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PH.D. THESIS

**The recognition of the musical compositional techniques in the art of theatre stage design**

**THE SUMMARY**

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## **1. The area and the aim of the research**

“The recognition of the musical compositional techniques in the art of theatre stage design” is an attempt to discover the point where the notions of musical theory meet those of the composition of visual arts, especially considering the specificity of the theater stage. The visual organization of a show - including decorations, actors' costumes, lighting design, props, in one word everything that is seen on the stage during a show - is elaborated with the specific means of visual arts, with a high regard to their principles of organization. The set designer's art and knowledge must be naturally accorded to the other arts of the show, in a unitary and eloquent concept that circumscribes all of them. Studying carefully the visual arts, one can find that the paradigm of the compositional techniques becomes substitutable for any of the principles of other arts, visual artworks conceptually fit with other artistic works, be it a sonata, a novel, a ballet show or a movie. This observation is consistent with the much-used term which describes theater as a sum of all the other arts, since the very possibility of summing assumes the compatibility of the summed parts.

Paradoxically, while music is considered to be the art that operates with the most abstract means, its power to impress has perhaps the greatest impact of all known artistic expressions. Remaining in this key of contradictions, the lack of perfect palpability of musical compositional forms seems to invite the passionate researcher to a surprising and unusual ride. The unreal sound material can thus be shaken to reveal those notions of music theory that can easily be translated into a different artistic world, such as the three-dimensional architecture that sustains a decor, an artistic expression that undoubtedly implies real, tangible, real matter. And this unexpected equivalence between principles of construction coming from different artistic worlds seems to function fully and authentic, compositional techniques moving easily from one territory of expression to the other, despite the seeming incompatibilities involved in the misleading presence or disappearance of the fourth dimension, the temporal one, which seems to have finally come out of the area of the paintings and sculptures, as well as the works of set design. For, unlike playing a symphony, at first glance, the set of buildings built on the theater stage and

inhabited by actors seems to occupy only three dimensions, the set design being instantly discovered by the public when the stage curtain is up.

The art music, one of the most significant forms of human culture, reaches a level so abstract that it becomes the object of considerations from the most varied areas of thinking. While listening to a few measures from a score, a philosopher discovers ideas, acts of thinking and imagination - which added to the sum of the others, results from the audition of the whole work, it composes a whole system as subtly, as profoundly reflective - an esthetician translates musical impressions into representations of the affective life, of the spirit, set up by specific compositional techniques. In a musical work of art, a mathematician regains precepts of proportion, order, and symmetry, while a linguistic specialist considers music as a mean of expressing ideas and feelings, referring to it as to a specific “language”, a widely used language of the sounds, universally acknowledged. Encompassing in its entirety such large diversity of analytical concepts, musicology emerges from this perspective as an extraordinary tool for research, a remarkably welcome tool for understanding the principles of art in general, and most surprisingly useful in focusing this research on studying the theatre stage design.

Music is an art that, like literature, choreography or theater, requires a certain period of time running, while the specificity of its message, which requires the notion of the “succession” (of chords, musical phrases, etc.), appears to be incompatible with that of the visual or the fine arts, like painting, sculpture, architecture. On the contrary, scenography can be considered, at least for the beginning, as an art of simultaneity, without taking for the moment into consideration that the decors, the lights or the costumes on the stage can be transformed (changed) during a show - a transformation that needs time. In opposition to music, visual arts have a synthetic character, organizing their message in their system, not in their (running) process. The arts of simultaneity, whose main character is the form, seem to reside at the opposite pole to those of the (time) succession. However, the art of music, so ineffable, is also born from the same need for form, a profound human necessity, in the same spirit of the man's creation “in the likeness of God”, as Stravinsky recognizes: “Creation myself, I can not have no desire to create”. The theater stage is the only one that can manage to bring together all these arts, both temporal and spatial, tuning them - one by one, as well as one with the others - during the eloquent fitting of the dramatic performance. This ineffable conversion is the object of the

present study which, through the succession and content of its chapters, aims to reveal the lowest common denominator of these initially incongruent arts.

Looking to the stage from the audience side, the compositional techniques of visual art can be recognized in those of music theory. Looking at the set design of a drama performance from the meloman armchair, we enter in a new ideological world, a world full of questions unimagined so far, which reminds us of Robert Wilson's words: "For us, the artists, the reason to work is to ask questions. If you know why you do something, you have no reason to do it. The reason we work for is to ask. What is it? What am I going to do? What am I about to say?"<sup>1</sup>.

## **2. The methods of research**

The thesis aims to bring together, until the merging into a single conceptual whole, the notions of musicology with those of the visual arts, two separate ways which, at first sight, use means of expression without any relationship at all, one with the other. "The recognition of the musical compositional techniques in the art of theatre stage design" proposes the translation of the music theory into the world of visual arts, examining the moment when the elements of the melodic and harmony notation, of key signatures, time signatures and rhythmic notation overlap the principles of visual organization, from the set designer's point of view.

"The recognition of the musical compositional techniques in the art of theatre stage design" covers seven different chapters.

**2.1.** The first one deals with the general framework of meeting between the musical grammar with the visual one by examining the morphological correspondences between the two arts, comparing the characteristics of their "raw materials", the sound and, respectively, what the

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<sup>1</sup> Mihaela Tonitza-Iordache și George Banu, *Arta Teatrului*, București, Ed. Nemira, 2004, p. 473.

author of this thesis calls “the smallest point of color”. Thus, as the score of a symphony comes to life by the intonation of sounds to each of the instruments, a theater decor is the result of placing in a certain light of a series of elements on a stage, elements with various forms and sizes, made of different materials with many textures and colors. These elements are made up of an infinity of “points” that make the substance of reality. One single sound is for a symphony what for a scenography is the smallest point of material, the painted top of the needle that is visible on a wall of the decor or on the surface of a props object.

The chapter that studies the morphology continues to deal with the correlations between the hearing and sight mechanisms for comparing the tones, timbres and textures of sounds with the lightness, hue and saturation of colors, then exploring the notion of “time” in the two worlds, as well as the appearance of the intensity in a musical and visual environment. The comparative method is first a physiological one: as the height of a musical tone, whether acute or severe, is classified by the nature of the hearing sensation, according to the frequency of the produced vibrations, the same way the colors can be classified according to the length of their light waves. However, if in the art music their heights are the main forms of expression (melody, harmony and polyphony depends on the height of the tones), unlike music, in fine art, the notion of color can not be putted solely in a relationship with only the other colors of work (as it happens in a “vertical” moment of a musical score, concurrently). If in music the horizontal developments do not change the impressions generated by the heights of the sounds, in the visual art, the color is influenced by a certain relationship with the shapes, the volumes, that corresponds to the horizontal direction of the musical score. The methodology of research goes beyond the first physical phase, preferring the analogy between the color of the things (fine arts) and the timbre of the sounds (music) instead of the one between the notions of color and the height of the notes. In order to discover the possible correspondences between these artistic worlds that present themselves to have such an irreducible appearance, the methods of investigation can not only relate to the exact sciences. While a musical composition is made up of sounds, color is just one of the attributes of the things that make up a visual work of art: one could not say that a painting (or a photograph) is a lot of "colors", and this not just because there are also black and white photos exposed in museums. The forms (volumes) are essential in a fine art composition, and the correspondence, as well as their degree of importance in musical structures, can not be only

scientifically researched. The study may further risk the snapshot of this thesis' author's intuition for assuming the links between the means of expression of the two - musical and visual - worlds.

The two-way ride from the temporal to the three dimensional world and back has become possible with the replacement of the concept of representation of the visible world (what you see) with the abstract language of nonfigurative art sensations. However, the “time” of the fine art works, either the classic or the modern ones, may have deeper references, ones that come to a closer, detailed analysis. Time may thus appear as one of the necessities of observing all the details that make up a painting or a photograph, although at first sight they could be categorized as instantly observable, at a single glance.

The methodology of the research then returns to physics. The amplitude of the vibrations, their volume, determine a certain intensity, both in the case of the sound waves and in the electromagnetic radiation of light. Intensity decreases in both cases from the source of the wave generation until where receiving vibration by hearing or by vision. In the music world, this value is the one that generates the dynamics, the alternation of musical nuances into an endless stream of expressive and emotional possibilities, descriptions that complete the other specific information obtained by the listener (the height of the notes, their duration etc.). At the same time, the amplitude of the light waves is related to the apparent brightness of the source or the objects enlightened by it in the eyes of the viewer. *Clar-obscure*, depth, luminance contrasts, there are so many notions of the color theory referring to the gradations of light, just as many musical techniques referring to the intensity of the sound.

Referring to the forms of the vibrations' waves, the study elaborates the timbre of the sounds, searching for its expressive correspondences in the visual arts territory, starting from the timbral sensation of each musical instrument, its unique color that complements the rest of its tones attributes, their height, duration and intensity. The research highlights the importance of the harmonics that accompany the basic sound, revealing in their presence the key of the connection between the two worlds' expressions of timbre.

Searching the correspondence of one important notion for the figurative description - that is, the texture - in music, the study implies its possible equivalences either in the ways of

attacking and extinguishing the sound, or in the nature of the materials from which the musical instruments are made.

By confronting the semioticities of the two arts, the methodology of this first "morphological" chapter resides in the research of the nature of fine art's signs from the point of view of the musical ones that "describe the phenomena of reference that the music affects, the specific way in which the music becomes a symbolic fact for its users, by taking into account the musical message in its concrete material reality, the strategies of production and reception of this message"<sup>2</sup>.

**2.2.** The second chapter of this study explores the psychology of music and the psychological effects of the visual arts, the transformations of the emotional natures of the two worlds. The study starts from the reactions appeared at the sensory level of the viewer or the listener in the theatre or concert hall, physiology which is determined by the chromaticity, the brightness, the shapes seen, and the "decor of sounds" that envelops the spectator. Their organization in structures containing contrasts and relationships determines the transformation of the physiological events experienced by the public into psychological impressions, these being influenced in turn by the marks and the taste of each of the receptors. The two artistic phenomena - visual and musical - resonate in the same way that a theater show that encompasses both changes the world of the spectator's emotions, his personality, intellect and spirituality.

Music, painting, scenography, as well as literature, poetry, all are arts of construction, ways of organization of their own material in convincing, artistic, strong and expressive forms. Construction involves intuition and rationality. The resulting work will overcome the first stages of physiological and sensory perception to reach the psychic dimension, involving new, affective territories. Color vibrations, those of the strings of a violin or a piano or those of the air columns flowing through wind instruments, thus become soul vibrations. Colors reach the forms drawn below them, and the sounds spill into a significant architecture of sounds. Furthermore, unlike fine art, music adds to the composer's sensitivity the temperament of the performer, his

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<sup>2</sup> J. J. Nattiez, *Fondements d'une sémiologie de la musique*, Paris, Union Générale d'Éditions, 1975, p. 27 și 50.

persuasion force, the talent and the culture involved in his vision, a plus of expressiveness that enhances that of the general emotional background described by its composer.

If psychological effects, like physiological ones, vary from one spectator to another according to their levels of education, their more or less elevated sensations, the moods in which they are in the minutes of receiving the work, all are equally also altered by the visual or musical site where the issuing source is at that moment (the ratio of that color to those around it, its place on the canvas, or the vertical harmony of that sound, along with the musical phrase that contains the preceding and subsequent measures).

**2.3.** The third chapter organizes both the musical constructions and the works of visual art from the theater creator's point of view, the theatrical art summarizing these two in one form or another. Thus, the overall sound scale (more precisely, the tonal harmonic pitch) is similar to the chromatic circle, as the interval (the "atom" of the music) is defined the same way as the ratio to which any visual contrast refers, by *contrast* meaning any relationship that implies the luminosity, hue or saturation of colors as well as the sizes and the proportion of the volumes, relations which involves interactions and reciprocal influences. The chapter proposes the transposition into the musical structures of the types of contrasts encountered in visual art constructions such as the contrast of the *complementary* colors, the *Clar-obscure*, the *cold-warm*, the contrast *of quantity, of quality* etc. The proposed method is to analyze the correspondence of the "interval", as it appears in each of these two arts' worlds.

The "musical atom", as defined by Leonard Bernstein, is composed of at least two "atomic particles", two sounds. One isolated, single note is similar to an impenetrable color. It can have a physiological effect on the viewer (it is described by height, intensity, timbre, attack and tail, as color has a tone, a value, texture), but to get meaning implies the necessity of a relationship. "A single note is like a proton, or an electron, which, taken alone, is meaningless. We need at least two of each to create an atom. And exactly the same way we need at least two notes so we can start talking about a music atom. Because only with a single, isolated note,



nothing happens”<sup>3</sup>. If a painting, a sculpture, or a decor can be described as the sum of relationships between colored particles (also placed in a certain compositional tissue), then the interval in visual art naturally assumes one chromatic relationship. Colors perceived by the viewer interact with one another, influencing each other. The same type of inductive relationship in both directions the colors also have with the forms where they are placed, as the shapes influence one another, in a complex of innumerable relationships that ultimately become, like the sum of horizontal and vertical intervals from a sonata, a unitary work. Two adjacent colors can be attracted (in a chromatic approach), as well as two (or more) sounds can be in harmony. Sounds can also be dissonant, just as colors can be in a contrasting distancing situation. Contrasts produce actions on the visual cortex, while music intervals (musical contrasts) produce equivalent audible actions.

The thesis is investigating the effects resulting from the possibilities of overlapping these types of contrasts in a multiplied, potentiated expression, in both the artistic, visual and musical worlds, as well as in the drawing of the theatrical stage design. The chromatic adjustment in the visual world translates into the language of sounds through the discipline of harmony. The composition of colors along the circumference of the chromatic circle is proposed to correspond to the musical tones, following the search for a possible parity of sensations produced by the expressive means of the two worlds. The world of cold colors is separated from that of warm colors in the same way that minor chords sit in the opposite corner of the major ones, the axes that divide the two artistic worlds (visual and music) overlapping.

**2.4.** The methodology of the fourth chapter is based on the correspondence between the images generated by the audition of a concert, those brought by contemplation of a painting or of an interactive art installation, and those imprinted by the viewing of a theater show. The understanding of a musical structure is compared to the storytelling played by actors in the setting. For this purpose, the structures generating configurations of the musical, visual and theatrical images are placed face to face by comparing the final experiences of sound, pictorial, or volumetric contemplations with the spectacular ones. The relations and interpretations of the

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<sup>3</sup> Leonard Bernstein, *Cum să înțelegem muzica*, trad. Mircea Ivănescu, București, Ed. muzicală, 1982, pp. 37

images of these arts imprinted into the spectators' minds are discussed, as well as their particularities regarding the density, continuity or concreteness of the exposed material.

The musical fact can be considered as one tripartite. Its first fragment includes the structure of the scores, the next refers to the act of their interpretation, and the third is the effects that the performances of these scores impart to the public's conscience. While the composition of the visual events omit the category referring to the performer, the theatrical act includes it to a similar extent as the music. In addition, the directors, scenographers, lighting designers, composers of theatre music, etc. are added to the actors, unquestionable the "interpreters" of theatrical art. When a dramatic composition is staged, we have to deal with an overlap of arts, many more than the original one, that of the dramaturgy in question. However, theater is an art that consumes the present, the audience "lives" in the same time as the characters on the stage, its reception being much more direct than the musical one. Music appeals the memory<sup>4</sup>. Understanding a musical structure involves remembering a whole series of previously traced moments, linking those measures - sung a while ago, a couple of minutes, or a couple of hours - with what is heard now. The living of the "now" of a theater performance by the listener of the *development* of a part of the *sonata form* involves the remembering of the themes previously exposed in the *exposition*. Their processing along the *development*, the actions of crossing, breaking, jumping or transforming the original musical ideas make sense only in relation to the position, the color and the glow that they had at the time of their first appearance, in the respective musical discourse. At those past measures of the *exposition*, the listener of the *development* makes appeal, the consciousness of this "now" being the result of the relationship of the present time, listened with the memory that knows the assimilated musical material. The result, both in the visual arts or theatrical representations, as well as in the musical audition, is the birth of the *image*. Of course, as in the case of the theatrical image formation in the spectator's consciousness, it is influenced by both the impact power of the musical measures intoned at that time (as the theatrical image is influenced by the scene that the actors are playing at that moment) and the entire undefined complex of the psychic states of the listener (the viewer) encountered at the reception.

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<sup>4</sup> v. Pascal Bentoiu, *Imagine și sens*, București, Ed. Muzicală a Uniunii Compozitorilor, 1973, pp. 12

Whether it is made up of a series of chords, a melodic phrase, a theme (main or secondary), a counterpoint of several voices or a small orchestral fragment, the musical image has a synthetic character, the lined sound events overlapping one over the other in a certain abstract configuration. The moment when it takes shape is when the speech made with sounds find a resting point. The sequence of musical tensions is bounded by a point of its beginning and a closing one - both intermediate, subordinated to the entire movement that contains them - the final one marking the beginning of the rest. The sum of the images so formed compiles the final experience of contemplating the “sound object”, as a painting in an exhibition will form its image in the visitor's consciousness only after the visitor will look at the next picture, just as a three-dimensional work of installation art shapes its image only after it has been fully covered by the viewer, through and around it. The image of a theater show includes both portraits of actors in costumes, visual sequences of all the decorations of the different acts of the show, the various situations in which they were lit, the order of their change, and especially all the dramatic circumstances that the actors played in these scenes, one by one, during the theater performance. The intermediate images are formed only in the resting, concluding moments, just as in the music world. Strong images can also be suddenly formed upon the unexpected appearance of a strong signal. It is the situation of a dramatic photograph or a striking musical signal (the opening famous motif of the Symphony in C minor of Beethoven, the opening of the "Jupiter" Symphony of Mozart etc.), similar to the shock of sudden revelation at the curtain rise of an impressive theatrical set design. To appear in the viewer's consciousness, the image does not necessarily require a moment of rest. Its crystallization can also be instantaneous.

**2.5.** The fifth chapter analyzes the elements of composition in the performing arts from the theatrical point of view. Here, the sound, visual and theatrical materials are compared one with the other according to their own compositional techniques, revealing the hidden relationships between them. The *exposition*, the *development* and the *recapitulation* of a *sonata form* are translated into the abstract perimeter of a visual work of art or onto the theatre stage, into the architecture of a set design. The symmetry, the *golden ratio*, the counterpoint, the rhythm and the “Gestalt Principles” of visual organization are all found in the structures of the various forms of artistic expression.

The methodology of organizing the materials with which all of the arts in question operate is organized in this chapter around the most sparkling paradox of artistic creation, that of the inexorable joining into its very essence of two concepts that stays, at first glance, in an implacable contradiction: the freedom of expression - contained by any authentic work of art - and the functional architecture diagram that sustains any work - encountered even where it is denied, as is the case with the most avant-garde Dadaist works of art. Any random appearance will be - sooner or later - in a certain relationship with the whole where it belongs, a singularity that will immediately be susceptible to unique representations generated by the formulated images. To the other extreme, a willingly related form with the whole which it is part of will be more vigorously remarked as an “obliged” part of an intransigent ensemble. “Freedom of creation always tends to a dialectical address. The form recognizes itself in its ties; it is made subordinate to a law, a rule, a system”<sup>5</sup> (Thomas Mann, *Doctor Faustus*).

**2.6.** The sixth chapter carefully examines the most delicate of the dimensions of the arts in question, the time, the absolute clarification of its implications being essential in order to find the lowest common denominator of the temporal and spatial arts. The time during musical developments is transposed in an abstract time, presumed to be necessary for revealing the content of the visual art works, its expression in the subtleties of the chaining all the “happenings” that take place during a theater show.

If the rhythm refers to the pattern of binding sounds to one another, the tempo - a notion which already involves in its morphological composition the word “time” - refers to the speed at which a piece of music is played, that is to say, the time it takes to hear it. Time reference is in this case a more abstract one, as it can not be said that a musical piece that takes a shorter time to listen has necessarily a rapid tempo. It may also be shorter one, but played in a slow tempo. So speaking about tempo, the “time” refers to a ratio of the amount of sound events happened in a unit of time.

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<sup>5</sup> Cornel Ailincăi, *Introducere în gramatica limbajului vizual*, București, Ed. Polirom, 2010, p. 157

Trying to translate this notion into the world of visual arts, where “time” itself flows in other circumstances - more subtle than physical ones, of the musical audition or attending a theatre performance - the research may begin from the description of the tempo as a ratio between the number of events happened in the (physical) time unit. Just as listening to a piece of music with a rapid tempo, the listener records more (sonorous) events per minute, one might say that a painting filled with visual “happenings” has a rapid “tempo”. A decor filled with ornaments or containing a large amount of props will convey more information per minute to the spectator who looks at it than an empty, aerated space in which the props or ornaments are sublimed to the essence. The tempo of the latter appears to be slower.

Likewise, a show that quickly follows the dramaturgic text appears to spectators like a musical movement interpreted in a fast tempo, and vice versa. The play's dramaturgy can also be one in which action, storytelling, happens faster or slower, and its “tempo” may or may not be in agreement with that of the show. Assuming that different directors stage the uncut original text, two different performances of the same play may take a different time, the scenes can be played at different speeds.

**2.7.** The last chapter compares the ways of producing emotions in different artistic worlds. There are studied common setups of similar structures in a series of subchapters starting with comic constructions - from primary, imitative, to satirical or grotesque compositions - to the one of pathetic contents that awaken in the audience has a wide range of feelings, from pain to ecstasy.

A theatre performance, a public hearing of a symphony or a presentation of a painting in a museum, all seem to share the primary purpose of communicating a story from the artist to the audience. Although the means by which they narrate are specific to each of the arts, the narrative paths of their stories impose eloquence equally, and the meanders traversed during the performance or the contemplation of the visual works of art are sprinkled with profoundly human experiences, similar to each other, regardless of art that produces them. Mechanisms by which a few measures of a sonata, the placement of characters or props on the canvas surface of a painting, or interleaving replicas in a dialogue of a dramatic text, stir up suspense, bitterness,

ridicule, nervousness, melancholy seem to be similarly designed, although each of these emotion-producing mechanisms processes specific elements of the morphology of their own arts.

The research of musical, plastic and theatrical sociologies leads, in the end - by deepening the similarities of the relationships of these forms of art with the audience - to the vast field of sociology of culture. The latter represents the common place where each of the arts under discussion acquires its methods of investigation and its compositional techniques, the sociology of culture encompassing the full range of attitudes and reactions of spectators. Although we may encounter situations where music or painting are devoid of the specificity of educational ploy - seemingly free of any constraint, of any limit - yet both forms of expression subsumed in the theatrical performing art take place in an area of thought and sensitivity socially stated. They cover until the moment of applause a ground of ideas, creating an increasingly nuanced image of the place where the resulting works of art eventually come to occupy it, in a particular social environment. A symphony, a sonata, or a theater show ends up decanting into the understanding and knowledge of the audience as well as “objects made by humans penetrate into consciousness and shape it with a certain psychological impact, establishing relationships with them, influencing their sense of continuity or discontinuity, playing an important role in the structure of situations”<sup>6</sup>.

Although seemingly opposed, visual arts and music, the arts that we are considering from the perspective of theatrical research, are so melting in a whole, like books in a library, forming a universe of knowledge that “deals with the world as a result of human action, a world that would not exist outside of human action”<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Alvin Toffler, *Șocul viitorului*. București, Ed. Politică, 1973, p. 62.

<sup>7</sup> Bauman Zygmunt și May Tim, *Gândirea sociologică*, București, Ed. Humanitas, 2008, p. 11.

### 3. The main conclusions of the thesis

**3.1.** As a result of the research of the morphological correspondences of the two languages, the musical and the visual ones, it is first of all observed that the encounter between the art music and the visual art takes place before any theoretical assumptions, at the moment of their debut, at the level of origin, the raw material with which both work being the simplest oscillatory movement. This movement comes to be physiologically transposed, following a path characteristic of one or the other, sound or visual world. The first conclusion of the study of the concordances between musical and visual expressions refers to sensory psychology: both the sounds and the images that make up a sonata audition, a contemplation of a three-dimensional installation work of art, a painting or a photograph, the watching of a movie or a theater show, consists of a series of sensations produced to the receiving (hearing and visual system) organs, sensations caused by the material vibrations of things and atmospheric waves. By placing the two worlds (the one of the sounds and the one of the visuals) side by side under the magnifying glass of physical research, assuming oscillation as a common denominator, the first analogy that emerges is the one between the heights of the sounds and the tones of the colors. Thus, beyond the fact that both sounds and colors make sense only when living in eloquent architectural (musical or visual) structures, another conclusion of the first chapter of this work justifies and confirms the coincidence first noted by Isaac Newton between the number of notes of a scale and the number of colors of the rainbow.

While the conclusions regarding the dynamics of expression refer to the notion of intensity - the amplitude of the vibrations - in both worlds (the volume of sounds and the brightness of the colors), the considerations about the timbre refer to the harmonics of the sounds that find their visual correspondences in the complementary colors contained in the main tones, to a lesser or greater extent, texturing them. As each sound carries in its resonance all its other harmonics, each color is composed of others, seemingly unrelated to it, colors that often come to be located anywhere else on the circumference of the chromatic circle, sometimes reaching up to a point diametrically opposed to the main color position. As in music, the tone of that color is a result of both these positions (the musical interval) and the proportion between the quantities of

these secondary colors and that of the main color (the intensity with which the harmonics are heard in relation to the fundamental note).

The textural correspondences of the two worlds conclude that choosing the materials of the elements of a decor or those making a fine art work - taking into account the way they are applied (brushing, etc.) - has for the theater spectator or for the visitor of an exhibition the same meaning as the orchestration for the lover of music. The “dressing” of the melodies with the layers of various textures of the musical instruments must be appropriate for that symphonic work, which manages to make the music heard in the most eloquent and convincing way. The texture of the decor, the brush stroke and the timbre of the musical instrument are also signs chosen to determine a certain relationship between the receiver and the objects determined by it. The choices made by scenographer, painter or composer pursues the same purpose, the awakening of certain public reactions, of special affective states.

The conclusion of the research on the spaces - musical, visual or theatrical - refers to the involvement of the audience. The “imagined space” of any arts thus presupposes the preoccupation to stimulate the presence (physical or mental-creative) within it of the one who wants to discover it.

**3.2.** The considerations regarding the psychology of music and the visual arts are based on the same involvement of the spectator in what is happening on the stage, as a participation in the development of an imaginary game initiated by the characters before him: “Therefore, what is happening in front of us is just what we see in scenic time and space, but also what reminds us of a possible world, a world that, in its very unrepeatability, needs our imaginative play and our re-knowledge”<sup>8</sup>. The large scale of the effects of the perception of the work of art from one viewer to another is widening even more if the performance goes from figurative to non-figurative art or from the tonal musical system to the dodecaphonic one. The abstract shapes of Brâncuși's sculptures, the dripping of the surfaces polluted by Jackson Pollock, the subtleties of Mark Rothko's floating rectangles, the rape painted by Țuculescu, which grows in the eyes of the

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<sup>8</sup> Sorin Crișan, *Sublimul trădării. Pentru o estetică a creației literare*, București, Ed. Ideea Europeană, 2008, p. 85



viewers, all modify the recipients from passive visitors (who only "look") to active participants, alluring them to the tempting approaches of completions, for fulfilling and solving in one way or another the initiated impulses. The works come to be considered as sums of the contained stimuli.

The arc of the transition from physiology to psychology in order to impress the spectator may perhaps elongate in the most grandiose way when looking a theater performance. In the theatre hall, actors on the stage become living characters dispersed into an as fictional, so consistent issue. The decorations around them, no matter how conventional they are in reality, become a space as imaginative, so concrete as the story is represented. The set design can be a more fulfilled one, that adds a lot of differentiated details to the imagination of the spectators, or completely different from the real one, up to the extreme situation of an empty scene, which can be imagined in any way. In order to create these remarkable fantasies, which are not limited to simply interpreting an exposition, but give rise to a spectacular emotional involvement of the audience, it is necessary that all the contained elements to be organized into an eloquent (without being explicit, theistic) meaningful complex.

**3.3.** As a result of the research of the correspondences between the different types of contrasts that compile the worlds of music and visual, the conclusion is that the evolution of the various artistic movement implied a contradictory development in the application of the harmonic concept. The great passage operated by Arnold Schönberg at the beginning of the last century from the tonal organization of the fundamental range, containing only seven notes, to the "chromatic" (atonal) of the twelve sounds is also found in the visual territory, where the chromatic balance is soon to be shattered. "In the second futuristic manifesto (1910), signed by Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carra, Giacomo Balla, Gino Severini, it is stated: «In painting, inherent complementarities is an absolute necessity, like a free verse in poetry and polyphony in music». But in only a few years, there are opposites: «Harmony has nothing to do with the complementary. All colors, without exception, can be blended harmoniously» (A.E. Dinet, Flagellation of Painting, 1926)." The explosion of tonal relationships (accompanied by the destruction of the chromatic relations between colors) will embrace horizontal disorganization in

music (corresponding to the volumetric one of the visual arts). Since the expressiveness can no longer be determined by any of the balanced principles of consonance, and the *disagreeable* is entitled to be a valuable containment in any work of art, to the same extent as the *beautiful*, the notion of “harmony” will refer to an exclusive criterion of authenticity of instinct, of the *sincerity* of the artistic approach. The complementary theory of colors, as well as that of tonal harmony, will never be contradicted, the annulment of this harmonic dimension not being in question, but the addition of a new one, a dimension that multiplies the expressiveness, as higher mathematics seeks the same truth, leaving the rigidities of Euclidean space for a new one, in which two straight parallel will eventually meet, in a context of endless possibilities.

**3.4.** The chapter that studies the correspondences of the musical, visual and theatrical imagery and their representations leads the research to trying to define a *common state size*, which can be manifested as a possible basis of this comparative study. Since the most common human habit is that to associate the most measurable values by spatial criteria, the musical fact can be described in the same way, spatially: "Spatial representations as such are the most current ones, linked to most of our biological experience. We tend to have spatial representations with reference to the most varied fields: artistic periods and movements, terminology in logic or psychology. Something more: we think we know a phenomenon when we have managed to give it a spatial expression (e.g. cardiogram, thermometer graduation, curve of a sound attack etc.). Nothing more natural, therefore, that the musical fact is transformed into spatial representation, encompassing two clear coordinates: the horizontal dimension (time) and the vertical dimension (the height of the sounds between the lower and the upper limits of audibility). On naming a third coordinate that transforms the two-dimensional space into three-dimensional space are hesitations"<sup>9</sup>. Pascal Bentoiu proposes for this third dimension either the intensity of the emitted sound or the tension of the musical expression of that moment: “Music has also been seen as a succession of states of tension and relaxation, as a succession of qualitative states, sometimes even as a kinetic energy manifested by sounds and by reference to which the successive positions

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<sup>9</sup> Ibidem, p. 16

(the sounds) are only resorts through which a "mysterious" thing is circulating"<sup>10</sup>. Among the three dimensions of this space being also the time, the final picture of a sonata, or the one of a symphony listened, involves therefore the memory also. If the "tension" - that Pascal Bentoiu writes about - relates both to the measure of the expression of the musical (interpretation) and to the psychologically one, generated by the unique reception of the spectator in that moment, the result of this possible spatial drawing of the listened work is one unrepeatable, unique, complete, a picture of the whole artistic act that was spent in that concert hall. It is worth mentioning, however, that the measure of "time" describing one of the three coordinates of the musical space (as well as the territories of other arts) is a relative one, which implies alongside the objective time - that of the performance of the respective piece - another subjective one, a time of the unique experiences of the spectators. The musical space thus created is not a "Newtonian" one, objective, a frame of the artistic manifestation, but an "Einsteinium" one, uneven, created by the same manifestation itself.<sup>11</sup>.

Taking into account other musical determinations - such as the timbre of instruments, the number of voices, the registers in which the melody evolves - the number of dimensions of the musical space would increase. However, its nature would resemble to the spaces of other arts, such as scenography, which, in its turn, contains more dimensions than the three of the classical Newtonian space. Their comprehension (the space of dramaturgy, of actor's play, of relationships between characters etc.) in its description is precisely what makes a "sculpture" - an artistic product that could otherwise be considered purely a visual work of art (even if it is putted in a theater light) - to become scenography. Coordinates that at first sight are of no great importance prove in the same way the exigency of both the two-dimensional physical space of a picture and the three-dimensional of a sculpture or of a installation artwork.

As in the previous subchapter "space" means a notion that transcends the meaning of its physical name, including the sum of the facts and sensations that occur during the performance, the image also refers to an entire complex of factors having more or less correspondence with an eventual visual sensation. If, in temporal arts, the final image of the artistic act seems to be

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<sup>10</sup> Ibidem, pp. 16

<sup>11</sup> v. Ibidem, p. 19

composed the same way as the image of a movie is made up of memorable frames, the shaping of a visual work's image, a painting, for example - an image that remains alive in the memory of the viewer for years to come, from the moment of his contemplation in the museum where it initially was - seems to be a procedure that does not bear any comparison with the way in which the images of temporal arts (theater, music, film etc.) crystallize. "Seeing" a painting, a sculpture, or even a theatre set design at one glance, one might think that is his image. It is true that what was seen at first glance will surely constitute an image. But that will only be one of the many that will compose the final one. That will contain many others: powerful details subsequently revealed, a series of sensations, strong experiences or various subjective reports. For imagining it, the final one, it takes time. The eventual differentiation between the artistic imagery, whether or not it involves the objectivity of the time in which this final image is formed. Thus, if the time required to watch a theatrical performance is the same for all viewers, the one necessary to crystallize the image of a picture or a photograph (by "image" meaning a complex, containing multiple dimensions, which is added to the two or three physical ones) is different from one viewer to the other.

The configuration that an artistic image acquires in the consciousness of the art consumer is unique, uncertain, being caused both by the objective nature of the artistic fragment that generated it and by the personal nature of each meaning the spectator attributes to it, by the relationships - conscious or not, applied or involuntary - which he initiates, the ideas he generates, his feelings of the moment or his own sensibility.

The structure of the artwork is dictated by the need to reformulate the image inherited by the creator in a form as close as possible to the original one<sup>12</sup>. Conversely, the free structure's pre-eminence in the compositional process could be found in the case of empty, non-substance forms, or in the fake-avant-garde forms, where structure innovation has no sincere motivation, not being the result of searches for configuration. The value of any structure is determined only by the nature of configuration of the resulting images.

If the correct perception of art - especially of contemporary art - requires to minimize possible relationships that lead to hasty conclusions, then the labor of analysis - which can be

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<sup>12</sup> v. Ibidem, pp. 28

done either later or concomitantly with the act of perception - is decisive for the quality of the generated image. This decoding of the received information is all the more complex as the cultural background of the music listener, the viewer of a painting or the theater spectator is richer, more advanced.

The chaining of sounds and chords on a certain rhythm, just like the assembling of shapes and colors on a compositional skeleton, is done in a certain order of meaning. This is the result of a succession of signs with a certain aesthetic identity, signs that are manifested as bridges between the original representations in the psyche of their creators and those imagined by the receptors. Between the musical, the visual or the theatrical signs, similar correspondence can be found.

**3.5.** The conclusions of the research on the various principles of organizing sound, visual and theatrical materials - including symmetrical techniques, those of the golden ratio, counterpoint structures and the implications of rhythm in both worlds of expression - are directed towards revealing the main qualities of theatrical art, the unity of all the arts contained and synthesized in the eloquent expression of a performance. Thus, if the music is a system that organizes the sounds in melodic, harmonic and rhythmic musical compositions, the visual arts deal with the arrangement of shapes, colors and textures in compositional structures, and in the same way the director works with the theatrical material of scenography, actors, performing music, choreography and lights. The forms of organization are intuitively drawn by the stage director, while pursuing a rational and logical path, whose eloquence is the very support of the meaningful communication to the audience. Appearing as a synthesis of the arts, the theater succeeds in bringing to a common expression from of all these seemingly incompatible arts: the acting, the facial and body expressiveness, the shapes, the colors and the textures of the decor and the props, the lights and the shadows of the playing areas, melodies, harmonies and accompanying musical rhythms. The common compositional principles determine multiplier synergies of sense for the communication while contributing to the establishment of a norm of unity, characteristic of any authentic artistic product. Symmetry, proportions, polyphony of discourse are found in all artistic compositions, as the rhythm of a scenography works on the

same principles that determine the architecture of musical works. “The classical distinction between the temporal arts and the visual arts departs in fact from the specific condition of the «abstract» language (in the sense that it doesn’t represent no object) in music and poetry, and” «real» (based on representations of the visible world) visual arts”<sup>13</sup>. The “frozen” rhythms of the theatre stage architecture (the decor) and the props overlap over the “abstract” ones of the dramaturgy (the rhythm of the words written in the text or that of the slow or the rapid storytelling) and the stage direction of the performance (the rhythm of the acting - singular or parallel - actions or the movements of actors on the stage - ornamented or not with dances).

**3.6.** The implications of time in the worlds of these compared arts are to be found in the chapter where the author reduces the set of problems for finding the adequate tempo (the speed of visual, musical or theatrical events) to a single one, the problem of establishing the compatibility of the final artistic product with the deep nature of the human spirit. Choosing a possible wrong tempo would embarrass this approach and the resulted artwork would appear to the public as a fugacious fake, devoid of any interest, as a result of its mere incompatibility with the human nature. The right tempo joins the other components of the artistic whole - in music to melody, harmony and rhythm, in the theater to the rhythm and to the sinuous journey of the story performed on stage - in a unitary complex whose eloquence is actually the result of the firm turn of its assembly direction the original “one” of the human spirit.

The reading of the entire text and harmonizing it with the departments of a production for their subsequent coalescing into an eloquent and singular “one” is the first condition for the public to steep in the dramaturgy of the text, to transcend it. Its transcendence is the condition to dispose the spectator for a future taking possession of it, which adds to the array of accumulations that any artistic performance implies: “Summarizing what we are pursuing, we can translate the situation, in fact, by analogy with «the non-dualistic nature of the free consciousness». If the spirit does not encompass and then leave what it has gained - and that is what it is called to transcend - then there would be no other possibility of a further possession gained through a correlation. Through the punctual transcendence to here and now (the

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<sup>13</sup> Ibidem, p.139

transcendence of the immanent possession), the spirit regains again its impartiality, which, for its next appropriation, is *conditio sine qua non*. The only possible realization of our spirit is given by the correlation of differences, by the elimination of each form of duality. Therefore, he has to meet the aspects of any diversity, a state of facts that appears to itself to be closed. Eliminating all the differences, integrating all parts into a whole, we call it «reduction»<sup>14</sup>. The tempo that sustains the cumulative course of the melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic determinations of a musical score - like the one that sets the speed of a performance - is the essential condition that the events of the whole can be assimilated and then transcended one by one by the audience.

**3.7.** The research of the last chapter of this thesis attempting to “convert” ways of impressing the audience from one world to another of artistic expressions leads the reader to formulate the final conclusions. The theater performance appears more explicit than ever before as an image of an “art of arts”. Of course, the actors' playing remains the primary one. If a performance can exist without a stage design, one without actors seems as absurd as one “Tristan and Isolda” performance without Wagner's scores on the stands from orchestra pit. A decor without actors - or in which the actors would become the viewers who walk through it - can become a “happening”, a “performance” of a singular experience lived by each viewer, but this artistic happening is far from being considered a theatrical form. For theater presupposes, above all, a story told by the actors.

The stage design they are into also means much more than what its semantic origin - “decorative” - means. The accompanying music of the show, the light in which the characters evolve, the objects around them are as important as the text or the story.

From the perspective of theatrical research, **the praxiological function** of this study is to discover the encounter between the arts that complete the theater performance to encourage the scenographers, the directors, the lighting designers, freeing their minds from the stencils by revealing the universality of the compositional principles, stimulating them to imagine new,

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<sup>14</sup> Ibidem, pp. 29

vivid and intense worlds, which would otherwise be hidden in an intuitive existence, without ever incarnating. “The recognition of the musical compositional techniques in the art of theatre stage design” is meant to be more than a morph of the creative actions of stage designers. On the other hand, it also does not propose to become a “musical” complement of some stage design imagined by them. Since each creative process is deeply rooted in its author’s cultural universe of affection, this research aims to be an impulse - by presenting the reader (a stage designer, director or choreographer) a less common angle of contemplation - waiting for a new type of a creative gesture of his actions, as the actor's gesture is expected to be born from within his body, as a movement that is nothing more than an incarnated impulse from the outside world: “Usually, when the actor wants to make a gesture, he builds it along a line starting from the hand. The other way, in life, when a human being is in a living relationship with others, the impulse is being prepared somewhere inside the body and only in the final phase the hand gesture appears as the end point of the impulse; that line leads from the inside outwards. In a living relationship with others, the stimulus is first received and only then the answer is given”<sup>15</sup>.

Instead of asseverating, the author wishes to raise questions, to the artists, as well as to the spectators. What appears to him more and more clearly (with every project he adds) to any theater creator is the essence of tuning each of the arts of the performance, each with the other, and each of them with the whole.

By further investigating the musical, visual and theatrical phenomenologies, the more cultivated artistic perception can reach a transfiguration extent. There the forms of expression are diluted in one single "whole", one that contains in its entirety, in every constituent part thereof, all the universal laws of composition. A similar one to that about which Mozart, referring to the synonymy of the arts - the subject of the present thesis -, wrote in one of his letters: "I can see the entire piece with a single look of my spiritual eye, as I see a beautiful painting or a beautiful human creature. I do not hear the opera as a succession, it will come later, but I hear it somewhat whole and at the same time”<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> Jerzy Grotowski, *Teatru și ritual*, București, Ed. Nemira, 2014, p. 156.

<sup>16</sup> Sorin Petrescu, *Ce se aude și ce nu se aude*, Timișoara, Ed. Brumar, 2014, p. 43.



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