay (*The Art of Listening to the Trolley-Bus or the Perception of Contemporary Music*, published in his volume *Radicalisation and guerilla*, 2004). “Attention, concentration, the purity of the soul that hesychasts speak of are the means through which this type of *pure perception* is obtained” – the author stipulated (the quoted work, pp. 152-153). This purity of the soul is considered to be the prime quality of Aurel Stroe’s music, beside other features that compose a veritable guide, which must be followed with a clear mind in order to take the next step towards the art of he who “electrified” the European intellectual world.

**With Anatol Vieru, through the meanders of “the long time”** is also a study-essay with original ideas. The author chooses to comment at length on the problematics of time, given the attention attributed by the composer himself; and not only as a technique of ordering the sonic discourse, applied by Vieru on the basis of the string of prime numbers, associated with the organisation, ranged in tiers, of the musical space (in works with a career of their own: *Hourglass I, Hourglass II, Eratosthenes’s Sieve*). In this essay Dan Dediu explains several implications of the time-sonority relation, departing from Fernand Braudel’s theory of historical time; “the short duration” and “the long duration”. This theory proves useful in penetrating the axiological level of

judgement: why a music “expires”, why another “increases in time”. We should retain the feature of a work, which is revealed in time: it is required to have *an enigmatic structure*, which cannot be deciphered at first sight but provokes the wish to understand. Moving “the long time” to the display of the musical discourse, the commentary departs from Anatol Vieru’s confession: “the feeling of time is associated for me with that of erosion” (quoted at p. 65). The author searches for a meaning, focusing on a few late operas, like *Symphony No. 6 “The Exodus”*. The conclusion is unnerving: “Vieru plays here at the limit of time, as at the end of *the long time* the breeze of the tragic is brought through the evaporation of the musical content and the setting up of the *weak* temporal quality, which I have named *spleen*. *The music arrives at a core.*” (p. 79). The possibility of it being an enigmatic structure is not, however, side-lined; its sense could be revealed in time.

A further two composers from the 1960s generation are included in Dan Dediu’s selection: Pascal Bentoiu (1927-2016) and Theodor Grigoriu (1926-2014), who, by not being professors, influenced the following generations to a lesser extent. Both were far-reaching orchestrators, both had a literary vocation, both had exercised the referential-syncretic art (related to theatre or film) but were fundamentally different in the approached themes. Pascal Bentoiu was a universalist, a line supported not only in his pure music (symphonies, chamber works) but also in his creations for the opera (*Doctor Love, The Sacrifice of Iphigenia, Hamlet*). On the other hand, Theodor Grigoriu was attached to “the poetics of the Romanian ethos” (p. 90) (*Symphonic variations on a song by Anton Pann, The Pontic Elegy, Transylvanian pastorals and idylls*). The two maestros referenced George Enescu through different means, with Bentoiu contributing greatly to the study of Enescu and multiplying the list of posthumous works, while Grigoriu evoked him in his own scores (*Homage to Enescu*), continuing his ethos through *melos* and writing. It remains that “the long time” also function for their works.

A touching essay is dedicated to former professor Nicolae Coman (1936-2016), a distinguished and independent spirit, recognised by his peers for his poetic and musical talent projected onto his miniatures for voice and piano or instrumental ensemble. “He is the composer who preferred the intimate reserve of the singing and the instantaneous explosion of emotions in lieder, as he is the poet, who sang, infinitely sensitively, the meanders of the modern soul searching for the Absolute” (p. 93), Dan Dediu expresses in nuances in the chapter **Nicolae Coman and the gates to light**.

Returning to the avant-garde, the author first captures the portrait of Cornel Țăranu (b. 1934), the erudite academician professor of musical Cluj-Napoca, a prodigious and skilful composer, an ingenious adapter of Western techniques from serialism to controlled indeterminacy, worthy propagator of

new music through the *Ars Nova* ensemble as early as 1968. Concentrating on a stylistic definition (**With Cornel Țăranu, through wreaths and columns or style as an atom**), the author discovers the core of his system of thinking and the recognisable stylemes, such as “the signals of the winds (with a smack of alpenhorn signals) ... obsessive repetition, the excess of dissonances, the non-developing combining forms” (p. 99).

Once Cornel Țăranu has been portrayed, a fine demarcation line is drawn between the ‘60s generation and the following one. The stage of intensive experimentation from the 1970s would be supported through four figures, emblematic in their impact on the creative and research environment in Romania: Octavian Nemescu (1940-2020), Corneliu Dan Georgescu (b. 1938), Nicolae Brânduș (1935-2023), Ulpiu Vlad (b. 1945). These are part of a numerous group of avant-garde composers born around the year 1940 (Corneliu Cezar, Dan Voiculescu, Fred Popovici, Iancu Dumitrescu, Horațiu Rădulescu, Costin Mioreanu, Lucian Mețianu, Costin Cazaban, Mihai-Mitrea Celarianu, Dinu Ghezzo, Sever Tipei), most of them choosing exile (the last eight) and succeeding in asserting themselves in the circles of European or American new music.

Returning to the contents of this volume, I observe that in the chapter **Octavian Nemescu and the mysticism of buzzing** Dan Dediu offers an explanatory picture of the creator’s personality, a relevant interpretation of his artistic and spiritual vision, which had remained engulfed in mystery despite the composer’s numerous theoretical argumentations. In the author’s opinion Octavian Nemescu was “a fiery personality, open towards the horizon of prophesy, with apocalyptic visions and an intransigent intellectual attitude”, a musician who “intends to tear himself away from the spectacular of the concert and change through a process of initiation during which individuals, the listeners, would change like a practitioner of yoga meditation” (p. 103). Thus, Dan Dediu finds the key to the meaning of the cycle *The Book of Hours*, critically assessing the composer’s choices, the musical language based on “sonic words fetishized [...] and used as *ethos symbols* on the basis of an extensive personal ritualist and shamanic programme” (p. 107). The analyst’s incompatibility with Octavian Nemescu’s world is obvious, yet objectivity wins, as he finally claims that the manner of applying the concepts is original and convincing. Dan Dediu’s natural musicality also reacts to his contact to the timeless music defined by the aesthetics of monotony, art and thought promoted by Corneliu Dan Georgescu. The author perfectly understands the composer’s static minimalism and the biblical and apocalyptic nuance in his last works but Dan Dediu’s interest in the section **Corneliu Dan Georgescu – the language and the limbos of originality** makes for his monumental musicological oeuvre, anthologised in two huge volumes totalising ca. 1500 pages. Unveiling the components of the thematic area through the title –

*Timeless music. Archetypes. Ethnomusicology. Romanian composers*, the work features fundamental pieces of research published/presented in Romania, in Germany (where he settled in 1987), in other scientific centres of Europe, which impress through the learned altitude of their approaches, the variety of the knowledge interests, the clear perspective on Romanian music. **With Nicolae Brânduș, in the land of the hybrid**, an essay of viral artfulness, directs the projector towards the last works of an author with the vocation of the avant-garde, with intense practice in experimental music as early as 1970. In his style, metamorphosed over the years along with the change in the cultural paradigm, Dan Dediu finds defining insignia: the absurd, the bazaar, the stupor. Commenting the mini-opera *Ornithorincus*, the author integrates it in the area of vernacular postmodernism “with a few batty grafts”; “the dream-like state of his stylistic combinations – continues the author –, the phantasmagoria of his discourse breaks, the doltish psychedelic and the eccentricity of the endings, all these characteristics define a fresh but sophisticated, unfettered but controlled, openly displayed but also esoteric opus.” (p. 131). Dan Dediu’s spiritual availability of penetrating extravagantly diverse concepts, visions and creative attitudes is also revealed in the sometimes poetic, sometimes lucid and analytical text **Ulpiu Vlad and the botanical resonances**. Here is an excerpt: “Pastellated and refined but also whirling like summer storms, Ulpiu Vlad’s opera possess intrinsic melodiousness, which develops imperceptibly, like cloud bundles.” (p. 136) Recognised through his unusual aesthetic position regarding *the poetics of dreams*, an expression of rare sensibility leading him towards unique writing with suggestions of improvisation, only partially rigorously noted, Ulpiu Vlad draws Dan Dediu’s attention through a consistent group of works. Analysing the scores *Resonances on a yellow background II*, *Wild flowers II*, *Through the sounds of the blue flowers* (I and II), *Sonorities and anemones*, *Sculptural fusions*, the author evinces the colour nuances of ineffable quality, “the aphoristic expression”, “the touch of contemplative nostalgia”, some expressionistic accents – a music “inviting on to re-listen”.

Including the composer Viorel Munteanu (b. 1944) in the parsimonious selection of this volume bears emotional significance for us, citizens of Iași, as much as the essay **Viorel Munteanu or the classical modernism of Byzantine inspiration** is sensitive and affectionate. Capturing the image of the man in resonance with his name – “a mountain of liveliness”, an “always animated, lively and trepidating” manner, a “mountainous massif of effort and will” (p. 140), Dan Dediu sketches the artistic and academic oeuvre of the Iași musician, stopping on his Byzantine direction. Especially his last genre work, the oratorio *Invitations to salvation (Pilgrims to St. Parascheva)*, which repeats a stylistic connection approached from a distance by few composers, firstly by Paul Constantinescu in the interwar period, subsequently by Ștefan Niculescu in the 1990s and 2000s. The interpenetration between the model of the Western

religious oratorio (a concert expression of Catholic or Reformed sacred music) and the Byzantine *melos* seems to Dan Dediu a “surprising thing”. The two types of spirituality are “brought together without effort or grinding”, fulfilling a work “akin to his own talent, humbly, with faith and hope...” (p. 145).

Maintaining the chronological order, the author will focus his attention on a group of representative composers for the 1980s generation, who capitalised artistically on the multiple conquests of the avant-garde and took the first steps towards postmodernism, recognised nowadays as first ranking personalities. The chapter **With Adrian Iorgulescu, in the carnival of duality** stresses the quality of a leader of the composer he comments upon, supported by the value and scope of his compositions, his writings of musical aesthetics, of the long and efficient managerial activity (President of the Composers and Musicologists’ Union from Romania from 1992 until 2022). Adrian Iorgulescu’s works (b. 1951) are the object of profound hermeneutics (referring to *Symphonies Nos. 3 and 5* and a few other creations), as the original features are revealed: *incorporating / transfiguring the quotation, the sonic gestures*, his particular minimalism, the relation between fragmentation and the extended formal arch, between the kaleidoscopic successions and the force of alternative development. “The spirit of his music is a Beethovenian one – Dan Dediu stipulates – (...) while the dominant expression features harshness and even severe drama”. *The expressive dualities* defining Adrian Iorgulescu’s art are also reflected in the association between the elegiac lyricism or “serene” poetry and “the ridiculous, dancing, dreamlike and theatrical” (pp. 151-152). Călin Ioachimescu’s portrait produces the revealing contrast. The composer’s vocation and technical capacity, his passion for the acoustics of sound led him towards spectralism and electronic music in formats of the musical avant-garde. With inspired comments about works composed after 1990 and performed by the avant-garde saxophonist Daniel Kientzy (*Concerto for saxophone and orchestra, Éclats de l’Abîme, Saxtraces*), Dan Dediu evinces expressive subtleties obtained by combining acoustic and electronic music, informational densities and explosive sensations. **With Călin Ioachimescu among the scintillations of the abyss** also capitalises on his most recent works, among which *The Concert for flute and orchestra, Organum Decimum*, where the flute plays a central role. The incentive provided by the mastery of soloist Ion Bogdan Ștefănescu, of his exceptional flute class, but also by the artistic virtuosity of his son, flutist Matei Ioachimescu roused a new type of complex, yet current creativity, intertextual but connected gravely to the *Absolute Spirit*: J. S. Bach, quoted at the end of the work *Organum Decimum*.

Another distinct figure of the 1980s generation is Doina Rotaru (b. 1951), an inspired and prolific composer, irremediably attached to the ethos of Romanian music in the tradition of the *doina*, written through her own techniques of simulated improvisation and heterophony. The acuity of Dan

Dediu's analysis in the chapter **Doina Rotaru or the radiography of the elements** firstly reveals the continuity of the sonic flow obtained from capitalising on a few intonations, ornamental, melismatic formulas, "a personal and emanating stylistic nucleus". The process of her music with an ancient hue creates a direction named by the author *melismatic archetypal minimalism*. Looking at her creation for flute (over thirty works in various genres) causes the author to reflect memorably: the flute substitutes the voice and prolongs it in *elemental* fashion; the music seems like "winding the flares and whimpers of an imaginary limbo, come from the depths of ancestral memory" (p. 162). Stopping at the end of his essay on the orchestral poem *Nymphéa* (2019), inspired by Boris Vian's novel *Froth on the Daydream*, the author re-discovers in Doina Rotaru's music "the theme of the *torn being*, like weeping at a cosmic scale", grounded on a "founding melodic gesture – the fall, the *lamento*" but which leaves "there to be guessed a subsisting light in the subtext" (p. 166).

**Liviu Dănceanu – being a music trotter or stylistic historicism** glosses about a nature generously endowed for music, literature and philosophy. Liviu Dănceanu (1954-2017), the composer, threw himself into conquering new music, creatively assimilating avant-garde techniques *en vogue* in the 80s and subsequently. He drew his energy from being active as a conductor of the *Archaeus* ensemble, by playing his own scores, the scores of a wide pleiad of current composers and organising genre festivals (*The Days of Contemporary Music* in Bacău, beginning with 1986) – ways by which he ascended towards a better knowledge of new music. Additionally, the musician searched for meanings, accumulating the reading of varied and vast specialty literature, edifying his style of an erudite essayist and poet of musicology. Capturing the tragic sense of his artistic visions features in the *quasi* cycles (*Quasifuga*, *Quasiconcerto*, *Quasisinfonia*, etc.) and *History*, Dan Dediu observes the references of an original polystylism, "placed among the unlikely, the dramatic, the ironic, the hilarious, the grotesque and the comical" (p. 170), a facet of the "message of desperation" conveyed through his entire oeuvre, the cultural pessimism sifted in the study *The Apocalypse of Learned Music*. By contrast, the art of Adrian Pop (b. 1951) seems a *thing in itself*, skilfully and reasonably made, with the sensitive and lucid attitude of the classical composer towards syntax and dramaturgy. His vast European culture, his pedagogical vocation, his beneficial influence on the education and musical life of Cluj-Napoca (as rector of the "Gheorghe Dima" Academy of Music, head of the *Transilvania* Philhamony, initiator and manager of the *Cluj modern* festival) have created infallible prestige for him. His increasingly well-known works for voices or instrumental ensemble (the string quartet *The Silk and the Metal*, the choral cycle *Galgenlieder-Bagatellen*) balance out sonic thinking and soulful vibration, the concept of the whole with the magnifying glass of detail. **The deft handicraftsman: Adrian Pop** is a harmonious text, with essential

perceptions, without ardent superlatives. Quoting György Kurtág's appreciation adds to its value: "My encounter with Adrian Pop's music was a veritable discovery: it seemed to me fresh and full of virtuosity, idiomatic to the highest degree, simple and, at the same time, sophisticated. It betrays the mastery of the author's compositional art and impresses with the way in which it explores rarely mapped areas of the soul." (p. 182)

The list of the *silhouettes in true movement* continues with Sorin Lerescu (b. 1953), a musician with considerable activity also at an international level on a compositional, organisational and interpretative line and as the conductor of the *Traiect* ensemble of new music (founded in 1982). From the basic outlining of his style, determined by the post-Vieru modalism and the post-Olah heterophony (his two Romanian mentors), continued by instrumental theatre and the surrealism *en vogue* in Romania in the 1980 and 1990, Dan Dediu passes to a detailed observation of his musical narration. Features of an accessible music, defined through the diatonic (**Sorin Lerescu and the emanations of the diatonic**), "melodic humming", "candid" luminosity, aestheticism. The comparison proposed by the author in the comment upon the electronic work *Dream Space* is surprising, ironically friendly: "the sonority of *Dream Space* seems plasticised in an aura of consonance, flowing like a river of cotton candy towards an unknown destination" (p. 186). **Andrei Tănăsescu – parody and speed** edify the portrait of a composer – an inventive pianist, full of virtuosity (b. 1955), an adept of diverse stylistic combinations typical of postmodernism. The nuancing proposed by Dan Dediu procures new metaphors: the instrumentation of references is strengthened "through an invigorating infusion of a few elements of instrumental theatre, which can be mainly defined as caprices, blunders or tomfooleries" (p. 188).

At the end of the book, Dan Dediu brings to the fore two composers from his generation, musicians with a tragic destiny: George Balint (1961-2019) and Nicolae Teodoreanu (1962-2018). Both were trained in Ștefan Niculescu's class, both were fully endowed for art and intellectual reflection, having, however, distinct, almost divergent profiles. **George Balint and the story of wings** becomes the metaphor of someone who had unconsciously foreseen his fate (of being stuck in a wheelchair), composing the work *The story of wings* during his years as a student. The results of his heroic fight against the incapacity of his body and the depreciation of his social status are featured in an extensive compositional and musicological oeuvre, remarkable through originality and the profound thinking. Meticulously analysing his works from themes to language, Dan Dediu evinces characteristics worthy of retaining: "the folkloric vein" manifested in *doina*-like or rhythmmed sonorities, "the poetic and philosophical vein", "the ludic vein" fed by a healthy sense of humour manifested paradoxically in the situation of his personal drama. Raising the poetic pen, Dan Dediu meditates towards the end as follows:

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“George Balint floats through music with grace, serenity and profoundness. His wings are now spread, shining blindingly in the light of Time, carrying with them a pure and courageous soul, much too tried.” (pp. 200-201) Nicolae Teodorescu found another way for himself. His music introduces us to an ancient world, definitively marked by the Byzantine psalm *melos*, processed through the new techniques: heterophony, controlled improvisation, refined electronic sonorities, particular relations between diffuse consonance and extreme dissonance. **With Nicolae Teodoreanu, about flakes and flights**, the author follows the sacred character in works obviously inspired from the Orthodox spiritual world (*The Hymns of Winter, Songs for the Birth of Our Lord*), in others which contrast the Byzantine chant with the academic art of Western filiation (*Variations-Varis*) and in compositions which hide the source, favouring, however, experiences associated to religious meditation (*String Quartet No. 2, The Fountain of Youth*, etc.). Under Dan Dediú’s pen, his music “has, as Milan Kundera would say, a lightness of being conveying to it the elegance of snowflakes. And, concurrently, you keep it in mind as a flight” (p. 206).

The musicians who read Dan Dediú’s synthetic study *Romanian Compositional Contributions after 1960* from the second volume of the work *New Histories of Romanian Music* (co-ordinated by Valentina Sandu-Dediú and Nicolae Gheorghiuță) will perceive beneficial complementarity in the current volume. His minute and exciting commentaries to many scores, among the most recent signed by the selected composers, offer new arguments and examples in order to understand the proposed concepts of systematisation. Although most of the portrayed composers are well-known from other Romanian pieces of writing, what Dediú sees is different: he breaks through the strata to the core of the phenomenon and proposes a surprising form, of modern literary expressiveness, almost impossible and useless to paraphrase.