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Liviu Danceanu – A “classic” Composer of Postmodern Music

Abstract:

Composer, musicologist, conductor, professor, essayist Liviu Dănceanu (1954–2017) remains a remarkable personality in Romanian musical culture in the second half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century. Liviu Dănceanu would have turned 70 this year. On this anniversary occasion, the National University of Arts “George Enescu” from Iași joined the initiatives of other Romanian universities to organize a commemorative event as a portrait *in memoriam*, integrated in the 26th edition of the Romanian Music Festival. The cameral concert dedicated to Liviu Dănceanu took place on October 15, 2024, in the “Eduard Caudella” Hall in Iași, with eight works from different stages of the composer’s creation, performed by the Archaeus Ensemble that he founded, coordinated and supported from its beginnings, in 1985, until the end of his life, which occurred in 2017. This Contemporary Music Workshop has carried forward the ideals of its creator to the present day, continuing the line of promoting new compositions that appeared after 1970, considered postmodern and/or contemporary. This study aims to analyse the position that musicological researchers give to Liviu Dănceanu in the historical context of Romanian music and we aim to observe the reception of Liviu Dănceanu’s works nowadays, having as a point of reference the program of the concert performed in Iași by the Archaeus Ensemble.

Keywords: anniversary concert, composer portrait, postmodernism, contemporary music.

Introduction

Associated with the period of postmodern music, also called “contemporary”, *Liviu Dănceanu (1954-2017)* is nowadays more than a representative figure of the postmodernism in the second half of the 20th century, which took root in Romanian musical culture after 1970. His musical language is a synthesis between avant-garde modernism and the archetypal, Byzantine and folkloric roots of local music, highlighting Dănceanu’s work as a point of reference in the context of contemporary Romanian culture, as an author who became a “classic” when we speak about the history of our music.

Composer, musicologist, conductor, teacher, hermeneut and thinker of great strength, theorist and publicist with an intense, prolific activity, with a protean spirit, Liviu Dănceanu remains a prominent figure of the Romanian musical avant-garde, with a compositional style that combines the complexity of experimental techniques and innovative sound languages with the West-European compositional tradition and Byzantine music, sometimes inserting elements of humour, parody and pastiche, treated with a vigilant, agile and intellectually refined spirit.

Liviu Dănceanu was a complex, encyclopaedic personality of the Romanian musical culture of the 20th and 21st centuries, endowed with multiple talents, a broad and comprehensive thinking

and a brilliant mind. Beyond these abilities and professional skills, he has remained in the memory of all those who knew him as a man of extraordinary kindness, human understanding, high moral and cultural standards, a sensitive man, able to perceive music, poetry, life in general from a particular perspective.

The study's novelty lies in an integrated reception-oriented profile of Liviu Dănceanu that combines two analytical layers: (1) how post-2000 Romanian historical-stylistic syntheses and musicological writings position Dănceanu within national postmodern/contemporary music, and (2) how this positioning is tested and specified through a concrete contemporary performance context—the 15 October 2024 commemorative concert in Iași by the Archaeus Ensemble, used as an empirical reference for observing present-day reception.

The subject of the study is the musicological reception and historiographic positioning of Dănceanu's legacy in Romanian musical culture (i.e., how researchers define his place, significance, stylistic identity, and contribution within the post-1970 postmodern/contemporary paradigm).

The object of the study is Dănceanu's creative output and its contemporary cultural articulation, examined through his postmodern/contemporary compositional language as described in scholarly discourse, and the performance-based "portrait in memoriam" format (the 2024 Iași program) as a point of reference for reception today.

The study aims to analyze the position that musicological researchers assign to Dănceanu in the historical context of Romanian music and to observe how his works are received today, using the Iași commemorative concert program as the principal reference point.

To achieve the aim, the study sets out to:

- map and systematize post-2000 musicological interpretations of Dănceanu's place in Romanian postmodern/contemporary music (e.g., in historical-stylistic syntheses and major scholarly assessments);
- identify the main stylistic/technical vectors attributed to Dănceanu in scholarship (e.g., heterophony, adapted spectralism, polystylism/metastylism, historically synthetic strategies);
- conduct analytical case-based readings of selected works performed at the 2024 concert (the author focuses on *Aliquote* op. 63, *Panta rei* op. 82, and *Heptaiib* op. 123) to show how compositional concepts materialize in practice and to connect discourse about "technique" with discourse about "meaning";
- synthesize what the concert-as-commemoration format reveals about Dănceanu's contemporary relevance and "classic" status in Romanian culture, understood through reception and institutional memory.

The article's results are primarily addressed to musicologists and researchers of Romanian music history, especially those working on post-1970 contemporary/postmodern trends, performers and ensemble directors engaged in contemporary repertoire (given the performance-analytic anchoring in the Archaeus Ensemble program), educators and students in higher music education dealing with contemporary compositional techniques, stylistic historiography, and reception studies.

Methods

The analytical method is employed as a fundamental general scientific approach aimed at decomposing complex phenomena into their constituent elements in order to reveal internal structures, relationships, and dominant features. In this study, analytical procedures are applied to examine musicological interpretations of Liviu Dănceanu's work, as well as to isolate key

stylistic, compositional, and aesthetic characteristics attributed to his music in post-2000 scholarly discourse and in the analysis of selected compositions presented in the commemorative concert program.

The method of synthesis is used to integrate disparate analytical observations into coherent conceptual conclusions. As a general scientific tool, synthesis allows individual findings to be assembled into a holistic interpretative model. In the present research, synthesis is applied to combine historiographic assessments, stylistic analyses, and performance-based observations, resulting in an integrated view of Dănceanu's creative legacy as a "classic" figure within Romanian postmodern music.

The historical method is applied to consider the studied phenomenon within its temporal and cultural development. In general scientific research, this method enables the reconstruction of processes in their historical continuity. In this study, the historical method is used to situate Dănceanu's compositional output within the broader evolution of Romanian music from the late 20th century to the early 21st century, as well as to contextualize the composer's reception within changing musicological paradigms.

The comparative method serves as a tool for identifying similarities and differences between artistic phenomena, scholarly interpretations, or stylistic models. In this research, comparative analysis is applied to contrast different musicological assessments of Dănceanu's work found in post-2000 Romanian scholarship, as well as to compare stylistic features across selected compositions included in the commemorative concert program, thereby clarifying the specificity of his postmodern idiom.

The method of generalization is used to derive broader theoretical conclusions from individual analytical cases. As a general scientific approach, generalization enables the transition from particular observations to conceptual interpretations. In this study, generalization is applied to formulate conclusions regarding Dănceanu's position in Romanian music history and his recognition as a "classic" composer of postmodern music, based on both scholarly discourse and contemporary performance practice.

The systemic approach is employed to examine the research object as an interconnected whole rather than as a collection of isolated elements. In the context of this study, the systemic approach allows the integration of compositional analysis, historiographic evaluation, and reception studies into a unified methodological framework, treating Dănceanu's legacy as a complex cultural system encompassing creative output, scholarly interpretation, and institutional memory.

The musicological analytical method is employed as a core discipline-specific approach aimed at examining compositional techniques, musical language, and structural organization of works within their stylistic and aesthetic contexts. In this study, musicological analysis is applied to selected compositions by Liviu Dănceanu performed at the commemorative concert, allowing for the identification of characteristic features of his postmodern idiom, including heterophonic textures, timbral thinking, and the integration of historical stylistic references.

The stylistic and historical-stylistic analysis method is used to identify and interpret stylistic markers and compositional strategies within broader historical frameworks. In the present research, this method is applied to situate Dănceanu's works within the trajectory of Romanian postmodern and contemporary music, clarifying how elements of modernism, postmodern synthesis, and historical allusion interact in his compositional practice.

The reception-oriented method is applied to examine how a composer's work is perceived, interpreted, and contextualized within contemporary cultural and institutional settings. In this study, reception analysis focuses on the commemorative concert dedicated to Liviu Dănceanu,

treating the concert program and its performance context as indicators of the composer's current status, relevance, and canonization within Romanian musical culture.

The performance-analytical method is used to explore the relationship between compositional structure and its realization in live performance. In the context of this research, this method is applied to analyze how Dănceanu's compositional concepts are articulated through interpretation, ensemble interaction, and timbral balance in the performances by the Archaeus Ensemble, thereby linking written musical structures with their performative embodiment.

The interpretative (hermeneutic) method is employed to uncover semantic, symbolic, and conceptual layers of musical works beyond their formal organization. In this study, hermeneutic interpretation is applied to selected compositions in order to elucidate philosophical, metaphorical, and expressive dimensions of Dănceanu's music, particularly those connected with ideas of continuity, transformation, and postmodern recontextualization of musical tradition.

The historiographic analysis method is used to examine scholarly narratives and critical discourse surrounding a composer's work. In this research, historiographic analysis is applied to post-2000 Romanian musicological literature in order to identify prevailing interpretations of Dănceanu's creative legacy, assess shifts in evaluative criteria, and determine how his position as a "classic" of postmodern music has been constructed in academic discourse.

The case-study method is employed to conduct in-depth analysis of selected representative examples within a broader phenomenon. In the present study, the case-study approach is applied to specific compositions and a concrete commemorative event, enabling a focused examination of how abstract musicological concepts and historiographic claims are realized in actual artistic practice.

Literature Review

Scholarly literature devoted to Liviu Dănceanu and to the broader context of Romanian contemporary and postmodern music forms a heterogeneous body of sources that includes interviews, analytical articles, historiographic syntheses, aesthetic reflections, and composer-authored theoretical texts. Taken together, these materials provide a multifaceted framework for understanding Dănceanu's creative identity, stylistic orientation, and cultural positioning. At the same time, the literature reveals a fragmentation between personal testimony, critical reception, and historical contextualization, which substantiates the relevance of the present study's integrative approach.

A significant group of sources consists of interviews and dialogical texts that document Dănceanu's reflections on music, aesthetics, and the role of the composer. Apostu's interview (2017) represents one of the most extensive first-person sources, offering insight into Dănceanu's artistic biography, compositional thinking, and intellectual background. Conducted in a conversational format, the interview reveals the composer's views on musical language, tradition, and innovation, as well as his critical stance toward contemporary musical culture. In the present study, this source is used to contextualize analytical observations within the composer's own conceptual horizon and to correlate scholarly interpretations with authorial self-reflection (Apostu, 2017).

Similarly, the interview conducted by Baltazar (2016) focuses on the ethical and communicative dimensions of Dănceanu's musical thought. Emphasizing the notion of "communion through music," this text highlights the composer's understanding of music as a space of shared meaning rather than purely formal construction. For the purposes of the present research, this interview provides valuable material for interpreting Dănceanu's postmodern

orientation not as ironic distance, but as a search for meaningful interaction between sound, performer, and listener (*Baltazar, 2016*).

Another category of sources includes early critical and lexicographic references that situate Dănceanu within Romanian musical discourse. Crețu's article (*1985*) represents one of the earliest scholarly assessments of the composer's work, written during the late socialist period. Although limited by the ideological and aesthetic constraints of its time, the article identifies key traits of Dănceanu's musical language and acknowledges his emerging individuality. In this study, Crețu's text is used as a historical reference point, illustrating how early critical reception framed the composer's work prior to the development of postmodern discourse in Romanian musicology (*Crețu, 1985*).

Berg's dictionary of famous words, expressions, and quotations (*1969*), while not directly concerned with music, provides a broader cultural and intellectual background relevant to the interpretative dimension of the study. The dictionary is employed as an auxiliary reference for understanding the semantic and philosophical vocabulary that informs discussions of reflection, ambiguity, and cultural memory—concepts that recur in both Dănceanu's writings and the scholarly literature on his music (*Berg, 1969*).

A central role in the literature is played by composer-authored theoretical and reflective texts, which articulate Dănceanu's own aesthetic position. In his chapter "Scholarly Music and the End of Its History," Dănceanu (*2007a*) critically examines the crisis of modernist paradigms and the exhaustion of linear historical narratives in art music. This text provides a theoretical foundation for interpreting his compositional practice as a response to perceived historical rupture. In the present study, this source is used to link Dănceanu's music to broader postmodern debates on historicity, continuity, and stylistic plurality.

In the essay "Between Clarity and Ambiguity," Dănceanu (*2007b*) addresses the tension between intelligibility and openness in musical expression. This reflection is particularly relevant for understanding the composer's preference for layered meanings and controlled indeterminacy. The study draws on this text to support hermeneutic interpretations of selected works, emphasizing the deliberate balance between structural clarity and semantic multiplicity (*Dănceanu, 2007b*).

Dănceanu's book *The Apocalypse of Scholarly Music* (*2009*) represents a polemical and philosophically charged critique of contemporary art music institutions and practices. Although rhetorical in tone, the book articulates a coherent worldview that informs the composer's creative decisions. In this research, the book is used to contextualize Dănceanu's critical stance toward institutionalized modernism and to explain his positioning within postmodern discourse (*Dănceanu, 2009*).

The edited issue *Bi-polarity* (*Dănceanu, 2014*) further develops these ideas by presenting a platform for discussing dualities such as tradition and innovation, system and freedom, and structure and expression. This publication is treated in the study as evidence of Dănceanu's active role not only as a composer, but also as an intellectual mediator shaping contemporary musical debate (*Dănceanu, 2014*).

A substantial body of literature situates Dănceanu within broader historiographic and stylistic frameworks of Romanian music. Sandu-Dediu's monograph (*2002*) provides a foundational overview of Romanian music between 1944 and 2000, establishing historical and institutional contexts essential for understanding Dănceanu's generation. This work is used to position the composer within the late 20th-century musical landscape and to identify continuities and ruptures in stylistic development (*Sandu-Dediu, 2002*).

Dediu's contribution to the collective volume *New Histories of Romanian Music* (2021) extends this perspective by focusing on compositional developments after 1960. The author's analytical treatment of postmodern tendencies and institutional dynamics provides a crucial framework for interpreting Dănceanu's work as part of a larger generational and stylistic constellation. In the present study, this source supports the classification of Dănceanu as a representative figure whose work exemplifies key trends in Romanian postmodern music (Dediu, 2021).

Garaz's article on postmodern music (2012) offers a theoretical examination of postmodernism as a reinvention of musical art after the perceived end of modernity. By outlining characteristic features of postmodern musical thinking, this text informs the study's methodological approach to stylistic analysis. It is used to align the interpretation of Dănceanu's compositional strategies with established theoretical models of postmodern music (Garaz, 2012).

Georgescu (2015) addresses the contribution of older generations to the fulfillment of Romanian music, emphasizing continuity and legacy. This perspective is relevant for understanding the notion of "classic" status attributed to Dănceanu in the present study. Georgescu's work is used to support the argument that Dănceanu's oeuvre represents not merely an individual achievement, but a formative contribution to national musical culture (Georgescu, 2015).

Several studies focus specifically on analytical and interpretative readings of Dănceanu's music. Petecel-Theodoru (2014) examines the composer's work through the lens of completeness and integrative thinking, highlighting the coherence of his stylistic and philosophical approach. This article provides detailed analytical observations that are incorporated into the present study's discussion of compositional structure and expressive intent (Petecel-Theodoru, 2014).

Vasiliu (2015) explores the dialectic between "music as reflection" and "reflection of music" in Dănceanu's work, offering a philosophically oriented interpretation of his compositional language. This source is particularly important for the hermeneutic dimension of the study, as it articulates the reflective and self-referential qualities of Dănceanu's music (Vasiliu, 2015).

Taken together, the reviewed literature demonstrates that Liviu Dănceanu has been the subject of sustained scholarly attention across several decades, encompassing interviews, theoretical writings, critical analyses, and historiographic syntheses. However, these sources often remain compartmentalized, focusing either on personal testimony, stylistic description, or historical placement. The present study addresses this gap by integrating these perspectives and by examining Dănceanu's work through the combined lenses of musicological analysis, historiography, and contemporary reception, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of his position as a "classic" composer of postmodern music.

Results

The reception of Liviu Dănceanu's work in the volumes of historical-stylistic synthesis published after 2000

Ever since 2002, when musicologist Valentina Sandu-Dediu, shortly after the passage between centuries and millennia, published the first volume of a synthesis of Romanian music between 1944–2000, Liviu Dănceanu was perceived both as a leading representative of the *avant-garde generation* of composers, by exploring new ways of producing sound and experimenting with elements of musical theatre, and also as a musician concerned with "personal re-actualizing of tradition", thanks to his series of "approximate" genres and forms (*quasi-fuga, quasi-ricercar, quasi-*

concerto, quasi-symphony, quasi-opera). Later, his works entitled *History* are considered from the perspective of the diachronic traversal of styles and languages of the past, entering the “field of Romanian musical postmodernity” (Sandu-Dediu, 2002, pp. 199-200).

After a decade, in 2012, the musicologist Oleg Garaz draws the chronological delimitations of postmodernism, considering as “the incipient period of postmodernism, even if with a certain degree of approximation, the time segment between the turning point of 1968 and 1979, when Lyotard finalizes his report.” (Garaz, 2012, p. 8) Considering this temporal delimitation in Liviu Dănceanu’s case, his compositional work, his musicological writings and his conducting and artistic activity in general can be categorized in this phase of the Romanian music history, tracing some personal, original directions and at the same time consolidating previous traditions, from a perspective of recovery, synthesis and reintegration of them in the actuality of the compositional phenomenon. Of course, the generalized perception of composers is a reprehensible one in relation to possible historical categorizations, aesthetic classifications or stylistic sorting, but, in the case of Liviu Dănceanu, “the gradual emergence, in waves, of postmodernity” (Garaz, 2012, p. 31) is obvious in his own creation, through the successive stages through which it has been configured, transformed and reconfigured, from the assimilation of the heterophony absorbed from the long relationship with his mentor, Ștefan Niculescu. Passing through the experimental phases that aimed at the quasi-traditionalist approach to genres and forms, instrumental theatre, partial aleatorism, spectralism with inverted harmonics, mathematical proportions, Liviu Dănceanu has reached in the last two decades of existence the stage of the diachronic journey towards the compositional languages of the past from the systematizing, integrating and reinterpretative perspective of the present. Thus, Liviu Dănceanu’s *perpetual mobility* among genres, styles, currents, languages, timbres and compositional techniques became his *compositional stylemark*, the generative code for his entire musical thought.

Closer to the unexpected end of his life is the study accomplished by the musicologist Laura Otilia Vasiliu, from Iași, entitled *Liviu Dănceanu—Reflection of Music vs Music of Reflection*, published in 2015, in which the composer’s personality and thought, as well as the establishment of the *Archaeus* Ensemble, which became the centre of interest of his entire musical activity, are considered as evolutions derived from an original structure, from a generative nucleus – the *archetype*. “The archetype principle is that of the gradual configuration of form from the fundamental sound and intermittent appearances. It dominated the aesthetics of Dănceanu, who owed this idea to Constantin Noica” (Vasiliu, 2015, p. 79). In the researcher’s view, Liviu Dănceanu’s work can be delineated into *three main stages*, named in the study: “1978–1985. *Composition versus musicology*”, “*Recoveries I (1988–1994). Byzantine music*” and “*Recoveries II (after 1995). Composition—interpretation—musicology*”. This demarcation into three periods of work reflects the musician’s multiple affinities, orientations, oscillations between the directions of his compositional, musicological, conducting, literary and publicist activity, on the one hand, but also his pendulations between archetypal sources, languages, techniques, styles, musical trends, on the other hand. The point of intersection between all these paths and ramifications remains the *Archaeus* Ensemble, a landmark of stability and consistency over time, with a path closely linked to the life of its founder and keeping alive his creative energy through the continuation of his concert activity and the perpetuation of his music.

After Liviu Dănceanu’s passing (in 2017), reflecting on his position in the large stylistic pool of stylistic trends, orientations, sources and compositional techniques existing in Romanian music after 1960 (in the second volume of *New Histories of Romanian Music*, 2021), the well-known Romanian composer and musicologist Dan Dediu places him, on the one hand, in the area of novel techniques, due to the use of *heterophony* and the application of *the theory of musical syntaxes*,

methods deeply embedded in his creative thinking as a result of the years of mentorship and the bond created with the composer Ștefan Niculescu, being in the area of the “compositional constellation” generated by his “encyclopaedic, olympian and world personality” (Dediu, 2021, p. 360). On the other hand, Liviu Dănceanu is also included in the category of musicians who have appealed to adapted techniques, such as *spectralism*, in the version of the *lower harmonics*, used in the Trombone Concerto entitled *Seven Days—Concerto for Barrie* (1991) and in the chamber works *Andamento* (1994) and *Aliquote* (1994), emphasizing the investigation of the natural resonance of sound and the experimentation of mathematical principles in the musical field. Adapted techniques also include *polystylism* and *metastylism*, which became particularly obvious in the compositions of his last period (approximately after the year 2000) in which appear frequent references to past trends and styles, both academic, Western European and folkloric, Byzantine, being inserted into his music with a rhetorical, objective attitude, typical for the *stylistic historicism*, but with a refreshing, playful approach to reinventing tradition as if created in the context of our times: *History II* (1998), *Panta rei* (2001), *Beverdillini* (2001), *Exercises of Admiration* (2004), *Heptail* (2011). A last category in which Dan Dediu places Liviu Dănceanu at the end of his study is the *vernacular*, imagined by the author as a novel aesthetic direction, based on the originality and uniqueness of the “poetic uniqueness of the Romanian ethos” (Dediu, 2021, p. 398) in the context of the intensely heterogeneous and cosmopolitan music of the 21st century.

Liviu Dănceanu’s imaginative force reaches points and directions so diverse in their aesthetic and stylistic essence that we arrive at Umberto Eco’s phrase—*opera aperta*, understood as open work/opera, but also as *a work in movement* or a *moving work*, as the composer himself states in an article published in *România literară* [Literary Romania], entitled *Between clarity and ambiguity*: “Due to the virtual composition and re-composition of the component parts, a work/an opera in movement can take on the appearance of narrative music, being in the presence of a phenomenon of non-identification of the work with itself, and of the highlighting of new aspects after each aesthetic consumption.” (Dănceanu, 2007a)

In all these historical, musicological or internet sources, we notice the dense perceptions, consistent in ideas generated by the impact of Liviu Dănceanu’s compositions on listeners and researchers. His works are characterized by stylistic diversity, versatility and an extraordinary sense of balance of form, language, expression, often adopting an aesthetics of paradox by harmonizing opposites, merging tradition with avant-garde, integrating abstract symbolism with instrumental theatre. Dănceanu’s music can sometimes be perceived as playful, intellectual, sometimes absurd, surrealist, with many incongruities embedded in a striking dramaturgy, or, on the contrary, it can be perceived as a return to the archaic ethos of modal, primordial sonorities, which add a meditative, transcendental dimension to his creation.

Analytical considerations on the works performed by the Archaeus Ensemble at the Romanian Music Festival in Iași, 26th edition, 2024

The anniversary concert, conceived as a compositional portrait *in memoriam*, prepared and performed by the *Archaeus* Ensemble, would have been, of course, an occasion of joy and celebration, to celebrate the 70th birthday with one of the most brilliant musicians of his generation, Liviu Dănceanu. Previously, I had the opportunity to participate in a concert performed by the members of the ensemble in Iași, conducted by the composer himself, on the same stage of the “Eduard Caudella” Hall of “Alecă Balș” House, during the 17th edition of the Romanian Music Festival in 2013.

After 11 years, we took part in the legacy left by Liviu Dănceanu to posterity, through the musical works and the carefully chosen words for the descriptions of the scores, which took

shape and sound in real time thanks to the *Archaeus* Ensemble, which he founded, directed and supported until the end of his life. According to Loredana Baltazar in an article published online in 2016, “the artistic trajectory of composer and professor Liviu Dănceanu is to a large extent to be found in the destiny of the *Archaeus* Ensemble” (Baltazar, 2016). The performers whom we had the opportunity to listen to in Iași, during the 2024 edition of the festival, were: Rodica Dănceanu (piano), Cristian Balaș (violin), Alexandru Matei (percussion), Ion Nedelciu (clarinet), Șerban Novac (bassoon), Ana Maria Radu (oboe), Andreea Țimiras (cello), under the musical direction of the conductor Mircea Pădurariu.

Out of the eight works performed by the *Archaeus* Ensemble at the Romanian Music Festival in Iași, I will focus on three opuses, due to the different compositional conceptions that emerged at the basis of each of them, determining three of its many contrasting musical horizons: the application of mathematical principles and proportions—in *Aliquote* op. 63,—the intention of historical synthesis, by bringing back and recontextualizing stylistic traditions in postmodernity—as he does in *Panta rei* op. 82—and the archaic Byzantine vein of Romanian musical culture—explored and masterfully exploited in *Heptaiib* op. 123.

***Aliquote* op. 63**

Composed in 1984 at the request of the *Chromas* Ensemble of Trieste and the organizers of the *Trieste Prima '94* festival, *Aliquote* op. 63 is a challenging work, both interpretatively and analytically (Figure 1). The work is intended for a chamber ensemble made up of flute/oboe, clarinet, bassoon, piano, guitar/viola, cello, to which are added various adjacent percussion instruments (*chimes, tom-tom, maracas, gong, raganella, ucellì*), based on a complex mathematical calculation with prime numbers and simple ratios, arriving at a dense, complicated sonic whole, according to the indications given by the composer in the score's preface. This whole is characterized by ubiquity and isotropy, having an egg-like internal distribution, i.e., homogeneous and dense in all directions within it. The term “aliquot” defines – in its original, mathematical sense—a part of a whole, contained within it a certain number of times. At the musical level, the principle of the aliquot is found both at the level of syntax and musical macrostructure, and in the sonorous material, expressed in this case by natural harmonics, approached as parts (i.e., aliquots) of an entity (in this case, the fundamental sound—D).

This phenomenon and compositional principle is suggested by the Latin expression pronounced by the performers throughout the work and very poignantly at the end—*Ab uno disce omnes* [“By one you can know/judge all”]—taken from the ancient epic *Aeneid* II by the Roman poet Vergilius (ca. 70 BC – 19 BC), referring to the episode in which the Greeks entered the city of Troy by the famous method of a wooden horse (Figure 2).

The insertions of the human voice and of the various adjacent percussion instruments outline the idea of a whole that can be decomposed into its parts (aliquots), according to the order predetermined by the composer. The composer's intuition of proportions is fascinating, as is his agile sense of balance, in order to avoid excess, redundancy or, on the contrary, lack of support for the musical dramaturgy.

Thus, any element that contributes to the construction of the discourse—a melodic succession, a rhythmic formula, a particular technique or a constructive principle—is carefully and measuredly exploited by the composer, highlighting his ability to calibrate the duration of the prolongation of an effect, such as certain pedals, insistences, timbral associations, certain “waves” or dynamic contrasts in relation to the conceiving thought over the sections or the whole work.

***Panta rei* op. 82**

A representative work for the historicizing, synthesizing perspective on the past is *Panta rei* op. 82, which was composed in 2001, at the request of the festival “Two Days and Two Nights of New Music” in Odessa. In Greek, *Panta rei* means *Everything flows* and is an expression reduced to its essence of meaning, based on the idea attributed to the Hellenistic philosopher Heraclitus, according to whom all things come into being through the conflict of opposites, and the sum of things—that is the “whole”—flows like water. The work composed by Liviu Dănceanu stands out both for its virtuoso writing and for its “mosaic, miscellaneous aspect (like crystalline schist), each layer being taken from a diachronic traversal of stylistic periods that have defined the language of European music in the last millennium”, as the composer himself states in the brief Romanian preface to the manuscript.

The opus is made up of a succession of 13 sections that unfold in a continuous, uninterrupted movement, but each moment marked distinctly in the score (*Middle Ages, Renaissance, Baroque, Classicism, Romanticism, Modernism, Post-Modernism, Ethnical, Archetypal, Jazz, Rock-Rap*) brings a certain compositional gesture, captured through a new type of discourse or a different writing, sometimes through certain sound suggestions that refer to certain historical-stylistic periods. The composer has added an introduction, called *A priori*, and a conclusion, called *A posteriori*, to the opening and the end of the composition.

Initially, the work exposes a sinuous chromatic line, exposed on the piano and composed of semitones that “flow” uniformly, predominantly downwards, in sixteenths, suggesting the musical thread, the warp, the sonorous material from which the discourse of future artistic epochs will be woven. The *Middle Ages* take up this line of sound in the oboe, but with a diatonic intonational structure where the only chromatic chromatics are B flat and B natural, followed by clarinet and bassoon, which develop their parts on the principle of horizontal linearity, supported by the interventions of the violin and cello which run parallel, in perfect fifths, in prolonged durations, recalling the tradition of *cantus firmus* used as monody and later in the parallel organum.

Renaissance takes over the musical line played by the violin in sixteenths, applying polyphonic imitation with the entry of the clarinet, then the cello and piano, at perfect octave intervals, in a manner similar to the motet and madrigal genres, but without prolonging this moment too much. *Baroque* and *Classicism* follow each other in an increasingly concise and condensed unfolding, in 2/4-time signature, by overlapping different types of arpeggiated figurations or gradual fragments combined with changing notes, passing notes, échappées notes, built through patterns of harmonic sequences, with brief flashes of potential melodies, exposed by oboe and violin, as in a quick dialog, created by the complementarity of musical lines. *Romanticism* emerges on the way, as a consequence of the accumulation of previous procedures. In this section, these techniques become sketched, compressed, suggested by the discourse of instruments that bring the gesture of specific themes and accompaniments from 19th century scores (e.g., the 3/4 meter and the waltz movement, with counter-time on the first beat) (*Figure 3; Figure 4*).

Modernism is marked by the 5/4-time signature and the sudden change of the writing which, although it keeps the profile of the chromatic motif from the beginning, becomes fragmented due to its irregular circulation in the ensemble instruments and the accompaniment generated by sounds arranged in a mosaic in the score, in the manner of pointillism.

Postmodernism, although more visually organized, creates an effect of deconstruction of the initial compositional idea through rhythmically calculated entries for each instrument, in a succession of alternative measures, followed by the sections for *ethnic, archetypal* and *jazz* categories, which bring particular elements such as melodic ornaments, polyrhythm and vertical polymeter, unconventional timbral effects, chords and syncopations specific to entertainment music.

The tensional climax is reached in the section entitled *Rock-Rap*, where the members of the ensemble also have vocal interventions, with spoken text based on rhythmic structures indicated in the score. The performers quote maxims, sayings, proverbs belonging to classical thinkers, mentioned by Liviu Dănceanu in the *Addenda*¹ at the beginning of the manuscript (*Figure 5*).

Finally, the last section entitled *A posteriori* brings back the chromatic line from the beginning, this time in an ascending and conclusive way. Throughout the 13 sections, the musical discourse that unfolds is cursive and chaotic at the same time, unidirectional and eclectic, unfolding at a speed that may seem fulminating for the average human capacity to receive such dense and varied music. However, perhaps the purpose of this quick foray into the history of musical styles that have succeeded one another over the last 1000 years is to remind us that, while on a cosmic level, time may be eternal, synchronous, overlapping past, present and future, for human, terrestrial existence, time flows linearly, life is always moving forward and flashing by in relation to the universe.

***Heptaih* op. 123**

Liviu Dănceanu's music is often like a show of stylistic allusions and refined parodies, which open unexpected perspectives on tradition and modernity to the listener. Another work that emphasizes the complex thinking and the kaleidoscopic image generated by his music is *Heptaih*, which exploits and synthesizes tradition in a different approach in terms of language, style, sonorous syntax, as well as semantically and spiritually.

Heptaih, op. 123 was composed in 2009, at the request of the *Macedonian Music Days* festival. The title, an obvious reference to the archaic echos, sums up the semantic force of the figure (*Figure 7*) both in a timbral context, through the number of instruments involved in the discourse (oboe, clarinet, bassoon, percussion—which contains vibraphone, gong, chimes,—piano, violin, cello), and through the sections named after the modes used in this work. The echos on which the composer has built the musical edifice of *Heptaih* are *Protovaris*, *Leghetos*, *Lydios*, *Phrygios*, *Plaghios deuterios* and *Protos*, which follow one another in a specific order designed to symbolize a path of states specific to religious meditation, like a pilgrimage—as Liviu Dănceanu would say—among many ethos and topos.

Beginning in the grave, solemn and deeply introspective atmosphere that the *Protovaris* mode creates, due to its association with the prayers of repentance in the archaic Byzantine tradition, the sonorous discourse has a modal construction initially made up of semitones that gravitate melismatically around B, through *glissandi* and chromatic undulations that circulate from one instrument to another, as in a feverish and involuntary search.

A state of possible certainty settles with the new section, entitled *Leghetos*, in 5/4-meter signature, when a simple but penetrating melody unfolds, intoned by the oboe and subsequently accompanied by the rest of the instruments. They enter successively, one or two beats apart, generating a heterophonic texture that covers the initial monody with other similar melodic contours, but more sinuous and offset by triplets, hemiolas, syncopations. The modal foundation in this section is explicitly displayed in the discourse of each instrument by the insistence on the sound-centre E and especially in the lower register of the piano, by those deep octaves whose resonance amplified by the pedal generates the image of a heavy anchor, dropped into the depth of the sonorous discourse (*Figure 6*).

¹ Translation: “What is not worth saying is sung.” (Beaumarchais); “As you sow, so shall you reap.” (Cicero); “The vanity of vanities and all are vanity.” (David); “Much ado about nothing.” (Shakespeare); “Look and pass!” (Dante); “The earth has room for all.” (Schiller); “Everything flows.” (Heraclitus).

Lydios, on the other hand, emphasizes the polyphonic imitation of a motif derived, somehow, from the previous melody, but melodically transformed by the insertion of two augmented seconds (A flat—B and D flat—E) and rhythmically treated through multiple variations including augmentation, diminution, division of some durations, all of which are sometimes perceived distinctly, in a row, other times synchronously and polyrhythmically.

In contrast to this clearly organized section on the modal, metric and syntactic levels, reaching a cadence in unison on G, the next sound area, marked with the *Phrygios* indication, brings a generalized freedom in all sound parameters: melodic fragments similar to Romanian doina, that are improvisatory and richly ornamented, played by the cello, then clarinet, bassoon and, later, by the rest of the ensemble, in tempo *ad libitum* and alternative meters. We note the harmonic pedals made up of quartal chords played by the vibraphone and the minor sevenths intoned by the chordophones (by overlapping violin and cello), arriving, on page 14, at a vertical harmonization, similar to a chorale, based on sounds drawn from natural harmonics arranged in different registers.

In the *Hypodorios* section, the heterophony returns, this time with more breadth and expressiveness, the composer requesting in the score a *molto legato sempre* performance. Each individual line of sound develops a warm, serene melos, which dissipates into a mobile and intensely melismatic texture, whose modal centre is D. The vibraphone and the piano together constitute the contrasting element in relation to the other instruments, due to their synchronous, unison development in higher time signatures.

The culminating point is reached in the penultimate section, entitled *Plaghios deuterios*—VIth echo or *Hypolidios*, the plagal of the second echo, *Lydios*, according to the study written by Despina Petecel-Theodoru (*Petecel-Theodoru, 2014, p. 54*)—due to the evolution of the sonorous lines towards the high register of each instrument and the insertion of chromatic elements, in a dense texture with increasingly shorter and accelerated note values. The state of tension brought about by these details of writing is typical of the *Plaghios deuterios* mode, whose use in oral practice also includes microtones, and is found in the penitential troparia and in the chants of Passion Friday (*Figure 7*).

The transition to the final part of the work is accomplished by setting the modal foundation on D for all instruments. From this point, a last meditative melody starts in a heterophonic motion, similar to the second section, *Leghetos*, where this melodic line was first exposed. The ethos of the mode used in the conclusion and mentioned in the score—*Protos*—creates a state of spiritual equilibrium and inner conciliation, thanks to the simplified, diatonic discourse, centred on D, with an airy, diaphanous writing, with uncomplicated and powerful harmonies, suggesting a return to simple, original musical phenomena (*Figure 8*).

Thus, the composer's conception on the modes arranged in seven sections on the seven instruments of the *Archaens* Ensemble is visible by layering the initial monody in a musical writing that alternates the homogeneous arrangement with heterogeneous polyphony, unison and modal counterpoint that intertwine and deploy in a perpetual motion, clearing up, in the end, in a general unison on D, in a noble consonance.

After this wandering among ideas, states, agglomerations, rarefactions, areas of quivering and persists above sonorous anchors, the words of the musicologist Despina Petecel-Theodoru came to my mind, who published during this summer a particularly sensitive portrait of the composer, in a high articulation, with areas of great depth of thought, as well as poetic insights. She wrote the following idea: "Liviu Dănceanu is always unpredictable, always different, each page of the score is different from the previous and the following ones due to the variety of

rhythmic, agogic, harmonic formulas, which he modifies and permutes, which gives dynamism and variety to his compositional approach.” (*Petecel-Theodoru, 2014, p. 59*)

Discussion

The results of the study demonstrate a high degree of relevance both for contemporary musicology and for broader discussions concerning cultural memory, canon formation, and the mechanisms of reception in postmodern musical culture. By focusing on Liviu Dănceanu as a representative and emblematic figure of Romanian postmodern music, the research contributes to the clarification of how individual creative trajectories become stabilized within national and transnational musical historiography.

One of the key contributions of the study lies in its reception-oriented perspective, which allows the composer’s legacy to be examined not solely through historical distance or abstract stylistic classification, but through its active presence in contemporary performance and institutional practice. The analysis of the commemorative concert format reveals how musical works are recontextualized and revalidated within present-day cultural frameworks, thereby confirming Dănceanu’s status as a “classic” not in the sense of historical closure, but as a continuing point of reference for artistic and intellectual discourse.

The findings are particularly relevant in the context of postmodern music studies, where the notion of “classical status” often remains theoretically ambiguous. By demonstrating that Dănceanu’s music functions simultaneously as a product of postmodern aesthetics and as a stable component of institutional memory, the study offers a model for understanding how postmodern composers may enter the canon without relinquishing the principles of stylistic plurality, reflexivity, and historical self-awareness.

Furthermore, the study contributes to Romanian musicology by synthesizing dispersed scholarly perspectives into a coherent analytical framework. Previous studies have addressed Dănceanu’s work from various angles—biographical, analytical, philosophical, or historiographic—but rarely have these perspectives been integrated within a single study that connects compositional analysis, scholarly reception, and contemporary performance practice. The study demonstrates that such integration is not only methodologically feasible, but necessary for a comprehensive understanding of the composer’s cultural significance.

At a broader level, the results are relevant to studies of cultural continuity in post-1960 European music. By situating Dănceanu within the long-term evolution of Romanian music after the decline of modernist teleologies, the research highlights the role of composers who mediate between historical consciousness and postmodern reconfiguration. In this sense, the findings resonate beyond the national context, offering insights applicable to comparative studies of postmodern music in other cultural traditions.

Despite the coherence of the analytical framework, the study process revealed a number of methodological and structural challenges that merit critical reflection. One of the primary difficulties concerns the heterogeneity of the source material. The literature on Liviu Dănceanu encompasses interviews, composer-authored essays, analytical articles, and historiographic syntheses, each operating with different methodological assumptions and evaluative criteria. Integrating these sources into a unified analytical narrative required careful differentiation between authorial self-interpretation, critical reception, and retrospective historiographic assessment.

A related problem arises from the inherently subjective nature of reception-based analysis. While the commemorative concert provides a valuable empirical reference point, it represents only one institutional and performative context. The interpretation of such an event as evidence

of canonical status necessarily involves a degree of inference, as reception is shaped by multiple factors, including programming policies, institutional agendas, and audience composition. The study addresses this limitation by situating the concert within a broader historiographic and cultural framework, but the issue nonetheless underscores the need for caution in generalizing reception-based conclusions.

Another challenge concerns the temporal proximity of the study object. The analysis deals with a composer whose legacy is still actively negotiated within contemporary culture. Unlike studies of historically distant figures, research on recent or near-contemporary composers lacks the stabilizing effect of long-term historiographic consensus. As a result, evaluative judgments remain open to revision, and the criteria for “classical” status are not yet fully codified. This situation complicates attempts to draw definitive conclusions, but it also constitutes a productive tension that reflects the dynamic nature of postmodern musical culture.

The study also encountered limitations related to the availability and accessibility of performance documentation. While analytical readings of selected works were supported by concert programs and scholarly descriptions, comprehensive performance recordings and archival materials were not always available for systematic comparison. This constraint restricted the scope of performance analysis and highlighted the broader issue of documentation practices in contemporary music culture.

Finally, the study revealed a relative scarcity of explicitly reception-oriented studies in Romanian musicology. While stylistic and historical analyses are well represented, fewer works address how music functions within present-day institutional and cultural contexts. This gap necessitated the adaptation of methodological tools from reception studies and performance analysis, underscoring the interdisciplinary nature of the research but also pointing to an area where further methodological development is needed.

The findings of the study open several promising directions for further research. One important avenue involves the expansion of reception-oriented analysis to a broader range of performances and institutional contexts. Comparative studies examining how Dănceanu’s music is programmed and interpreted across different ensembles, festivals, and cultural settings would provide a more nuanced understanding of his contemporary reception and canonical status.

Another perspective direction lies in comparative postmodern studies. Situating Dănceanu alongside other European composers who emerged in the post-1960 period would allow for the identification of shared strategies and national specificities in postmodern musical thought. Such comparative work could contribute to a more integrated European perspective on postmodern music, moving beyond isolated national narratives.

Further research could also focus on the pedagogical dimension of Dănceanu’s legacy. Investigating how his music is represented in academic curricula, analytical textbooks, and compositional training would shed light on the mechanisms through which postmodern music enters educational canonization. This line of inquiry would complement the present study’s focus on performance and historiography, extending the analysis to the sphere of musical education.

Another promising direction concerns interdisciplinary approaches that connect musicology with philosophy, cultural studies, and institutional theory. Given Dănceanu’s own engagement with aesthetic and philosophical questions, future studies could explore the relationship between his compositional practice and broader intellectual currents, such as postmodern theories of history, identity, and meaning.

Finally, further research may address the role of archives, documentation, and digital media in shaping the reception of contemporary composers. As musical culture increasingly relies on digital dissemination, understanding how recordings, online platforms, and digital archives

contribute to canon formation will become increasingly important. Applying such perspectives to the study of Dănceanu's music would extend the study into new methodological and technological domains.

In sum, the Discussion confirms that the study's results are not only relevant for understanding the creative legacy of Liviu Dănceanu, but also for advancing methodological and theoretical debates in contemporary musicology. By identifying both achievements and limitations, the research lays the groundwork for future investigations that can further clarify the processes through which postmodern composers attain enduring cultural significance.

Conclusion

Overall, Dănceanu's work is situated at the intersection between experiment and reverence for musical history. Making use of heterophonic writing techniques, partial aleatorism, inverted spectralism, instrumental theatre, mathematical proportions, rigorous formal processes and constructive strategies to bring music to a new level of artistic expression, the composer later turns to the musical languages of the past, acquiring a playful-recuperative attitude in reinterpreting styles, trends, syntaxes and even famous themes, until reinventing them in new contexts and approaches with a fresh, postmodern breath. His creation is not only an accumulation of sophisticated musical techniques, but also a philosophical reflection on the condition of contemporary music.

His artistic ideas and messages, conveyed both through his compositions and theoretical writings, outline a perpetually restless meditation on the state of contemporary music, as suggested in the volumes of essays, philosophical reflections and aesthetic debates: *Implosive Essays* (α -1998, β -2001, γ -2005), *The Book of Instruments* (2002), *The Book of Dances* (2004), *Partially Sonorous Diary* (2009), *Seminars in the Key of C* (2009), *Figurations and Fulgurations* (2011), *The Cursive Aerial Diary* (2017—a volume of memories and confessions of exceptional literary value). Especially in his philosophical work, *The Apocalypse of Scholarly Music* (Dănceanu, 2009b), the musicologist Liviu Dănceanu expresses his concerns about the ephemerality of this art and the fragility of musical culture in the face of historical, social and cultural changes. This sentiment also comes through in his music, which often contains breaks with rhetorical effect, moments suggestive of states of anxiety, ridicule, sometimes even despair, but also notes of introspection or resignation, highlighting the idea that music itself is an art of passing and transformation.

Even though Liviu Dănceanu left us on October 26, 2017, his music, his ideas, his writings, the memory of his concerts and lectures are what prolong his existence beyond the Great Threshold. In his own words, “after all, no one and nothing is indispensable except the sun and the belief that, even if I know that the latter will win, I love life and not death.” (Apostu, 2017, p. 24)

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that is no conflict of interest.

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Appendix

The image displays four pages of a musical score, numbered 10, 11, 12, and 13. The score is for the piece 'Aliquote, op. 63' by Liviu Dănceanu. The instruments and voices included are:

- Flute (FF)
- Oboe (OB)
- Clarinet (CF)
- Fagot (Fg)
- Piano (P)
- Clarinete solista (Clif solista)
- Violina (VI)
- Violoncel (Vc)
- Voice (Voc)

The score is written in a complex, multi-measure style with various dynamics and articulations. The pages are arranged in a 2x2 grid. The first page (10) shows measures 50-53. The second page (11) shows measures 54-57. The third page (12) shows measures 58-61. The fourth page (13) shows measures 62-65. The score includes a variety of musical notations, including slurs, accents, and dynamic markings such as *mp* and *p*.

Figure 1. Liviu Dănceanu, Aliquote, op. 63, excerpt from the manuscript score, pp. 10-13

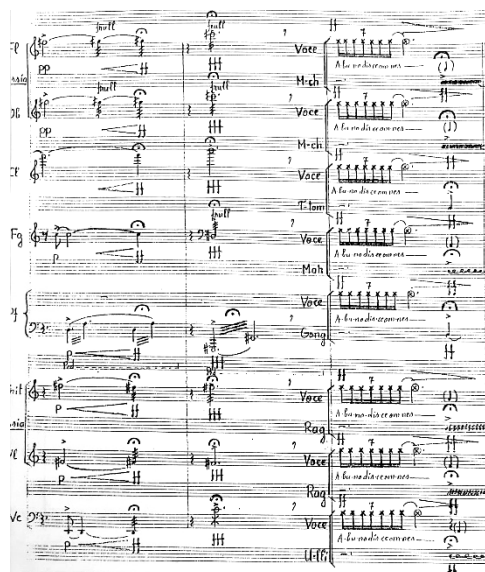


Figure 2. Liviu Dănceanu, Aliquote, op. 63, excerpt from the manuscript score, p. 34 (the end)

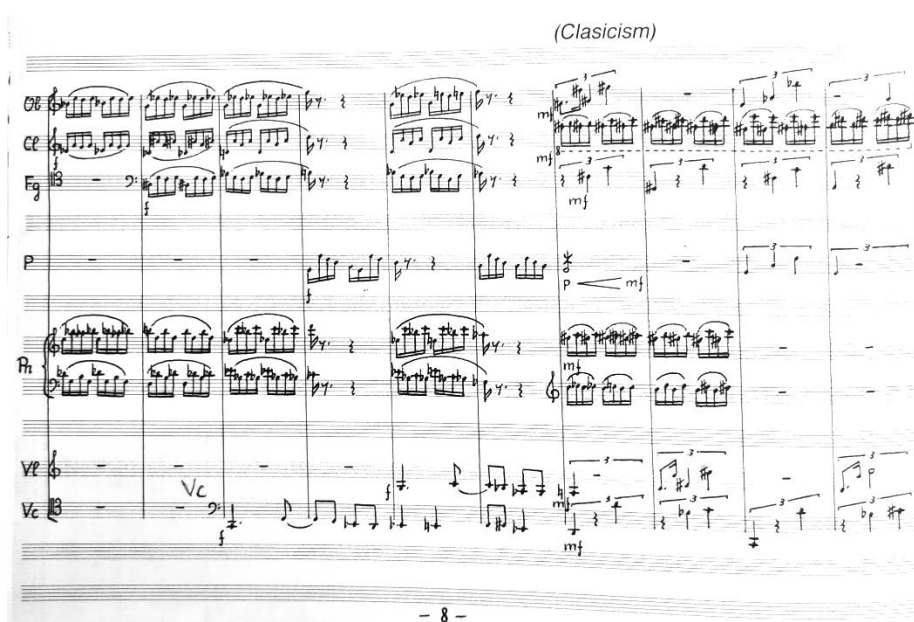


Figure 3. Liviu Dănceanu, Panta rei, op. 82, fragment from the sections Baroque – Classicism. Excerpt from the manuscript score, p. 8

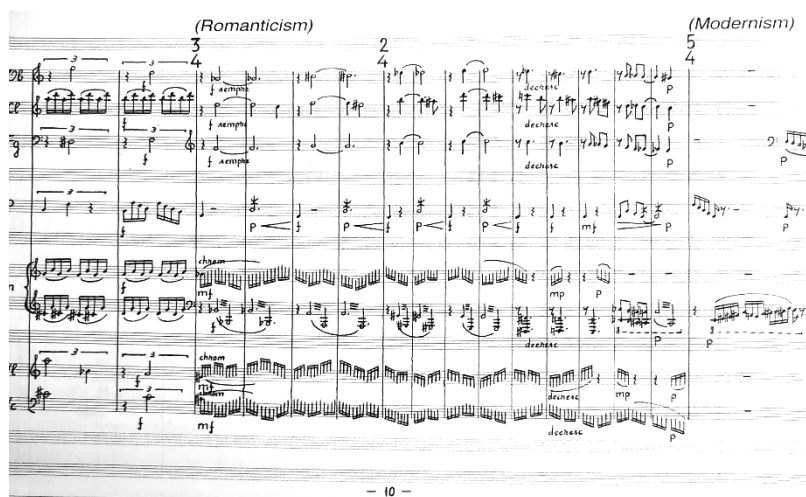


Figure 4. Liviu Dănceanu, *Panta rei*, op. 82, fragment from the sections *Romanticism – Modernism*. Excerpt from the manuscript score, p. 10

A D D E N D A

"Ce qui ne vaut pas la peine d'etre dit, on le chante" (**Beaumarchais**)

"Ut sementem feceris, ita metes" (**Cicero**)

"Haveil havulim hacoil haveil" (**David**)

"Much ado about nothing" (**Shakespeare**)

"Guarda e passa" (**Dante**)

"Raum fur alle hat die Erde" (**Schiller**)

"Panta rei" (**Heraclit**)

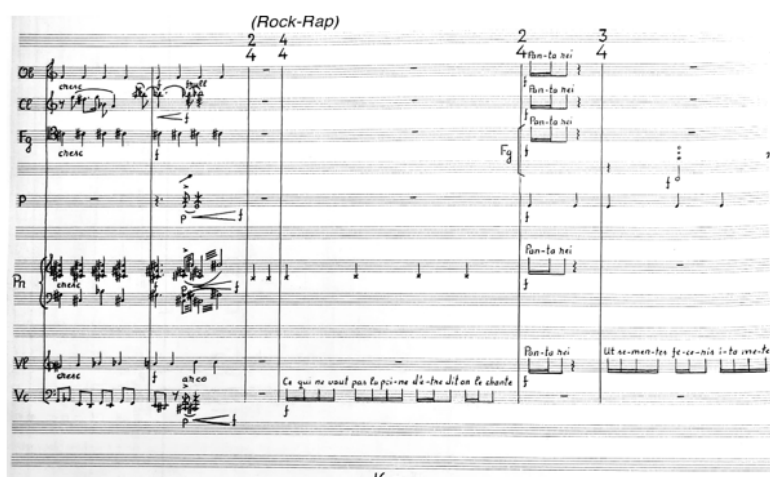


Figure 5. Liviu Dănceanu, *Panta rei*, op. 82, fragment from the section *Rock-rap*. Excerpt from the manuscript score, p. 16

The image displays two pages of a musical score, numbered -3- and -4-. The section is titled '5 Leghetos'. The score is written for a full orchestra, including woodwinds (flute, oboe, bassoon, clarinet), brass (trumpet, trombone, tuba), strings (violin, viola, cello, double bass), and piano. The tempo is marked '5 Leghetos'. The music features complex rhythmic patterns and dynamic markings such as 'p' (piano) and 'mp' (mezzo-piano). The notation includes various musical symbols like slurs, accents, and dynamic hairpins.

Figure 6. Liviu Dănceanu, *Heptaih op. 123*, fragment from the section *Leghetos*. Excerpt from the manuscript score, pp. 3-4

The image displays two pages of a musical score, numbered -18- and -19-. The section is titled 'Plaghios deuterios'. The score is written for a full orchestra, including woodwinds (flute, oboe, bassoon, clarinet), brass (trumpet, trombone, tuba), strings (violin, viola, cello, double bass), and piano. The tempo is marked 'Plaghios deuterios'. The music features complex rhythmic patterns and dynamic markings such as 'p' (piano) and 'mp' (mezzo-piano). The notation includes various musical symbols like slurs, accents, and dynamic hairpins.

Figure 7. Liviu Dănceanu, *Heptaih op. 123*, fragment from the section *Plaghios Deuterios*. Excerpt from the manuscript score, pp. 18-19

The image displays two pages of a musical score, labeled -21- and -26-. The score is for a symphonic work titled 'Protos' by Liviu Dănceanu. The first page (21) features a 6/4 time signature and includes staves for Oboe (Ob), Clarinet (Cl), Bassoon (B♭), Violin (Vln), Viola (Vla), Violoncello (Vcl), and Contrabass (Cb). The second page (26) includes staves for Oboe (Ob), Clarinet (Cl), Bassoon (B♭), Violin (Vln), Viola (Vla), Violoncello (Vcl), and Contrabass (Cb), with a 'M. Chimes' part also indicated. The score contains various musical notations such as notes, rests, dynamics (pp, ppp), and articulation marks.

Figure 8. Liviu Dănceanu, *Heptaih op. 123*, fragment from the final section *Protos*. Excerpt from the manuscript score, pp. 21 and 26