

CREED AND METHOD IN MUSICAL INTERPRETATION

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ABSTRACT

The method in musical interpretation is a way to achieve and materialize the musician's interpretative approach. Moreover, the method allows the suppression of doubts and ignorance while enhances the study's efficiency. The method involves both the interpretative approach- as a process of internalization and deepening of the semantics belonging to the musical text, as well as the sound materialization- finding the proper way to express the result of identifying the encoded meaning among the music score. When learning through the method, the goal is made aware and the means are being synchronized to it. The performer's method involves the rational use of the basic principles of interpretation, adjusted to the repertoire's diversity. In addition, the teacher's method involves flexibility and grace in coordinating the student's learning process. The role of the teacher is to guide the constant evolution of the student through understanding and motivation.

Keywords: belief, method, general and specific interpretive coordinates

The key concepts from which I start are CREED and METHOD in musical interpretation. Therefore, musical interpretation is an artistic field that, in order to be explored at its highest levels, needs first of all an artistic CREED on which to base its interpretive approach and then a METHOD through which to understand the interpretive conception.

Every musical masterpiece is a phenomenon that lives through the performer, and he must perceive it primarily in its spiritual significance. If we refer to CREED it is important to listen to the voice of the Masters, it will help us to find our own inner Master. Dinu Lipatti was and will remain a model for me, a model of musician (pianist and composer) and man.

The interpretive act is a phenomenon in itself, for which the performer invests all his energy out of the desire to express the meanings of musical creations. An interactive triangle is formed in the concert hall among: composer, performer and listener. Thus the goal of the performance is the spiritual communion with the audience to which the music is addressed. CREED is just the argument, but the realization must be based on a METHOD. Method in interpretation and method in teaching are those paths that we consciously draw to reach the desired goal.

I start from CREED in order to achieve as well as possible the main directions of my profession: the interpretive side and the pedagogical side. The BELIEF is the engine of motivation to achieve the best I can. It is the vertical that supports my entire activity.

Additionally, the METHOD develops horizontally, as the experience is enriched and the circle of concerns widens.

The method is a conscious factor of realization and of concretization denoting the interpretive approach. I was concerned about the difference between the interpreter's method (individual course) and the teacher's method (disciple's direction).

Olivier Reboul discusses the problem of learning in a book regarding the philosophy of interpretation. "Learning, in all fields, presupposes a motivation (that is, everything that derives from the artistic creed) and an effective practice that man does by method. The method is a school of the economy of means"¹. The difference between trial learning and method learning consists primarily in the fact that method learning is aware of the goal, the model. The conscious goal allows us to control every attempt, to save groping and thus reduce mistakes. The method allows the suppression of risks and the efficiency of the study. Do not confuse the method with coercion. It is not good to force our beliefs on others. In art, truth can be expressed in countless ways, and the goal of methodical learning is actually to discover "learning how to learn."

Why do we need Masters? The Master does not have to completely control us, thus his role is to make us ask ourselves questions in order for each one to find its inner Master. The role of the teacher is to be a guide of progressive evolution, through understanding and motivation.

In this sense, the method approached by the interpreter in the study and the teaching method differ in the sense that the interpreter's relationship with his inner Master² is direct, while in training the teacher, based on his experience, makes the disciple discover his own inner Master. Therefore, not every method can eliminate everyone's trials in its own way.

The performer's method involves using the basic principles of musical performance, adapted to the diversity of the repertoire. The teaching method also involves flexibility in coordinating the student's learning process.

The artistic creed, reflected in the didactic plan, brings the primacy of the artistic image formation in the preliminaries of learning, the discovery of the organization of meanings, structure and proportions in the musical text. Nowadays, many theorists and practitioners recommend memorizing the text as quickly as possible, because it involves paying attention to all the elements of musical language contained in it and their awareness.

Mental play - studying without a piano is recommended by Chuan Chang in a broad treatment of piano practice, following a method by Yvonne Combe (Debussy's student)³. It distinguishes five kinds of basic methods of memorization: hand memory, audio - tactile; memorizing music, its elements: melody, rhythm, expression, emotions; visual, photographic memory; keyboard memory associated with mental singing; theoretical memory.

¹ Olivier Reboul – *Qu'est-ce qu'apprendre? Pour une philosophie de l'enseignement (What Does Learning Mean? For a Philosophy of Teaching)*, Presses Universitaire de France, Paris, 1980, pg. 56

² St. Augustine - a disciple of Plato, in his book "De magistro" - stated that in order to learn it is enough to rediscover the eternal truths that we each have in us, without realizing it. " - Olivier Reboul, book cited, pg. 169

³ Chuan C. Chang – *Fundamentals of Piano Practice*, Library of Congress Control Number 2007907498, on line: <http://www.pianopractice.org/>

In my opinion, in the interpretive approach, the theoretical memory would be the one that offers perspective, the sense of form - so necessary, then the memorization of linguistic elements, which coagulate in meanings and are transmitted with expression. For the gifted - visual memory helps to form the sound image, but cannot replace it; it must pass into the auditory sphere. Of great importance in my opinion is the audio-tactile memorization, which offers security on the keyboard, giving the whole body the opportunity to participate, to "sing". In concert performance, the close connection between touch and hearing is of great importance, especially for the feedback received in both ways. But, in fact, all these "memories" are associative, the result of educating each one being, in the end, an effective mutual empowerment.

For visually sensitive students, visual memory is indeed the most important. For them, the additional graphic signs added by the teacher are very useful, highlighting and outlining by graphic signs as suggestive as possible the intentions already existing in the score, but "insufficient" for those who fail to penetrate a deeper level of expression. Personally, I like to use revised editions of B. Bartók, J. S. Bach's Preludes and Fugues, or W. A. Mozart's Piano Sonatas, in which musical intentions are made explicit by inner micro-phrases or appropriate accents.

Returning to Chuan C. Chang's book, it turns out to be a complex work, given the questions we need to ask ourselves now, at the beginning of the 21st century. Everything is precipitated in the learning of musical language, due to the modern development of the construction of piano mechanisms, the spread of music schools in countries such as Japan, China and Korea. As Europeans, we have to accept the challenges of musicians in these countries, who come up with a fresh and perhaps more "scientific" vision of how to interpret and educate musical talent. The Suzuki method, which is aimed at beginners, some future professionals, has been successfully adopted all over the world. The new vision on learning, the proposed solutions were taken over by the Europeans in order to optimize the learning time.

An interesting perspective on the problems of piano performance was made by Ana Pitiş and Ioana Minei in *Theory of Piano Behavior*. It demonstrates the need to build a pianistic behavior: its fullness⁴.

I adopted in interpretation and teaching that "intonation" of sounds required by Master Sergiu Celibidache, which really gives that energy needed by the performer, like a singer, to highlight the expressiveness of the intervals. Thus, the chaining of intervals has life and the "pulsating" sound transmits the sound flow to the listener. The inner organization of musical discourse then proves to be well designed, when music can carry us on its wings precisely through the well-ordered pulsating energy. The relationship we have with the Universe itself through pulse, time and emphasis in music is interestingly exposed by Tobias Mattay in his book⁵, complex and visionary for the beginning of the twentieth century.

The auditory control for such sounds is undoubtedly more consciously performed and takes care of the quality of the sounds emitted due to the fact that sonority is actually the sensitive material of music. The sonority is perceived as the "packaging" of the musical

⁴ Work cited, pg.. 45

⁵ Mattay, Tobias - *Musical Interpretation. Its Laws and Principles, and Their Application in Teaching and Performing*, Stanbope Press, Boston, 1913, pg. 151

meaning, but this "packaging" is very important to attract the listener to the concert hall and for the pleasure of the interpretive act itself. Because the sound imprint of each pianist is given by SONORITY, the disciple must be instilled with the desire to refine his sound formation according to the sonorities he wants to obtain, to diversify it according to the expressive requirements of the musical dynamics.

Particular attention will be paid to the exercises that can be done in this regard. I consider it important that the preliminary exercises prepare the performer's physical apparatus so that it reacts effectively to the finest requirements of hearing and the desire to materialize the inner musical image.

I recommend to the instrumentalist's typical exercises such as: scales, arpeggios, chords in different dynamics, with clear intentions, to pay attention to the test and to allow awareness of how changes occur, the body's reaction speed, by what means it can be improved. I even recommend improvisations on these elements, for the development of sound imagination and perception of body sensations.

But the technique does not make sense without being put in the service of art, of the message of music. The exercises I propose are just the workshop necessary to diversify the means of expression of each. These must be related to the musical image in all its complexity.

In order to interpret a work by a composer, it is necessary to educate the sense of musical form, both in our own interpretation and in what we ask of our disciples. This requires careful and detailed analysis.

Then the attitude in interpretation is important. Just as a speaker consciously "builds" his speech to impress the audience, the performer must lucidly construct, in the study, the sound edifice, in the most appropriate⁶ and efficient ways.

But after that, as Dinu Lipatti advised his disciples: "we will have to add to the concrete casing of scrupulousness towards the text all those things that a house needs to be finished: the zeal of our heart, spontaneity, freedom, diversity of feelings etc ...".

Among the notes left by Ana Voileanu - Nicoară⁷ we find a reference to what George Enescu said about the special states that an interpreter experiences: "In front of the work of art there are two states of mind: daydreaming and concentration. Although they are two very different things, to dream usefully or to pursue an actively directed dream, both states are present in the artist's life." To achieve these states there is only the individual experiment, and any external method is unnecessary.

For this reason, I consider, adopting the opinion of O. Reboul, taken from St. Augustine, that the teacher helps the disciple to discover his own inner Master, evolving spiritually in this way. "The real touch of the pianist is something other than a good technique; it is the result of a man who has been transformed."⁸ The satisfaction of the inner "transformation"

⁶ Valentina Sandu-Dediu, - *Choices, Attitudes, Affections: About Style and Rhetoric in Music*, Didactic and Pedagogical Publishing House, Bucharest, 2010, pg.268 „Is the interpreter the speaker? It should, its role being mainly to exert persuasive force on the auditor. The interpreter memorizes a speech elaborated by someone else, however, and delivers it. Thus, the composer largely depends on the performer's abilities "

⁷ Ana Voileanu-Nicoară – *Contributions to the Issue of Musical Interpretation*. Preface and documentary anthology Ninuca Oșanu Pop, Ed. MediaMusica, Cluj-Napoca, 2007, pg. 54

⁸ Karlfried Graf Durckheim, cited work, pg. 22

of those you guide is the greatest reward of the teacher's effort, a proof that there was a method, a way.

It is very important how we look at the teacher-student relationship and understand what he needs to discover through us. The method by which we attract disciples is to find ways in which young people can be educated without destroying their ability to perceive, themselves, the artistic truth. They perceive everything much more naturally when given the opportunity to have their own discernment. With their own beliefs, they can transmit their music in a much more convincing and "renewed" way.

The model of the artist is important, who exemplifies and offers practical and momentary solutions. Occasionally it is the case when the teacher must become the artist who continuously develops his imagination, sound fantasy, his artistic abilities in order to transmit them in turn. The waves through which the communication fluid propagates are very fine and subtle and often it is not the need for words, but the presence of the Master (in turn he is also an interpreter).

Regarding the Path I propose in interpretation, from the interpretive approach to the public interpretation of a work I must mention the awareness belonging to the coordinates existing in the musical text and those specific to their realization.

If the approach is to identify the intrinsic meaning of music, through the process of internalizing, deepening the semantics of the musical text, then the method leads to sound concretization through the process of externalizing the results of deepening the textual semantics and finding optimal ways of expression.

The general coordinates are related to the creed, to the creative representation, but also to the precision with which a musical text is decoded. The specific coordinates - precisely the ways of approaching the instrument itself - require experience, practice and are revealed by a method suitable for playing each musical text, with all its characteristics.

My author's book *General Coordinates and Specific Coordinates of Musical Interpretation*, printed at the West University Publishing House, in Timișoara, 2011 is a reflection of my searches and part of the Conduit followed on the pathway of initiation into music. In the book we tried to synthesize those coordinates that help us orient ourselves in our interpretive approach, from decoding the score to interpreting the piece as an act of re-creating it. We distinguished the coordinates discovered in: general coordinates and specific coordinates.

Therefore, the general coordinates of a musical interpretation, its objective frameworks, are included in the musical score and consist on the interweaving of musical language elements. They are the ones through which the "code" of the spiritual message is engraved in the score. The correct decoding involves the inclusion in those parameters that lead to the formation of a sound image in accordance with the composer's desire and carrying the meanings with which he loaded them.

The musical interpretation specific coordinates bring together the aspects related to the effective sound contouring of the musical image (as a synthesis of the elements of musical language) and the aspects related to the preparation and chiseling of the effective, specific interpretation - on instrument or in chamber ensembles.

Awareness of all these coordinates and their integration into the actual interpretation is a method that ensures the efficiency of the study to achieve the proposed goal: an interpretation that matches the requirements of the composer, but at the same time full of

the uniqueness of the performer, which expresses the deep meaning of the interpreted work.

Consequently, the musical belief is expressed, with the help of the method, in and through the living act of the original, unique musical interpretation.

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