

# Obsession of Time and the New Musical Ontologies: The Concert for Saxophone, Daniel Kientzy and Orchestra by Myriam Marbe

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**Abstract**—For the music composer Myriam Marbe the musical time and memory represent 2 (complementary) phenomena with conclusive impact on the settlement of new musical ontologies. Summarizing the most important achievements of the contemporary techniques of composition, her vision on the microform presented in *The Concert for Daniel Kientzy, saxophone and orchestra* transcends the linear and unidirectional time in favour of a flexible, multi-vectorial speech with spiral developments, where the sound substance is auto(re)generated by analogy with the fundamental processes of the memory. The conceptual model is of an archetypal essence, the music composer being concerned with identifying the mechanisms of the creation process, especially of those specific to the collective creation (of oral tradition). Hence the spontaneity of expression, improvisation tint, free rhythm, micro-interval intonation, coloristic-timbral universe dominated by multiphonics and unique sound effects, hence the atmosphere of ritual, however purged by the primary connotations and reprojected into a wonderful spectacular space. *The Concert* is a work of artistic maturity and enforces respect, among others, by the timbral diversity of the three species of saxophone required by the music composer (baritone, soprano and alto), in Part III Daniel Kientzy shows the performance of playing two saxophones concomitantly. The score of the music composer Myriam Marbe contains a deeply spiritualized music, full of archetypal symbols, a music whose drama suggests a real cinematographic movement.

**Keywords**—Archetype, chronogenesis, concert, multiphonics.

## I. INTRODUCTION

**A**SYNCHRONOUS look on the creation of the music composer Myriam Marbe will locate *The Concert for Daniel Kientzy, saxophone and orchestra*<sup>1</sup> (22.05.1986) in the proximity of the works *An die Sonne*, for mezzo-soprano and saxophone (1986), and *Symphony I Ur-Ariadne*, for mezzo soprano, saxophone and orchestra (1988). Therefore, a particularly efficient period during which the mature works of the music composer were born.

It should be noted that the first audition of *The Concert* took place shortly after its completion, 06.03.1986, in the interpretation of the singer Daniel Kientzy (to whom it is dedicated) and the State Philharmonic Orchestra of Ploies (Romania), conducted by Horia Andreescu, also having a

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<sup>1</sup> Regarding the title of the work, we mention that two variants are in circulation: *The Concert for Daniel Kientzy, saxophones and orchestra 2*.

*Concert for Daniel Kientzy, saxophone and orchestra* (mentioned in the score edited).

record Electrecord (ST-ECE 03248), the duration of which is 29'55" [1].

## II. CONCERT ANALYSIS

The concern of the music composer to obtain a wide timbral variety determines her to provide for this score the use of three species of saxophone in Mib, as follows: baritone saxophone, Part I; soprano saxophone, Part II, ms. 63-172; alto saxophone, Part II, ms. 184-225, and Part III; soprano saxophone + alto saxophone simultaneously, Part III, ms. 116-210; baritone saxophone, Part III, ms. 226-260 (final).

The main reference points of the compositional strategy revolve around two archetypal phenomena: 1. **continuity**; 2. musical improvisation.

The continuity is an archetypal phenomenon that symbolizes the perennially character of the human communities on a historical scale [2]. In the score *The Concert*, the phenomenon of continuity is materialized in many forms.

The first of these is the accompaniment, being itself a bond – archetype between the Romanian oral traditional music and the Psalms music of Byzantine-Orthodox rite.

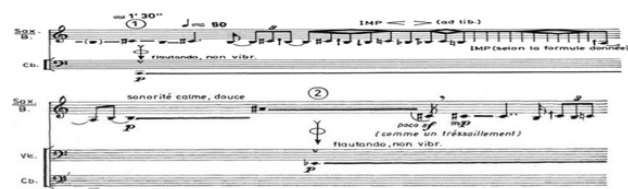


Fig. 1<sup>2</sup> Part I, no. 1-2, p. 6

Moreover, the accompaniment – emancipated in the **pedals** bi- and poli-stratified – is directly involved in the coagulation of the genre's macro-form, representing the main unifying factor of the global chronology. Thus, parts I and II of *The Concert* are interconnected by the harmonic pedals placed especially in the grave registers of the orchestra, for different instruments / groups of instruments: contrabass and contrabassoon – the passage between Part I and Part II (pp. 45-46); clarinets, horn, tuba, violoncello and contrabass – the passage between Part II and Part III (pp. 83-84).

A second form of manifestation of continuity is the complex overlapping of **ostinato** type – particular case of the

<sup>2</sup> The musical examples are extracted from the general score published by Editura Muzicala, Bucharest, 1989.

repetitive phenomenon that has a strategic importance in the general economy of the opus.

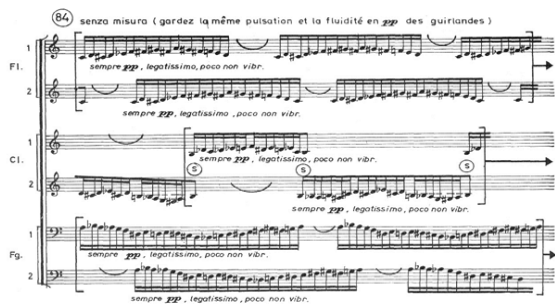


Fig. 2 Part I, no 76, p. 32



Fig. 3 Part I, no 84, p. 36

Fig. 3 excerpt represents an *ostinato* surface with a global effect, whose multi-vocal density draws a very fine border between heterophony and mobile cluster. Initiated in a state of rarefaction (no 78, p. 33) and progressively crowded (no 84, p. 36), this fluid sound mass will accompany the entire soloistic evolution of the baritone saxophone, in the widest evolution of multiphonics (no 84-87, pp. 36-41).

The second generating phenomenon, the improvisation, claims its archetypal essence from the oral traditional music, in this case, the Romanian one [3]. In *The Concert* of the music composer Myriam Marbe, the ‘simulation’ of improvisation – regardless of extension – equally remains under the deterministic, parametric and syntax control. Here is an example of writing that induces the idea of collective improvisation, with references of strictly (pre)established synchronicity.

Extrapolated in the micro-formal plan, the improvising principle generates what the Italian semiotician and writer Umberto Eco called ‘open work’ [4], so in the music sphere, it shall produce a genuine change of temporal paradigm: the passage from rectilinear, unidirectional time to the cyclic or spiral time.

Based on these two pivot – phenomena (continuity and improvisation) an entire series of subjacent phenomena with archetypal symbol authenticity branches off.

The first phenomenon in question is the one of vertical syntaxes which has its origin in the primary stage of the modal monody [5].

The cult for this ancient form of expression – symbolic representation of philosophical essence of the ONE, as opposable term for the MULTIPLE – will determine the music composer to open *The Concert* with an exceptional modal monody entrusted to the solo (baritone) saxophone.



Fig. 4 Part I, no 53, p. 25



Fig. 5 Debut of *The Concert*, p. 5

We see here the entire arsenal of the means of expression in a *parlando-rubato* manner: melisma sinuosity with a variable

extension, free, non-periodic / asymmetric rhythm – frequently inter-crossed by rests and pauses, elongations and shortening of duration –, ways of attack and unconventional emission (excerpted from the complex range of the saxophone’s effects), minimal-intonation microstructures, with oscillation (sometimes not tempered) around the pivot – sounds etc.

In this context, it is appropriate to bring up the modern semiography, radically different from the traditional one. Present in the score of *The Concert* (and developed by approved usages in the corresponding *Legend*), the new semiography (in this case, with substantial contributions of Daniel Kientzy is nothing but the natural and direct consequence of the use of free rhythm, of *parlando-rubato* type. This type of writing induces indeed the quasi-generalized sensation of improvisatory music, but in reality it is a rigorous technique of ‘simulation’ of the conceptual and interpretative freedom, carefully recorded in the score.

On the grounds of the musical avant-garde’s gains of the 60s and 70s of the last century, but also of the direct collaboration with the saxophonist Daniel Kientzy, the music composer Myriam Marbe makes one of the most expressive solo cadences in the concert music dedicated to this instrument<sup>3</sup>. Especially encountered specially in the parts II and III, these cadences excel in pauses, breathing signs with particular graphic representation, interrupted measuring bars, etc.

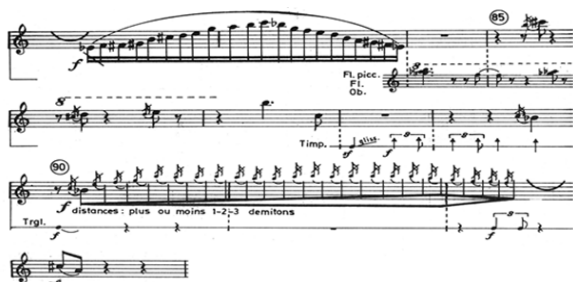


Fig. 6 (a) Part II, no 83-93, pp. 57-58, sax. Soprano



Fig. 6 (b) Part III, no 45-55, pp. 89-90, sax. alto

<sup>3</sup> As a matter of fact, the score of saxophone requires a laborious technical documentation, since it is a vast a complex range of sound effects specific to the instrument. Fortunately, there is a solid supporting point with this respect: the monographic work *Les sons multiples au saxophones*, belonging to the player of the first audition of *The Concert ...* – Daniel Kientzy –, close advisor of the music composer in the field mentioned.

The concept of “open work” – concretized in an improvisatorical – aleatoric manner of the music speech – acts both on the level of organization of the micro-form (global chronology) and on the level of vertical syntaxes by free organizations of poly-, heterophonic type.

In this context, the **macro-form** of the genre follows a sinuous track: Part I (8’12’’) begins with a broad movement, with an instrumental cadence that avoids the imposing of a particular tempo. The evolution is additional and reaches its peak at the reference *Allegretto*, then it decompensates itself; Part II (5’10’’) coincides with the maximum of speed, *Allegro*, registering two intermediate culminations followed by a gradual rarefaction towards the end. The end of the work (Part III, 16’33’’) brings a relative and softer culmination under the temporal thresholds of the previous parts, the last sequence of *The Concert* being also consumed in a rarefied spatial-temporality.

But the modal monody of *parlando-rubato* type has the generating impulse of multiplicity. Being reflected in a polyphonic-heterogeneous multi-ocality, the monodic line is often branched into heterophonic sounds, those ‘gaps’ (desynchronisations) preceding or following the intersection in unison being brought by the hetero-rhythmic mobility (B flat – B natural – C – C sharp etc.).



Fig. 7 (a) Part I, no 32-33, p. 18



Fig. 7 (b) Part I, no 34-35, p. 19

<sup>4</sup> The duration of each part is strictly related to the interpretative version of the saxophonist Daniel Kientzy, recorded on the Electrecord album aforementioned.

One of the most interesting and spectacular instances of heterophony (bivocal) presented in this *Concert* is connected to the rare performance acquired by the French saxophonist

when, on a significant expansion of Part III (no 116-210, pp. 101-112), he plays two saxophones simultaneously (*sopranino* and *alto*).

Fig. 8 (a) Part III, no 118-127, p. 101

Fig. 8 (b) Part III, no 138-145, p. 103

Fig. 8 (c) Part III, no 163-171, pp. 105-106

Fig. 8 (d) Part III, no 181-182, p. 107

This distinctive phase of the work potentiates to the maximum the soloistic score, opening unexpected insights regarding the bi- (and multivocal) writing designed for this instrument. Also, the intertwining of the two voices – governed by the complementary static (accompaniment) – mobile (melody) ratio – brings back into the foreground all the

improvisatory characteristics of monody of *parlando-rubato* type, which we have detailed earlier.

The vertical syntax – dominated by the phenomenon of the sound mass-extension by dissolving the details in a compact mass (static or fluid) – sometimes knows the organization of texture type, whose parametrical determination may be integral (Fig. 9 (a)) or partial (Fig. 9 (b)).

Fig. 9 (a) Part II, p. 71

Fig. 9 (b) Part II, p. 76

In the same sphere of the vertical syntaxes is placed the issue of the sound structures of homophone-harmonic type, evidenced, in the case of wind instruments, by the means of the multiphonics technique – a vast chapter of overwhelming importance, field in which Daniel Kientzy excelled by a series of unique contributions that have considerably broadened the interpretative possibilities of the saxophone.

In the score of the music composer Myriam Marbe, the multi-phonics include not tempered intonations (micro-intervals), being often accompanied by timbre effects<sup>5</sup> and complementary emission modes, and the fingerings – ‘the key’ to solving the multiphonics – come from the tables prepared by Daniel Kientzy.

From the syntax perspective, the multiphonic structures – associated at the homophonic / harmonic dimension of the musical speech – advances in the same type of temporal womb: dilated, narrative-recitative, non-rectilinear, with

heterophonic meanders, marking the free spirit of improvisation that, in the concrete space of this music, makes direct references to the archaic melody of Romanian doinas and ballads [6].

Fig. 10 (a) Part I, no 84, p. 36, sax. baryton in Mib

Fig. 10 (b) Part I, no 84, p. 37, sax. baryton in Mib

<sup>5</sup> Here are some of the most expressive intonation and articulation manners (timbral effects) of the saxophone presented in the score of *The Concert: SLAPE* (comparable with *pizzicato*); *CHUTE* (*CHUTE ABRUPTTE*, *CHUTE BRÈVE* or *CHUTE LONGUE*); *DÉTIMBRÉ* – timbral mode by which the sound lacks the superior, medium and high harmonics. It is the only one by the means of which *ppp*. grave and extremely-grave can be obtained. By practicing the continuous breath, it can be gradually made the transition from *DÉTIMBRÉ* to *ÉTOUFFÉ*; *FLATTERZUNGE* or *FRULLATO*; *SIMILIGLISS* – an ascending or descending *glissando* by which two notes at a high distance can quickly connect. It also produces a small variation of timbre; *TONGUE-RAM/TONGRAM* – short sound obtained on *BOCAL*, also preceded by a breath noise. It is the playing mode of flautists for *SLAP* imitation. The sounds emitted are part of a wide untempered range (due to the absence of mouthpiece) and the intensity increase up to *forte*; *BARISSEMENT*, also called *SONS-TAUREAU* – type of sound obtained *sans bec*, ‘a sort of cry of rhinoceros’ (Kientzy). It is more a breath noise with hardly controllable and *untemperate* heights. The minimum duration is quarter note and the maximum one is free because the *continuous breath* is comparable with this mode of emission.

Fig. 10 (c) Part I, no 85, pp. 38-39, sax. baryton in Mib

Fig. 11 Part III, no 51-54, p. 90 (effect of alphon)

Fig. 12 Part III, no 178-180, p. 107 (effect of bell)

The chronology of the work requires an intense archetypal connection – being enhanced by the timbral evolutionary dynamics, the general expression – of a true polychromy. The field of timbre aspects is not limited only to

the technical possibilities of saxophone (which, as we have seen, are not few) or of the orchestral unit, it explores the archaic resources of the traditional instruments: alphon (bucium), bagpipes, semantron, bells.

In one of the few interviews she has given, Myriam Marbe talked in a 'postmodern' authentic style about the 'consciousness of the relativity of system: modal, serial etc.'. The score of *The Concert for Daniel Kientzy, saxophone and orchestra* demonstrates precisely the openness towards syntaxes of transsystemic type – plurivalent, integrating, fusionable – generators of new sound ontologies, new musical works, whose structure of resistance is flaunt primarily by the **coherence** and **cohesion** of all components it builds. From this perspective, *The Concert* is a sympathy box that captures the minimal elements from the prepentatonic / prepentachornic structures of the Romanian traditional melody or of the Orthodox religious songs, along with the polimodal chromatic densities and the complex texts that can sometimes suspend the sound gravity itself.

### III. CONCLUSION

*The Concert for Daniel Kientzy, saxophone and orchestra* by Myriam Marbe – dedicated to the incomparable French player whose name is inserted in the work's title – is shown to us like a model of sound cronogenesis where – in the sense of *coincidentia oppositorum* – some fundamental dichotomies interact: determinate – indeterminate, continuous – discontinuous, evolutionary – non-evolutionary, static – fluid, etc.

The semantic / expressive palette of *The Concert* includes diverse connotations and states: from an archetypal sound gesture, full of magic symbols and echoes, to the rhythms of eternity of the metaphoric lyric of the Romanian traditional space, masterly surprised by the poetry and philosophy of Lucian Blaga. Thus, the deep spirituality and the dynamism of the musical speech favour the analogy with the image of a complex cinematic performance, where, as someone said, the conductor becomes director, the triptych of saxophones integrate the various facets of the main character, and the orchestra reserves the role of the community which is in full and perpetual communion as beginner.

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