

BOOK REVIEW

VALENTIN TIMARU - ON MUSIC AND BEAUTY IN ESSAYISTIC STYLE

Among Valentin Timaru's theoretical works, we encounter three volumes *Aforisme: comentarii și confesiuni* (*Aphorisms: Comments and Confessions*), *Muzica noastră cea spre ființă* (*Our Life-Giving Music*), and *Frumosul artistic și fațetele sale subiective* (*Artistic Beauty and Its Subjective Facets*), which are approached contextually, in an essayistic, personalized style. The author's manner of speech often encloses subjective aspects gathered during his lifetime experience, but nevertheless the proposed debate involves a vast knowledge of various stringent (general) artistic, artistic-musical, philosophical, aesthetic, and psychological issues (behavioural conducts and human feelings).

In essayistic style¹ because not all aspects required in the elaboration of such a study are observed *ad litteram*. The large sizes of the works enable us to approach their subjects from various perspectives, advising the reader in perceiving the themes microscopically as well as synoptically.

The manner in which the presented works are approached is synonymous to a review, as it includes summarizing configurations of the revealing ideas depicted by the author. The text is scattered with the *subchapters' titles* (e b) cumulated on the contextual level, or *themes, expressions, terminologies* which hold an evidently important role among the themes debated by the author.

***Aforisme: comentarii și confesiuni* (*Aphorisms: Comments and Confessions*)**

In the work *Aforisme: comentarii și confesiuni* (*Aphorisms: Comments and Confessions*)², written in an essay-like shape and at the same time

¹ Essay, 1. small sized study on philosophical, literary or scientific themes, composed with original means, without undertaking to treat a subject exhaustively (Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language, *dexonline*).

² It was printed in 2007 at *Galaxia Gutenberg* (Târgu-Lăpuș), edited by Silviu Hodiș, graphics and cover by Lucian Szekely, text processing by Ioachim Gherman. It is signed *in the memory of Father Florian* as *homage to the dignity with which he lived his vocation as a priest*.

embracing aspects of a philosophical nature, the author, without taking on the role of a professional, treats behaviours, feelings, and beliefs of the human nature. *Behavioural Conducts* (presented in the form of character traits) are described in a personalized manner, being (in some cases) accompanied by aspects of Christian ethics, while the *feelings* are depicted by means of sentiments and emotions.

The first chapter (*That Which Is*) is composed of two parts. The *Behavioural Conducts* are expressed in terms of character traits, illustrated in a personalized manner and underlined by instances of Christian morality.³ The mode of expression in relation to the existential importance of character traits is frank, descriptive, presented in the first person singular and scattered with moral aspects, accompanied by examples appropriate for each type of character. Each behavioural conduct receives a clear and concise definition, while descriptive elements and personal thoughts are depicted similarly to a comment on the initial explanation.

*The Guise of Feelings*⁴, the second part of the chapter *That Which Is*, refers to emotions, sentiments, and experiences of human nature. The mode of depiction and explanation closely resembles the first part, but there are aspects inserted here of feelings preached by father Florian (**envy, shame**), short stories, and a fragment from a variant of *Miorița* (**longing**).

The Attitude and the Gesture are differentiated through dissociative comments. Action, involvement, materialized thought signifies an attitude sometimes enveloped in discretion. The gesture on the other hand requires a hypothetical action, a suggestion, and can display or demonstrate in an annoying manner.⁵ Among the comparisons made between attitude and gesture are inserted meditations and stories, the role of which is to clarify, from various perspectives, the significant differences between the movement of the attitude and/or the artificiality of the gesture.

³ **Generosity** is placed in a relationship of contentment with the love offered by the Saviour and described in the *Gospel According to John* 3:16. **Wisdom** is regarded by the author as a convincing expression of intelligence, **punctuality** a proof of good breeding, and **decency** is compared to pudency. **Dignity** signifies grandeur, gravity, and risk. **Gratitude** is a virtue that few have, **frankness** is the courage of direct expression and **duplicity** is regarded (among others) as a good adaptability to quotidian life. **Pride, vanity** and **conceit** are placed together in a negative description, situated, in the moral hierarchy of value, under narcissism, depicting human degradation.

⁴ **Envy** – expression of one's own unfulfillment, **loneliness** can be an emotional experience overflowing the one not understood by people, **shame** is a reaction determined by common sense, and **hate** is an instance of non-love. **Nostalgia** is the reverberation of a memory, while **nostalgia as regret** emerges as an impossibility to relive moments from the past.

⁵ Valentin Timaru, *Aforisme: comentarii și confesiuni* (*Aphorisms: Comments and Confessions*), Galaxia Gutenberg, Târgu-Lăpuș, 2007, p. 33-35.

The third chapter, ***The Dilemma of the Signs***, is structured by means of the six subchapters standing “*under the sign*” of dialogue, intuition and reason, consensus, calmness and silence, primordially, while the last subchapter lies between *affirmation and negation*. Thus V. Timaru highlights various normative matters from the perspective of *dialogue* and communication. *Reason* orders, catalogues, sets hierarchies. It is defined (in general) by logic thinking, concomitantly involving an amount of wisdom, unlike *intuition*, which admits an undemonstrated truth. *Consensus* is attributed to specific hypostases: consensus as a state of understanding, factual consensus, consensus as antidote (for loneliness), or cooperative consensus. *Calmness* is a state of equilibrium, an inner contentment, a state of mind, while *silence* refers to the discretion of non-movement and the absence of sound signals. “The Sign” of *primordially* is divided into: dilemmas of primordially, duplicity of primordially, and certainties of primordially. The last subchapter revolves *around the sign of absolute affirmation*, represented in the author’s opinion by the Saviour’s words addressed to his apprentices in their moments of faithlessness.⁶

The final chapter (**Healing confessions**) approaches the issue of *opportunism* (attitude, servitude, pragmatism), but also the three acts emerging after the involvement of the spirit: *faith*, *superstition*, and *confession*.

Aforisme: comentarii și confesiuni (*Aphorisms: Comments and Confessions*) is an extensive essayistic work, in which Valentin Timaru debates subjects, behaviours, feelings, and beliefs, without undertaking a professional’s role. The idea of the book started, according to the author, from every day’s obsessing questions; the answers (or rhetorical interrogations) are written in a sincere, intimate manner and are completed by abstract confessions.

Muzica noastră cea spre ființă (Our Life Giving Music)

The extensive essay *Muzica noastră cea spre ființă (Our Life Giving Music)*⁷ encloses an approach destined for the music loving public, evincing a thematic variety of general interest in the musical art. Valentin Timaru wishes to enlighten the minds of those who “still reside outside music”, employing references to elements of language, philosophical interrogations, musical genres and forms, musicological ideas, questions and answers in religious music, annotations with historical-musical and stylistic valences, models and anti-models in musical sub-professions.

⁶ Idem, p. 47-70.

⁷ The first edition of the work *Muzica noastră cea spre ființă (Our life giving music)* was released by Axa, in Botoșani, in 2001. The 2nd revised and complemented edition was released in 2008 by *Galaxia Gutenberg*, with a cover by Maria Timaru.

The meticulously structured volume encloses information that does often surpass the music lovers' sphere. In the first chapter, *The Music Before Music*, the author treats the problem of musical language, *Music in Its Essence* offers explanations on musical language as an element of communication, and the *Revitalization of Music Through Its Creators* offers the reader stylistic coordinates and aesthetic elements related to the approached subject.

In his meditations, the author captures the existence of a permanent *need for music*, which he calls "unconscious addiction" (it is not perceived as a reality). The *Sonosphere* represents the quasi-musical world that we live in, while the adaptability of our own wishes creates a *habitat for sound*.

Valentin Timaru presents historical and structural aspects of high importance in the field of the *musical genre*. Being a complex notion, it relies on elements of structural, categorical, and special origin. Among the *most used musical genres* he mentions *genres of simple succession* – the suite (the sequence of a number of parts, unconditioned by specific musical laws), *choral genres of determined succession* (the liturgy, the mass – *kyrie, gloria, credo, sanctus, agnus dei*), *the concert genre, the sonata-symphonic genres, the musical-dramatic genres, and vocal-symphonic genres*.

Table 1

Musical genre⁸		
Structural distinctions	<p>Monopartite genres (troparion, psalm, hymn, motet, ode, madrigal, lied, prelude, musical miniature, choral piece, concert overture, symphonic poem, or other music works made up of a sole part)</p> <p>Multipartite genres (sonata, suite, quartet, quintet, sextet, etc., instrumental concert, oratorio, opera, or other music works made up of several parts).</p>	
Categorical distinctions	Type of sound source	<p><u>Vocal genres</u></p> <p><i>chamber genres</i> (lied, song, ballad, lied cycle)</p> <p><i>choral genre</i> (motet, madrigal, choral poem, choral suite)</p> <p>Dramatic genre (opera, musical theatre)</p> <p>Vocal-symphonic genres (cantata, oratorio)</p>

⁸ The differentiation and repartition of the music genres in this table correspond to the author's classification in *Muzica noastră cea spre ființă* (*Our life giving music*), p. 54-58.

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	<p>Number of performers</p> <p>Type, place, and destination of communication</p>	<p><u>Instrumental genres</u> Sonata – symphonic genres (sonata, duo, trio, quartet) <i>Concert genre</i> - concerto grosso, concert symphony) <i>cameral genres</i> - solo and double concert, concert pieces The symphonic genre (symphony, overture, symphonic piece)</p> <p><i>Solo, cameral or ensemble genres</i></p> <p><u>Music types</u> 1. folk music, 2. religious and ritual music, 3. pop music, 4. ambient music, 5. jazz music, 6. art music works</p>
<p>Specific distinctions</p>	<p>Lyrical genre</p> <p>Epical genre</p> <p>Dramatic genre</p>	<p>- vocal music has priority, in instrumental genres, musical expression renders lyrical aspects; - preponderantly in: recitatives, ariosos, instrumental cadences, improvisations, libero fragments. Intentionally epical pieces (Chopin's ballads, some symphonic poems); - representative: opera.</p>

The *Configuration of Metaphor between Auditory and Visual* conveys various nuances of the figures of speech, rendering a semantic fulfilment of artistic, visual, and auditory images. The author cites the two metaphoric typologies underlined by Lucian Blaga: *plasticizing metaphors* and *revealing metaphors*, stressing the presentation of the figure of style in aesthetics dictionaries, as *an element of artistic language*. A presentation of the metaphor between auditory and visual is accomplished by its configuration in music and plastic arts (light and colour being the results of the same vibrating phenomenon).

Table 2

Purple	Red	Orange	Yellow	Green	Blue	Indigo
Ab	G major	F-E	D major	C-B	A major	G#

We notice thus the author's option regarding the chemistry of colours (3 basic colours and 4 composite ones), by stressing natural semitones (*F-E* is the division of audible orange, *C-B* the division of audible green, the half of the Aboctave – the audible purple and *G#* - the audible indigo).⁹

Of the chapter ***Revitalization of Music by Its Creators*** we wish to mention Master Toduță, honorifically named the *Most Serene*, and depicted by his disciple, slightly subjectively, as surrounded by a mystery aura, before which the student was condemned to an admiring silence. Years later, the same student mentions the *Sigismund Toduță Memorial Concert* (May 17th, 1992 – Toduță would have turned 84 years old) praising the composer's genius through the performed works: *7 Choral-Preludes for Organ*, *Sonata for Oboe and Piano* and *Liturgy for Mixed Chours* (first audition).

Appendix or Pollution by antimodels represents a *not like this!* example. The author portrays the music teacher by a comparison to Caragiale's sketch – ***A New Trend Musician***, where mediocrity is the main descriptive noun. The amateur composer is presented in an antithesis to the professional composer. The compositional craft, which is the differentiating element, manifested along a bi-dimensional trajectory: a temporal one, by structuring the language in terms of syntax, and a syntagmatic one. The composers' qualities reside in their ability to create a musical language, a valuable musical idea, and to use it wisely. The triad talent – intentionality – craft are attributes of a professional composer.

In the end, Valentin Timaru, *speaking about music*, expresses thanks for the opportunity to have written down his ideas, hoping to have created a link between musicians and non-musicians, between professionals and amateurs. In a personalized style, the author conducts an overview of perennial subjects of general interest in the art of music. Starting from elements of language, interrogations of a philosophical nature, musical genre and form, musicological ideas, questions and answers in religious music, annotations with historical-musical and stylistic valences, models and anti-models in musical sub-professions, Valentin Timaru offers a comprehensive presentation addressed predominantly to music lovers, in which professional musicians can nevertheless discover revealing ideas.

⁹ Valentin Timaru, *Muzica noastră cea spre ființă*, (*Our Life Giving Music*, second revised and complemented edition), Galaxia Gutenberg, Târgu-Lăpuș, 2008, p. 78-80.

Frumosul artistic și fațetele sale subiective (Artistic Beauty and Its Subjective Facets)

Authored in the same essayistic style, with an aesthetic-philosophical categorical supplement, the volume *Frumosul artistic și fațetele sale subiective (Artistic Beauty and Its Subjective Facets)*¹⁰ introduces to the reader's mind the notion of beauty in art (preponderantly in the art of music), where Valentin Timaru analyses artistic beauty in a conceptual manner, as well as by means of practical examples. Beauty is regarded from a subjective standpoint, presented in an antithesis to ugliness, and presented in the chapters as follows:

Table 3

<p><i>Prelude to Awareness of Artistic Expression</i> (introductory issues)</p> <p>The Need for Beauty The Dictatorial Spirit of the "isms"</p> <p><i>Interlude (with Some Auditory Annotations or on the Post-music Rest)</i></p> <p>Art as Fashion Modern Consumerism and Bad Taste</p> <p><i>Postlude to Separation from the Eternal Obsessions</i> (conclusive issues)</p>

Art as an expression of beauty is accomplished in the expressive sphere of human nature, having real elements (intrinsic relevance) as well as unreal ones (by configuring its imaginary semantic side). Artistic expression is often characterized by aesthetic delight, that no terminology can explain, whereby the author outlines the need for beauty from a metaphysical standpoint, which is a relevant aspect for each particular person (*Prelude to Awareness of Artistic Expression*).

The author incorporates the artistic creative manifesto in the aesthetic trio truth-beauty-good. *Oscillating between movement and non-movement* (reality or dream, being or non-being), with the help of semantic codes, artistic expression comes to life, placed under the sign of intuition. In *visual arts*, *artistic expression* captures (plastic) certainties of non-movement (line, colour, volume) and in *temporal arts*, art works are presented to us/interpreted/revitalized.¹¹

¹⁰ Valentin Timaru, *Frumosul artistic și fațetele sale subiective (Artistic Beauty and Its Subjective Facets)*, Galaxia Gutenberg, Târgu-Lăpuș, 2009, editor Cristian Șoimușan, text processing Georgiana Tremurici.

¹¹ Valentin Timaru, *Frumosul artistic și fațetele sale subiective (Artistic Beauty and Its Subjective Facets)*, Galaxia Gutenberg, Târgu-Lăpuș, 2009, p. 9-16.

Artistic expression (between the imaginative ephemeral and the materiality of expression) is referred to symbolic elements of metaphoric origin, directing the author towards a communion in the *absolute* with the eternity of *good, beauty, and truth* (the reference to “the need for beauty” belongs to the logic and the reflection of each particular individual).

Stylistics has highlighted, over time, notoriety landmarks of important cultural relevance. Arising from the need to define an artistic trend, these models are used in various hypostases, with terminological and stylistic differentiations, having in common the same suffix: *-ism*. Characterized by the author as *the space of the isms (The Dictatorial Space of “isms”)*, it becomes the vault under which diverse artistic currents, fundamental styles or aesthetic attitudes receive a justification. As an independent stylistic entity, the “ism” has created over time various oppositions, which V. Timaru regards as straying attitudes. The term meant to be problematized is style, which receives such explanations as: aesthetic attitude, artistic style or artistic manner.¹²

The Perception of Fashion as a phenomenon in itself captures positive aspects (the evolution of aesthetic refinement) as well as negative ones (obsessive search for the new). In today’s context, *modern and contemporary in art* have the contextual affinity of stylistic orientations; the modern promotes the new in relationship to previous trends, and the contemporary is related to the present. This relationship can be perceived within every stylistic age, the acception of the term *avant-garde* being attributed to the historical connotations of modernism.

Regarding *the curse of ugliness* and the logic of this aesthetic category in relationship to the perspective of beauty, Valentin Timaru finds the motivation of avoidance, but not of ignorance. Beauty – a fundamental aesthetic category, is regarded as an aspiration towards the absolute, ugliness being classified as *aesthetic an-category* or a *correlative of beauty*. By *the opulence and ostentations of bad taste*, we decipher the discrepancy between a person’s income and cultural-aesthetic level. Ostentations offend good taste through material objects, in the hope of proving an abundance of art (imitative objects, impersonal paintings, gold plated furniture, etc.), thus sinking into the black hole of kitsch.

Postlude to Separation from the Eternal Obsessions or about the regrets of the one who writes: the first (regret) emerges in the author’s

¹² Of the four “styles”, (Classicism, Romanticism –fundamental styles) debated by the author, we mention two: *mannerism* – presented as a consequence of a rhetoric constrained by naturalness, shadowing the artistic discourse. *Polystylism* is catalogued as a pulsation towards an “otherwise at any price” and lacks a natural artistic expression.

obsessions form the zone of unfulfillment, combined with the feeling of dissatisfaction, coming from the approach of the essay by means of a subjective tint. Observations from the spheres of all arts are also differentiated because of the author's field of competence.

By writing this work, Valentin Timaru accomplishes an obvious differentiation between style and manner, a conceptual delimitation between craft and talent, professionalism and amateurism. The author's oscillations in relationship to some avant-garde tendencies, to "modernisms" and mannerist elements are justified as far as expressing the new does not possess a real artistic valence. The method of presentation, although sometimes subjective, reflects personal opinions, accumulated during several decades in the service of artistic beauty.

Conclusions

The three extensive essays *Aforisme: comentarii și confesiuni* (*Aphorisms: Comments and Confessions*), *Muzica noastră cea spre ființă* (*Our Life Giving Music*) and *Frumosul artistic și fațetele sale subiective* (*Artistic Beauty and Its Subjective Facets*) have a remarkable relevance among the musicological works written by Valentin Timaru, unveiling a new side of his personality, moral conduct, and of the intimate and slightly subjective manner in which he approaches the artistic phenomenon in general in an interdisciplinary perspective. The questions asked by the author often have a rhetorical meaning, at the same time raising stringent problems of behavioural conducts and human feelings. Being visibly interested in the perception of music by its lovers, Valentin Timaru presents a thematic variety of general interest, treating the problem of musical language and offering readers stylistic and aesthetic coordinates in order that they may understand the artistic phenomenon of music.

EMANUELA - FABIOLA PRIP
Translated by Alina Pop

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