

STYLISTIC INTERFERENCES IN “THE BRASS QUINTET”

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Abstract: *The interest and preoccupations regarding Polystilism and the junctions of style and writing from different musical periods is one of the essential characteristics of postmodernist composition. Alongside the evolution of our point of view, this type of interferences was not an aim in itself, rather it came as a language necessity more often than not dictated by the themes of our compositions.*

Keywords: *Polystilism, ostinato, rhythmic-melodic theme, isorhythm.*

1. INTRODUCTION

A very interesting research theme is precisely the penetration of the way in which postwar Romanian composers up to the latest generations have understood Polystilism and applied it in their compositions. These problems opened a new curiosity to us not only from the composition point of view, which is the practical work in fact, but from a theoretical one too, analyzing different polystilistic procedures in the Romanian musical creation showed as a component, an intrinsic part of modern music. The effective and practical application of the above has been our preoccupation in our research and creation.

For a more profound understanding of Polystilism and of the stylistic interferences within the composition language, we chose specific, more varied and particular techniques as compared to the expressive and aesthetic necessities of the compositions.

Even from our first compositions, the interference of styles was a rich source of inspiration and language, and it was only later that we recognized this source to be more valuable the more efficiently it was used, but only when justified from the perspective of the profound meaning of music.

The ensemble chosen for this quintet is the classic one: two trumpets in C, a horn in C, a trombone and a tuba, the score being written in C. The composition is a suite made up of five parts structured on the basis of a mirror symmetry, the third part being the symmetry axis of the whole quintet, the second and the fourth parts – the slow parts – have clear similitude, based on a common rhythmic and writing, and the first part and the fifth one also rhyme because of the evident rhythmic ostinati, folk elements and quick tempo.

2. COMPOSITION ANALYSIS

The first part begins with a tuba rhythmic *ostinato*, centered on D, made up of two rhythmic cells and their versions that combine binary pulsation with the ternary one (but conventionally written in 4/4 measure), ostinato that will be present during almost the entire first part. From the harmonic point of view, this part is structured on a bimodalism made up of a Dorian mode on D (tuba and horn) and a Myxolydian mode on F flat, then transposed at an upper major third (the second trumpet).

This first part is subject to a variation principle, looking as a *ciaccona* based on a main rhythmic-melodic theme, that appears in two very resembling variants in successive insertions, two measures apart at horn, first trumpet and then second trumpet, at one major third intervals (respectively diminished fourth) in parallel movement:

Ex. 1, m. 6-10

Ex. 1, m. 6-10 musical score. The score is for five instruments: C Tpt. (two staves), Hn. (one staff), Tbn. (one staff), and Tba. (one staff). Measures 6-10 show a complex rhythmic and melodic interplay. Dynamics include *sf*, *p*, and *mp*. The key signature has one sharp (F#).

At measure 11 trombone is added, at an interval of a descending perfect fourth. The emphasis at dissonant intervals (diminished and augmented seconds) on the sixth quaver, present in measure six and eight, supported by the two trumpets and by the trombone, are maintained because of the interval of diminished second between the highest and lowest voices (the first trumpet and the trombone). Measure 19 and 20 are in a cadence, ending the first section.

The second section presents the first varied rhythmic-melodic theme in a counterpoint alternation of trumpets, rhythmically supported by a version of the tuba initial rhythmic ostinato, superposed on a complementary picture of horn and trombone.

Ex. 2a, m. 21-25

Ex. 2a, m. 21-25 musical score. The score is for five instruments: C Tpt. (two staves), Hn. (one staff), Tbn. (one staff), and Tba. (one staff). Measures 21-25 show a counterpoint alternation of trumpets, rhythmically supported by a version of the tuba initial rhythmic ostinato, superposed on a complementary picture of horn and trombone. Dynamics include *f*, *p*, and *mf*. The key signature has one sharp (F#).

Ex. 2b, m. 26-30

The musical score for Ex. 2b, measures 26-30, is written for five brass instruments: two Trumpets (C Tpt.), Horn (Hn.), Trombone (Tbn.), and Tuba (Tba.). The score is in 4/4 time. The first two measures (26-27) feature a complex rhythmic pattern with various dynamics including *mf*, *f*, and *p*. The third measure (28) shows a change in dynamics to *mp*. The fourth measure (29) continues the pattern with *mp*. The fifth measure (30) concludes the section with *mp*.

A new variation appears in measure 29, representing a thematic derivative of the initial one, alternative to the two trumpets, over a global rhythm achieved through the *hoquetus* technique (between trombone and tuba) without juxtapositions as in the previous variation, the horn supporting the parallel movement by sounds with higher values. The rhythmic juxtapositions of tuba and trombone mark the appearance of the main rhythmic-melodic theme slightly varied, emphasizing similar accents to those present in the first section. The main rhythmic-melodic theme in measure 37 is presented at interval of a third by the second trumpet and horn, a new variation of the theme by trumpet one and trombone, followed by another variation (horn and trombone), taken over by the two trumpets and again the melodic-harmonic structure of the first section appears, ending with a coda in rising melodic movement, excepting the tuba, which reaches the lowest sound.

The second part of the quintet is based on two “characters” presented from the very beginning, the first one being a theme based on a perfect fifth and a minor second at trumpet two, then rhythmically varied and augmented – due to special divisions – at horn, and later, in another circumstance, at trombone.

Ex. 3, m. 1-6

The musical score for Ex. 3, measures 1-6, is written for four brass instruments: Trumpet 1 in C, Trumpet 2 in C, Horn in C, and Trombone. The score is in 4/4 time. The first two measures (1-2) feature a rhythmic sequence with various dynamics including *mp*. The third measure (3) shows a change in dynamics to *sf*. The fourth measure (4) continues the pattern with *sf*. The fifth measure (5) concludes the section with *sf*. The sixth measure (6) concludes the section with *sf*.

The second “character” (anticipated in a way by the stressed emphasis in the first part) is made up of a rhythmic sequence isorhythmically presented with all the instruments (excepting the tuba) in parallel chords of superposed fourths contrasting rhythmically and harmonically, as well as from the point of view of character, appearing exactly like in the first part of the quintet, with the indication *sf* :

Ex. 4, m. 9-11

Ex. 4, m. 9-11 shows a musical passage for a brass quintet. The instruments are C Trumpet 1, C Trumpet 2, Horn, Trombone, and Tuba. The music features a descending melodic line across the instruments, with dynamic markings like *sf* and accents.

This first motive made up of a perfect fifth and a minor second is presented in a continuous development terraced downwards in two versions, each of them representing the symmetry of the other one “floating” into a harmony of pedals made up of overlapped fourths, therefore the two characters continue to be present here, too. The first character of the motive is changed into a musical idea, introduced by a *fugato* two measures later in the following order: trumpet 1, trombone, trumpet 2 and horn, the appearance of the horn is at unison with the previous appearances of the other instruments, having the dynamic indication *f*, and a *Maestoso* aspect:

Ex.5, m. 20-31.

Ex. 5, m. 20-31 shows a musical passage for a brass quintet. The instruments are C Trumpet 1, C Trumpet 2, Horn, Trombone, and Tuba. The music features a more complex melodic development with dynamic markings like *mf* and *mp*, and a triplet in the Horn part.

The insertions of the second character follow, but this time presented in a different rhythmic way, enriched by adding a measure of two fourths. This part is ending with the “maturing” of the initial theme, that passed from the state of *fugato* to that of a two phrases period, previous and consistent, shown in canon with a distance of one fourth by the two trumpets and the trombone in a succession of isorhythmic pedals played by the horn and tuba, reiterating the principle of the two sonorous characters in a permanent conflict.

The third part of the quintet has as a constructive unit the interval of major seventh, respectively its complementary interval – minor second, successively developing minor third and major second interval structures. The used sonorous material is the chromatic total presented entirely in the first six measures without being arranged, resulting only from manipulations of generating intervals.

Ex. 6, m. 1-5

The interval elements appear in a rhythmic diversity giving this part, together with the material used both vertically and horizontally, a free character, despite imitations.

The horn entering at intervals of minor seventh in measures 4, 6 and 8 (where trumpet 1 appears at interval of major second to the horn) reminds us of the beginning of the first part. A first unison moment is present in measure 11, among the low voices of the quintet, in *staccato*, immediately followed by the second unison moment in the following measure.

Ex. 7, m. 11-12, corn+trombon



These “arranging” moments, having a signal function, are followed by others, as the out of time bass rhythm (actually, the tuba in this part has only the role to stress some sounds) present in the following two measures (13 and 14), the interval generating the major seventh repeated by trumpet two of the same measure, as well as the presentation of the chromatic whole in triads of sixteenths at trumpet 1, in measure 14:

Ex. 8, m. 13-14

At the end of this part the horn and the trombone are isorhythmic (measures 15-17), resulting harmonic intervals of minor third, perfect fourth and major second. The last but one measure of the third part, the isorhythmic construction is abandoned in favour of a *quasi* complementary rhythm, resulted from the phase difference between the horn and the trombone. The last measure brings back the descending major seventh for the horn (c# - d) and this is the beginning of the third part.

Ex. 9, m. 15-19

Excerpt from the musical score for measures 17-19. The score is for five instruments: C Tpt. (two parts), Hn., Tbn., and Tba. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The time signature is 4/4. Measure 17 features a triplet of eighth notes in the first C Tpt. and a half note in the Hn. and Tbn. Measure 18 shows a half note in the first C Tpt. and a half note in the Hn. and Tbn. Measure 19 features a half note in the first C Tpt. and a half note in the Hn. and Tbn. The Tba. part consists of a low, oscillating pedal point.

The fourth part of the quintet, the most static from the rhythmic and melodic point of view, is based on the characteristic intervals of seconds and thirds, this time presented as some pedals interrupted by accents with anacrusis value, played by the whole instrumental ensemble in *sf.*. The musical discourse appears in the state of imitative melodic oscillations, with torculus and porrectus played by the tuba on an oscillating pedal.

Ex. 10, m. 1-7

Excerpt from the musical score for measures 1-7 of 'Ex. 10'. The score is for five instruments: Trumpet 1 in C, Trumpet 2 in C, Horn in C, Trombone, and Tuba. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The time signature is 4/4. The score features dynamic markings: *pp* (pianissimo), *sf* (sforzando), and *mp* (mezzo-piano). The instruments play a series of notes with accents, creating a rhythmic pattern. The Tuba part is a low, oscillating pedal point.

The accents, together with the large intervals used, have the role to "break" the cadence of 4/4 measure also used in this part.

The tuba, in a low register here, has the role to point out the isorhythmias between the first trumpet and the horn, the second trumpet and the trombone respectively, which change starting with measure 18 into a parallel movement of the whole ensemble, ending with a chord made up of perfect fourths and major seconds.

Ex.11, mäs. 18-22

18

C Tpt.

C Tpt.

Hn.

Tbn.

Tba.

ff

ff

ff

ff

The second section of this part starts with a multiple pedal, the instruments entering one by one from trumpet 1 to tuba. The chord made up of overlapping pedals has the sonorous centre on G and its characteristic constitutive elements are the fourth and the ninth. The chord is repeated with anacrusis, the pedal being followed by imitations between trumpet one and horn as well as by sequences on the same background of multiple pedal gradually solved on a minor second chord with minor seventh.

Ex. 12, m. 28-42

29

C Tpt.

C Tpt.

Hn.

Tbn.

Tba.

ff

ff

ff

ff

ff

36

C Tpt.

C Tpt.

Hn.

Tbn.

Tba.

pp

pp

pp

pp

The Fifth part of the *Brass Quintet* is again very fast (reminding somehow of the first part and having the same sonorous centre on d), the main musical idea resulting from joining alternative interventions of the two:

Ex. 13, m. 1-4, trompete

Trumpet 1 in C

Trumpet 2 in C

f

mf

The sonorous material used is a pentachord c-g, the foreign notes *e flat* and *b* being used to tension the speech only on beats and weak sections of the beats, representing at the same time the extremities of the ambitus of the main musical idea in this part. The different repetition of the main musical idea is made not only by a timbre translation (the alternation between horn and trombone) but in accordance with that principle of symmetry previously discussed (in the second part) but, this time in its mirrored version.

Ex. 14, m. 5-9

5

C Tpt.

C Tpt.

Hn.

Tbn.

Tba.

f

mf

The musical material is processed by overlapping the two previous states, the second trumpet presenting the initial pentachord a minor third higher and the trombone imitating it in reverse and in *stretto*, finishing the first section of this part.

Ex. 15, m. 9-16

Ex. 15, m. 9-16 shows a musical score for a brass quintet. The score is divided into two systems. The first system contains measures 9-12, and the second system contains measures 13-16. The instruments are C Tpt., C Tpt., Hn., and Tbn. The music features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, with various dynamics and articulations.

The second section (measure 17) is strongly in contrast because the ensemble instruments are used in a jazz inspired manner, defined not so much by the specific techniques of dynamics and phrasing on long sounds (ascending, descending, specific techniques of attack), but especially by the accompaniment technique of the tuba, which supports the isorhythmic sequences of the other instruments:

Ex. 16, m. 17-20

Ex. 16, m. 17-20 shows a musical score for a brass quintet. The score is divided into one system containing measures 17-20. The instruments are C Tpt., C Tpt., Hn., and Tbn. The music features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, with various dynamics and articulations.

This rhythmic bass is to be maintained (with small variations) until the end of this part (and of the work) overlapping the synthesis in measures 5-9, a version which bears again a transposition to the major superior fourth, at trombone this time, followed by a thematic version of the second section, superposed at horn and trombone, with a new transposition at the major sixth at trombone.

Ex. 17, m. 25-28

25

C Tpt.

C Tpt.

Hn.

Tbn.

Tba.

We resort again to counterpoint, the initial musical idea being kept at trumpets but presented in a heterophonic way, superposed with the development of the motive in the second section (derived from the initial musical material), in mirror at horn and trombone (heterophonic, too) above the same bass, followed by an isorhythmic *coda* in *f*, reiterated later at a major eighth in *ff*, extended on four measures and characterized by a cadence formula in triads of fourths bringing a welcomed rhythmic refreshment.

Ex. 18, m. 29-40

29

C Tpt.

C Tpt.

Hn.

Tbn.

Tba.

34

C Tpt.

C Tpt.

Hn.

Tbn.

Tba.

37
C Tpt.
C Tpt.
Hn.
Tbn.
Tba.

After a break to intensify the final effect, the quintet ends with a rising melodic formula, exactly as in the first part.

Ex. 19, m. 44-45

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