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## BASIC FUNDAMENTALS OF PHENOMENOLOGY OF MUSIC BY SERGIU CELIBIDACHE AS CRITERIA FOR THE ORCHESTRAL CONDUCTOR

Lucia Marin

University of Kentucky, [luciamarinmarin@yahoo.es](mailto:luciamarinmarin@yahoo.es)

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Lucia Marin, Student

Professor John Nardolillo, Major Professor

Dr. David Sogin, Director of Graduate Studies

BASIC FUNDAMENTALS OF PHENOMENOLOGY  
OF MUSIC BY SERGIU CELIBIDACHE  
AS CRITERIA FOR THE ORCHESTRAL CONDUCTOR

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DISSERTATION

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Music in the  
School of Music  
at the University of Kentucky

By

Lucía Marín

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: John Nardolillo, Professor of Conducting

Lexington, Kentucky

2015

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## ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

### BASIC FUNDAMENTALS OF PHENOMENOLOGY OF MUSIC BY SERGIU CELIBIDACHE AS CRITERIA FOR THE ORCHESTRAL CONDUCTOR

The phenomenology of music is the science of studying sounds and their relationship with human beings. Conceived by the Romanian orchestra conductor Sergiu Celibidache, phenomenology of music has become a valuable source of knowledge for the orchestral conductor, offering tools that can lead to a deeper understanding of the score. In this paper I will offer an explanation of phenomenological method, applied to conducting based on my own experience, and an explanation of the basic ideas of “Celibidache’s Phenomenology of Music.”

KEYWORDS: Celibidache, phenomenology of music, structure, unity, consciousness

Lucia Marin

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Student’s Signature

March 25<sup>th</sup> 2015

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Date

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By  
Lucía Marín

John Nardolillo

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Director of Dissertation

David Sogin

---

Director of Graduate Studies

March 25<sup>th</sup> 2015

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To my master Enrique García Asensio, to whom I owe everything I am as an  
orchestral conductor

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The role of the conductor is one of the most mysterious aspects of music making for the general public, and defining it is elusive even among professional musicians. Conductors themselves differ widely in their approach to the art, as they must balance various aspects of technique, which include musical interpretation, gestural communication, and the approach of leadership. In this paper I limit my investigation to the component dealing with musical interpretation, specifically the relationship between the conductor and the score, through the lens of my experience of Celibidache's phenomenology of music.

Although we know at a deep visceral level when we experience a great performance, it is difficult to explain how this happens. What is it that allows a conductor to inspire and elicit an exceptional performance from musicians who may have played the work many times? It is this core question I seek to explore in this paper, specifically through the work and legacy of the renowned conductor Sergiu Celibidache (1912-1996). By examining his approach to the score and the vibrant sound he drew from his musicians, I hope to reveal a method by which any conductor can envision and work toward a transcendent performance, which many musicians consider the ultimate goal of the music.

There are many approaches to preparing a score for performance, including issues of "how," "how much," and "when," which are essential to any musical performance. Conductors must develop their own approaches to these musical issues in order to execute their art with the utmost responsibility and credibility. My explanation

of Celibidache's approach is based on my own understanding and application of his approach, which I have developed over the past fourteen years, through the transmission and guidance of Celibidache's distinguished disciple, the Spanish conductor Enrique García Asensio (1937).

Celibidache cultivated a form of musical understanding that was of great importance in the twentieth century. He developed this understanding through his study of Eastern philosophy and Edmund Husserl's philosophy of phenomenology, as well as his own knowledge and engagement with music. Celibidache's phenomenology of music is an investigation or inquiry into the direct perception and influence of sound and how the sound contributes to the musician's ability to reach a transcendent performance.

Celibidache did not leave a single complete account of his approach. Rather, his explanations are scattered among different interviews, newspaper articles, lecture transcriptions, and the legacy of his disciples. None of these sources have an organized explanation of the main concepts of the phenomenology of music and the phenomenological method; neither Tom Zelle nor Javier Miranda, authors of the only two complete doctoral dissertations on Celibidache's phenomenology of music, have opted for this approach. In addition, it will be very useful to have this information in English, since most of the materials about the subject are in other languages.

My approach has been to select those texts by Sergiu Celibidache that best describe his "Phenomenology of Music" and to discuss them in a coherent sequence so they can be more easily applied to an orchestral performance, and by extension, be used by any musician.

## CHAPTER TWO: AN APPROACH TO THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD

Although Sergiu Celibidache did not leave a complete written record of his musical phenomenological method, I believe that based on my own experience, it is possible to formulate a set of guidelines for the application and understanding of phenomenology of music. The starting point of this investigation is the perception of sound. A phenomenological method is difficult to explain because it refers to direct perception, which is experiential. This method is based on the perception of sound, particularly the tension and relaxation that exists in the vertical (chord) and the horizontal (melody) dimensions. It can be applied to any large structure, such as binary and ternary forms, variations, as well as microstructures, such a set of two or more sounds.

This approach to the score creates a structure balanced by the climax: the point of maximal tension of the piece. The location of that point is the first and most important goal for the conductor. To find this point, I will examine the basic elements of contrast and repetition as they are manifested in the context of rhythm, harmony, melody and timbre of the piece. Contrast always creates tension, and the repetition, depending on context, can increase tension or release the tension.

This method has three steps: (1) locating the climax; (2) determining the sections of extroversion, (building the tension) and introversion, (release of tension); and (3) studying the subsections to find areas of tension and relaxation.

The first step of the phenomenological method locates the point of maximal tension of the structure. The second step determines the sections of extroversion and

introversion of the work. The section of extroversion covers the path from the beginning of the work to the climax, and the section of introversion covers the path from the climax to the end of the structure. The third step of phenomenological method determines the relationship of the sounds on a micro level: how the tension and relaxation work and how the sounds create phrases that have a simultaneous relationship of tension and relaxation between themselves. All of these articulations contain a peak of tension, but they are different from the point of maximal tension of the structure.

## CHAPTER THREE: PHENOMENOLOGY

*“The most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or touched, they are felt with the heart.”<sup>1</sup>*

*Antoine de Saint Exúpery*

Phenomenology<sup>2</sup> is the science of studying the essence (“what it is”) through the analysis of the phenomenon (“what it shows”). Phenomenon and essence cannot be seen as entities living apart, but as aspects that interact with each other to give us information by which one enlightens the other. It is one of the extremely influential philosophical schools of thought of the twentieth century.

Edmund Husserl<sup>3</sup> (1859-1938) is considered the father and founder of phenomenology. He wrote: “Phenomenology is the universal doctrine of the essences, in which the essence of the science of knowledge finds its place. It describes a science, a link between different scientific disciplines, but at the same time it refers a method and an intellectual attitude.”<sup>4</sup>

If Edmund Husserl is considered the father of phenomenology, then Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) could be considered his heirs. There are many philosophical inquires before Husserl’s teachings that can also be

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<sup>1</sup> “Good reads,” accessed March 14, 2015, <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/369705-the-most-beautiful-things-in-the-world-cannot-be-seen>.

<sup>2</sup> Miguel Astor, *Aproximación fenomenológica a la obra musical de Gonzalo Castellanos Yumar*, (Venezuela: Comisión de Estudios de Postgrado-Facultad de Humanidades y Educación de la Universidad Central de Venezuela, 2002), 23. Trans. Lucía Marín.

<sup>3</sup> “Philosophica,” accessed March 13, 2015, <http://www.philosophica.info/voces/husserl/Husserl.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Edmund Husserl, *La idea de la fenomenología*, (Madrid: Ed. F.D.F España, 1950), 92. Trans. Lucía Marín.

considered as phenomenological. For instance, Georg Wilhelm Hegel (1770-1831) used the term phenomenology in a sense very similar to Husserl's, and even the musical theory of Aristoxenus of Tarentum (335 BC) could be considered phenomenological in its clear opposition to Pythagorean concepts. Saint Augustin (354-430 AD) used a similar concept of essence in his book *De Musica*, as well as in his philosophy of time contained in *Confessions*.

Edmund Husserl's philosophical inquiry soon turned into a full-fledged school of thought, and he quickly had a following of disciples. This movement grew out of his concern about the nature of numbers, and later it developed into a full refutation of psychologism as taught by his teacher Franz Brentano (1838-1917). Phenomenology is different from psychologism, the other important philosophical stream in the beginning of the twentieth century. To deny any type of relationship with psychologism, Husserl clarified: "we must avoid mixing up the pure phenomenon, any data that comes from our experience, with the psychological phenomenon, subject of study by the other natural science called psychology."<sup>5</sup>

According to phenomenology, nothing is taken for granted: common sense, the natural world, scientific proposals, and psychological experiences are all important. The approach is to perceive objects before any belief or judgement arises, in order to openly explore the object's essence, which can be hidden by subjective interpretations and reactions.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

Husserl defined phenomenology as “a scientific method” that excludes any kind of psychologism; in other words, anything extraneous to the experience. We can experience this type of perception through two fundamental steps that he called reductions:

1. *Transcendental reduction* overcomes the constrictions of the ego and allows us to connect directly to the phenomenal world without judgment. The term “reduction” (from the Latin *reducere*) suggests the leaving aside of all information and relationships that are extraneous to the experience of a phenomenon. Thus we “bracket” our experience by eliminating the unessential.
2. *Eidetic reduction* is the absorption of learning from the phenomenon through our consciousness.

The main focus of phenomenology is consciousness itself and how we experience the world moment to moment. What we perceive directly through our senses can be called reality. The main attribute of consciousness is intentionality. According to Husserl all consciousness is aware of something: every act of consciousness is always related to something else, and the way consciousness learns is through the connection with our intuition. During the twentieth century, phenomenology became wide spread, creating different schools of thought in many diverse fields of knowledge.

## CHAPTER FOUR: CELIBIDACHE'S BACKGROUND IN MUSIC AND PHILOSOPHY

*"All that we are is the result of what we have thought:  
it is founded on our thoughts and made up of our thought."<sup>6</sup>*  
Buddha

Sergiu Celibidache was born in Romania in 1912, but his most important musical training took place in Berlin, the German capital, before and during World War II (1936-1945) at the *Hochschule für Musik* and the *Friedrich-Wilhelm-Universität*. At the *Hochschule für Musik* Celibidache studied composition with Heinz Tiessen, conducting with Walter Gmeindl, counterpoint with Hugo Diestler, and music theory with Kurt Thomas and Fritz Stein. Under their instruction, Celibidache gained the basic fundamentals of his musical knowledge, which he then expanded by attending philosophy classes by Eduard Spranger and Nicolai Hartmann. Professor Tiessen and Nicolai Hartmann were Celibidache's the most influential teachers.

On many occasions Celibidache said that Richard Gustav Heinz Tiessen (1887-1971) was the central figure in his musical training. The Romanian conductor learned of Tiessen in Paris, when he heard one of his string quartets on the radio. Celibidache was so inspired by the piece that he composed his own quartet and sent it to Tiessen, who then accepted Celibidache into his studio.

Tiessen had a broad range of interests beyond music, including plant science, linguistics, and even astrology. He had also studied birdsong, like the composer Olivier Messiaen. Tiessen helped Celibidache develop the technical and practical components of composition that would later frame his thoughts about the phenomenology of music.

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<sup>6</sup>"Good reads."



Tiessen's music was considered modernist, but he never accepted the total dissolution of the tonal system championed by Arnold Schoenberg and his followers in the Second Viennese School. Tiessen's compositional style was closer to Hindemith's, based on the preeminence of a tonal center, and therefore the logic of the cadence. He was also convinced he could find a tonal center in atonality, a conviction that led him to establish powerful musical structures in his compositions. This view was also shared by Celibidache, who had always rejected what he considered the extremes of the Second Viennese School. Other theorists and composers such as Hugo Riemann, Ernst Kurth and Heinrich Schenker embraced the same modernist approach as Tiessen.

Celibidache's relationship with the philosopher Nicolai Hartmann is another key to understanding the development of his thoughts on the phenomenology of music. In his 1985 lecture on phenomenology of music in Munich, he discussed in detail how Hartmann's ideas helped launch his theory. The text from this lecture later became the first published paper by the Romanian conductor on this topic.

Nicolai Hartmann (1882-1959) was born in Riga and enjoyed a rich and complete education based on his interest in music and astronomy.<sup>7</sup> He was recognized in the first half of the twentieth century as one of the leading German philosophers, as important as Husserl or Heidegger. Hartmann began by studying the works of Immanuel Kant and progressively moved towards phenomenology, the new discipline that dominated philosophical studies after World War I.

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<sup>7</sup> "Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy," accessed March 13, 2015, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/nicolai-hartmann>.

## CHAPTER FIVE: SERGIU CELIBIDACHE'S PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH TO MUSIC

Sergiu Celibidache is too complex a figure to capture easily in words. He was clearly a genius who, through music, could create experiences of transcendence. His inner need to find depth in every aspect of life, including music, led him to the study and practice of Zen Buddhism and to engage with and elaborate on the phenomenology of music. He adapted Husserl's concept of phenomenology for the field of music and put it into practice in his work as an orchestral conductor. There are five basic components to Celibidache's approach to music, which I discuss in the following sections: Celibidache's view of music itself, phenomenology, interpretation, musical structure, and the dimension of spatio-temporality.

### **Celibidache's view of music**

The basic definition of music in the *Oxford English Dictionary online* is: "The art or science of combining vocal or instrumental sounds to produce beauty of form, harmony, melody, rhythm, expressive content, etc."<sup>8</sup> This widely accepted definition of music provides a starting place to which a phenomenological approach to music can add more depth.

Yet, according to Celibidache, because of its non-static nature, music cannot be grasped and thus has no definition *per se*. Therefore, he proposed that there must be an essential element present for music to exist. For him, that element is sound. Of sound Celibidache says this:

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<sup>8</sup> "Oxford English Dictionary," accessed March 13, 2015, <http://www.oed.com>.

In my view, music is not something we can understand by giving a definition based on conventional language. It does not fit in any perceptible form of existence. In other words, music is not something. Nevertheless, under certain circumstances, something can turn into music. This something is what we called sound. On the other hand, sound is not music, but under certain conditions it can turn into music.<sup>9</sup>

Very often, professional and amateur musicians alike go along with the definition of music in the OED, equating music and beauty, considering any beautiful sequence of sound to be music. Celibidache, however, was critical of this view. For him, the essence of music is the truth of pure perception<sup>10</sup>. If this pure perception is perceived by the performers and the audience, then a transcendent experience is possible. Celibidache feels that simple beauty and superficial emotion have no place in music: “Anyone who still has not gotten past the stage of the beauty of music still knows nothing about music. Music is not beautiful. It has beauty as well, but the beauty is only the bait. Truth is our ultimate goal, not beauty.”<sup>11</sup>

The unconventional understanding of music that emerges from a phenomenological point of view is essential to understand every other idea of this theory.

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<sup>9</sup> Sergiu Celibidache, *Über musikalische Phänomenologie*, (München and Ausburg: Triptychon Verlag, 2001), 2. Trans. Lucía Marín.

<sup>10</sup> Sergiu Celibidache, “La música, sin alternativa,” *ABC Newspaper*, (Madrid: 1993), 29. Trans. Lucía Marín.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

## Celibidache's phenomenology of music

Celibidache's phenomenology of music can be defined as the science responsible for the study of the sound and its effects on human beings. According to Celibidache, the perception of tension and relaxation in our consciousness after listening to two or more sounds cannot be interpreted because, for him, it exists *a priori*. According to Celibidache: "Nicolai Hartmann set two paths of research that [...] attempt to turn this discipline into a real science: the objectification of the sound and the way the sound affects consciousness."<sup>12</sup>

From this quote, it is clear that for Celibidache there are two dimensions to the phenomenology of music: the study of sound as part of a musical piece, and the relationship between a sound and human listener.

Sound is the first dimension that must be present for music to emerge. In our consciousness the natural association of sounds creates a natural movement of emotional tension and relaxation in the listener. The nature of sound itself, including natural overtones, is the starting point for the treatment of sounds and their natural relationship between each other. It is important to perceive this sound properly so that music can emerge; as Celibidache expressed it:

When I am in front of an orchestra, I feel like a sculptor ready to sculpt a big block of stone. What is the common factor of everything I do when conducting? I never stop saying no: "No, it is not like that, too fast! Not like that, the second horn has been concealed! No, that is not the main theme. It is over there! No, no, no!" until we finally get to the "Yes." But it is not me who makes the final decision. I am just responsible for

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<sup>12</sup> Celibidache, *Über musikalische Phänomenologie*, 2. Trans. Lucía Marín.

creating the material conditions so everyone can understand an idea of how to get to that yes and how to achieve it.<sup>13</sup>

The second dimension involved in the perception of music is found in human consciousness as it is affected by the sound. In this relationship, we distinguish two concepts: “*noesis*” and “*noema*.”

1. *Noesis* is the “intentional process of consciousness [...] it is the object-as-it-appears.”<sup>14</sup> It occurs when our consciousness makes the first contact with the physical world. In the case of an orchestral conductor, that contact is the reading of a score. Celibidache stated, “Everything I perceive in my consciousness is noetic.”<sup>15</sup> What Celibidache meant is that given the enormous amount of information that assaults our senses, our consciousness has only one option in order to perceive them all: reduction. So the reduction of sensory perception is called *noema*.
2. *Noema* is “the ideal content [...] the object-as-it-is-intended.”<sup>16</sup> Through reduction, all of the information goes into our consciousness. For Celibidache, only through reduction can multiplicity be turned into that single unity called oneness. That “oneness” is *noema*.

Unity and oneness is what consciousness needs to perceive an object.

Transcendence is achieved when we are able to reduce multiplicity into oneness.

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<sup>13</sup> Sergiu Celibidache, “La dirección orquestal según Sergiu Celibidache,” *Revista Amadeus*, (Madrid: 1994), 40. Trans. Lucía Marín.

<sup>14</sup> “Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.”

<sup>15</sup> Celibidache, *Über musikalische Phänomenologie*, 15. Trans. Lucía Marín.

<sup>16</sup> “Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.”

Musically speaking, Celibidache finds that the concept of oneness can be applied to any musical structure in what he terms vertical pressure (chord) and horizontal pressure (melody). This exercise of reduction in our consciousness is imperative when the conductor has to face different kinds of information that must be unified. On this subject Celibidache says: “When I am in front of an orchestra, I receive a lot of information. What is the most important? Which information must my consciousness follow? I must reduce this multiplicity into a single unity, taking into account that reduction does not mean losing any information.”<sup>17</sup>

Multiplicity is exhibited in the variety of timbre, pitches, attacks, and articulations that simultaneously exist in any given single moment, as well as those existing successively overtime. Transcendence is the reduction in our consciousness of all the multiplicities of the vertical and horizontal pressures after the elimination of all forms of ego-identifications (our own emotions, expectations, interpretation, etc.). Celibidache defines transcendence as “the act of accumulating multiplicity and then reducing it to oneness in order to be able to perceive more multiplicity.”<sup>18</sup> Once consciousness has successfully reduced multiplicity, it is ready to face and reduce the next form of multiplicity. The job of the conductor is the continual reduction of multiplicity during the processes of rehearsal and concerts in order to align the sounds with his previous idealization of the score.

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<sup>17</sup> Celibidache, “La dirección orquestal según Sergiu Celibidache,” 40. Trans. Lucía Marín.

<sup>18</sup> Celibidache, *Über musikalische Phänomenologie*, 23. Trans. Lucía Marín.

Once sound has been reduced by our consciousness and perceived as a oneness, musical transcendence is possible. In Celibidache's words:

Sound is in the first place an agent. It can take us beyond any physical contingency. Everyone wishes to understand and enjoy the different relationships both between sounds and emotions. Having said so, the relationship between sound and a human being is not symbolic, as with language, but direct. Sound has a special position in the human sensorial structure. I am not aware of a more direct path to transcendence than sound.<sup>19</sup>

In the following citation Celibidache supports the basic idea of phenomenology of music by linking sound with the vitality of human affection:

In a symphony with two themes, where is the contrast between them? Who creates them? The inner force does, the vitality of human affection. [...] The link between the interval of sounds and the affective world is direct. It is the fact of being first moved one way, and another way later, that creates opposition [...] But at the same time, we can take it out from its ontological perspective before saying: That is it!!<sup>20</sup>

### **About interpretation of Music**

According to Enrique García Asensio,<sup>21</sup> the phenomenology of music can be defined as the science of the study of sounds not subject to interpretation or human will, and the relationship between sounds, according to the phenomenological parameters of tension and relaxation, along with the structure created by the sounds of a musical piece.<sup>22</sup>

Celibidache often likened the structure of music to a landscape:

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 43.

<sup>21</sup> In conducting lessons.

<sup>22</sup> Celibidache uses the word interpretation to connote any unwarranted liberty that a musician takes with the score.

The musical material is, in a sense, like a landscape, it has mountains, valleys, rivers. It has its own topography. What can we do to become aware of this landscape and its different natural variances? We cannot change them, we cannot alter them, but we can ignore them. If we do not want to ignore these features, we must integrate all the information about the landscape into a single unity. Musically speaking, one cannot change the music to make it more expressive. What leads to interpretation is the confusion between music and emotions, but the way each one of us goes into music is different. This interpretation responds to our different criteria, although interpretation has nothing to do with differences in criteria. [...] You have needed forty minutes, whereas I needed twenty-five. But the path of these criteria through the landscape, no matter how incompletely it is represented in the score, is a representation of the landscape. If we follow the composer's guidelines, what is to be interpreted? Can I do a *ritenuto* if an *accelerando* is written in the score as many do? We might. [...] But this is pure fancy. What we call interpretation is the combination of the ignorance of the player and the listener. Behind the term "interpretation" there surely lies the idea that one can treat music as it was a simple object, as something that can be taken out from the refrigerator, and topped with a certain sauce, depending on someone's taste. There is nothing more false and more distant from what music really means.<sup>23</sup>

According to Celibidache, the goal of the conductor is to understand the intrinsic structure of a work and to be able to recreate it as such. It should not be interpreted through the dictates of simple taste. Although the structure is objective, the time and conditions around the act of a performance are always changing, and therefore each performance is unique and unrepeatable.

### **About musical structure**

As we explained in Chapter Two, the musical structure, or "topography" of the piece can be divided into two primary sections. The first section contains the expansion

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<sup>23</sup> Celibidache, "La música, sin alternativa," 29. Trans. Lucía Marín.



phase, in which ever-increasing tension culminates in the climax. The second section enters into a phase of resolution in which the tension of the piece releases until its conclusion. According to Celibidache, the main goal for any conductor will be to perceive the structure and to create the material conditions so that music can emerge. “How far can the phase of expansion go? Obviously as far as to the point it cannot expand any longer. That crucial point is called the point of maximal tension. This point is the event around which all the musical architectural structure evolves.”<sup>24</sup>

The climax or point of maximal tension is not just theoretical but the experience of two opposing forces – tension and relaxation – directing their energies against each other. So music, as part of this phenomenal world, cannot escape from this essential law of tension and relaxation.

According to the phenomenology of music, the first sound perceived in any structure is called “point zero.” When a second sound appears the listener can begin to experience the relationship between both sounds. From the first sound perceived to the point of climax, the tension is continuously increasing, and from the point of climax to the last sound perceived, the tension is continuously released, and returns to “point zero.” Ideally, beginning and end are inseparable and can be perceived as a single unit. This is one of the most difficult concepts to understand in Celibidache’s phenomenology of music, and it is strongly supported by the cyclical concept of time as conceived in Eastern philosophy. Celibidache says: “In phenomenology, the end of a piece is the

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<sup>24</sup> Celibidache, *Über musikalische Phänomenologie*, 38. Trans. Lucía Marín.

potential beginning, because both beginning and end are an inseparable unit that transcendently exist in complete synchronicity.”<sup>25</sup>

According to the phenomenology of music, tension and intensity are the two main factors that combine to create musical structure. Although the terms sound similar, they differ in significant ways, as shows in the following definitions:

- Tension: The state of being stretched tight by two opposite forces.<sup>26</sup>
- Intensity: The measurable amount of a property, such as force, brightness, or a magnetic field.<sup>27</sup>

Musical tension refers to an inner force that comes from the phenomenon of sound. Musical intensity on the other hand, is the aural experience of the sound and it can be represented by the dynamics. For that reason, a melody placed in *pianissimo* can show more tension than a different melody placed in *fortissimo* since tension is dependent upon the musical context. Tension can be related to harmony, melody, rhythm or pitch. Among these four aspects of music, there are two fundamental qualities: harmony and melody. The melody, or melodies, creates the melodic tension (horizontal pressure), and the harmony creates harmonic tension (vertical pressure). Enrique García Asensio repeatedly said in conducting lessons: “music is the amount of horizontal flow that vertical pressure allows,” making it clear that music depends of these two opposing forces.

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<sup>25</sup> Antonio Del Moral, “Sergiu Celibidache en busca de la verdad,” *Scherzo Magazine*, (Madrid: 1987), 56. Trans. Lucía Marín.

<sup>26</sup> “Oxford Dictionaries,” accessed March 13, 2015, <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com>.

<sup>27</sup> “Oxford Dictionaries.”

Regarding melodic tension, and using phenomenological terminology, the higher the sound, the stronger the tension. According to Sergiu Celibidache, the human voice is the perfect instrument – the only one with tension and intensity on parallel levels. With the human voice, if the pitch ascends, the tension increases, and vice versa. Celibidache noted that in this respect the flute, of all instruments, comes closest to the perfection of the human voice because they both innately have the same phrasing. Understanding the human is indispensable for achieving ideal phenomenological phrasing. The application of this idea can then inform the decision-making of an orchestral conductor.

With respect to harmonic tension, the initial tonality of a musical piece is called the “mother tonality.” In the functional tonality the V-chord functions as “dominant” because it creates the most natural tension with respect to the tonic. Therefore, every movement toward the dominant creates tension, whereas every return to the tonic creates relaxation. This needs to be experienced to be understood. On this concept, Celibidache says: “What can you explain about the extroversion [increasing tension] of an ascending fifth, and of the fact that a Sol derives from the Do? If you do not experience it, it cannot be explained. But if you experience it, there is nothing to explain.”<sup>28</sup>

In a musical composition we can have two basic resources in which the phenomenology of music has something to say: repetition and contrast. Every time

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<sup>28</sup> Celibidache, “La dirección orquestal según Sergiu Celibidache,” 42. Trans. Lucía Marín.

someone listens to a sound or a group of sounds perception will differ with every repetition, as it provokes a different response each time. In the context of Celibidache's phenomenology true repetition does not exist in music, because music occurs through time, and time is unrepeatable.

Repetition has the dual purpose of creating tension and relaxing it. Extroversion and introversion are related to tension and to relaxation, respectively. Phenomenologically speaking, the purpose of creating tension is to produce instability, whereas the resolution of that tension leads back to the initial balance.

Memory allows us to understand music because it enables us to compare one event to previous events, and in the context of music, one sound to the previous sound. Without memory the experience of resolution would not be possible because our minds could not perceive the tension that had been created through a prior expansion. According to the Venezuelan composer Miguel Astor: "When we listen to a musical phrase, our memory allows us to retain this phrase until our expectations have been resolved. Our experience of beauty has a lot to do with the inner permanence of a musical feeling consisting of a number of expectations that must be satisfied. For that reason, beginning and end cannot disconnect from each other."<sup>29</sup>

Memory allows us to organize sounds in an action called "correlation." Correlation is an essential term for Celibidache, in that it requires a direct and complete perception of the sound moment to moment. As such frees us preoccupation with a

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<sup>29</sup> Astor, *Aproximación fenomenológica a la obra musical de Gonzalo Castellanos Yumar*, 71. Trans. Lucía Marín.

separate sense of self and fixation. It thus relates directly to the spiritual dimension of the human being. Correlation is the act of relating a sound or group of sounds to each other in terms of tension and relaxation. In 1987, Celibidache said:

A particular measure is related to the previous measure as well as the following measure. What is responsible for correlating the principles of music? Sounds. If this correlation does not take place, what happens? Everything is played forte [...] Oh, my God! But, what is objective in a score? The structure [...] the way sound is articulated depends on both vertical and horizontal pressure. If one is not aware of these two pressures, one cannot correlate.<sup>30</sup>

### **About the dimension of spatio-temporality in music.**

Establishing tempo is one of the main duties of the orchestral conductor. Every work needs a specific tempo that allows music to emerge depending how it sounds in a particular acoustic space.

When Celibidache asked Wilhelm Furtwängler after a rehearsal about the tempo of a particular passage of a piece, he answered: “Well, that depends on how it sounds.” The answer was a revelation to Celibidache.

According to Celibidache, Furtwängler meant that tempo was dependent on the sound in its current acoustical setting and therefore it cannot be imposed *a priori*. The “correct” tempo is always relative, not absolute, as might be implied in the score.

Tempo is part of the whole musical experience which always occurs in a specific spatio

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<sup>30</sup> Del Moral, “Sergiu Celibidache en busca de la verdad,” 56. Trans. Lucía Marín.

temporal context.<sup>31</sup> Celibidache came to believe that music is subject to the spatio-temporal conditions in a current moment:

A metronome cannot set the conditions under which I can achieve a transcendent experience. But, is this an act of human will? Not at all. If time is considered as a simple object, as many foolish people do, 'quaver at 72' can be written on the score. Tempo is the necessary condition so that multiplicity of all phenomena of music can be perceived by our consciousness. The ability of our consciousness is to reduce the multiplicity of elements and turn something very complex into a single unity. Then we will be ready to reduce the next form of multiplicity. The greater the multiplicity, the more time will be necessary. But, in fact, tempo itself is not slow or fast. Today, tempo has turned into some kind of object that has been measured as a physical entity. The tendency to do this is absurd. Physical time does not exist in music, although critics and foolish people who teach in music schools continue to teach this.<sup>32</sup>

This concept about the temporality of music in addition to the idea of reduction of the multiplicity in music are the main reasons why Celibidache conducted using such slow tempos, especially in his last stage of performing. He believed the tempo of a piece was determined by the structure of the score and the acoustic conditions of the venue. In the 1990's, Enrique García Asensio asked Celibidache why he conducted with very slow tempi, and Celibidache answered: "because now I can hear better."

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<sup>31</sup> This relativism not only affects tempo, but it also affects the dynamics of the score. We cannot determine what *forte* or *piano* are, as they both depend on the relationships between the instrument with itself and with the others.

<sup>32</sup> Celibidache, "La dirección orquestal según Sergiu Celibidache," 43. Trans. Lucía Marín.

## CHAPTER SIX: THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD APPLIED TO THE FINALE OF THE BRAHMS' *VARIATIONS ON A THEME BY HAYDN* OP.56a

This chapter contains a basic application of the phenomenological method to the Finale of the *Variations on a Theme by Haydn* op.56a by Johannes Brahms. This method has three steps: (1) locating the climax; (2) determining the sections of extroversion, (building the tension) and introversion, (release of tension); and (3) studying the subsections to find areas of tension and relaxation.

The first step is locating the climax of the piece, which the conductor should do through analyzing the musical form and phrase structure. This movement is a *passacaglia* based on seventeen repetitions of a five-measure *basso ostinato* by the cellos and basses. Each repetition creates a new variation generating more tension through the repetition of the *ostinato* along with the contrast of each variation. The seventeen repetitions of the *ostinato* are grouped into four symphonic articulations: (1) measures 1 to 19; (2) measures 20 to 39; (3) measures 40 to 64; and (4) measures 65 to 84. At measure 85 we begin articulation 5: the recapitulation of the main melody, Haydn's the *Chorale of Saint Anthony*, on which the variations are based. The climax, which uses the largest orchestration of the piece, occurs at measure 91, at the dominant of the tonic of Bb Major.

The second step is to determine the sections of extroversion and introversion of the piece. The extroversion includes the music from the beginning to the climax in measure 91, and the section of introversion covers the path from the climax to the end of the structure.

The third and final step is to locate areas of tension and relaxation on smaller levels of the two large sections. Since this step requires more subtle analysis, I will point out the most interesting elements of contrast and repetition intended to build the musical structure.

In the first symphonic articulation, measures 1 to 19, the *basso ostinato* is placed in the parts of bass and cello II, and it is balanced by a contrapuntal texture created by the melodies in cellos, violas, violins and woodwinds. The tension created by the seventeen repetitions of the *basso ostinato* is one of the elements that drive the movement towards the climax at measure 91. In measure 15 the next elements of tension are different rhythms between the triplets in the strings parts, versus the duplets in the winds, as well as the *staccato* figuration between woodwinds and strings.

In the second symphonic articulation, measures 20 to 39, the *basso ostinato* is presented in cellos and basses with a new majestic character. The main element that generates the tension in this section is the change of character from *legato* to *staccato* and the inclusion of a new thematic element in eighth notes, which we can observe in measure 25. The conductor should pay attention to the balance of the instruments in the whole piece, but from measure 21 to 30, there is an example in which the conductor must help the wind section and string section to be balanced. Another important element of contrast in this symphonic articulation takes place in the seventh repeat of the *basso ostinato*, in which the main theme becomes syncopated in the first violins and is extended until the climax of the section in measure 39.



The third symphonic articulation, measures 40 to 64, is characterized by a continuous increase of the tension to the climax of the piece. This articulation begins with a new, radical change of character, from the exuberance of the previous section, to the *dolce pianissimo* between measures 40 and 41. The *basso ostinato* is in the first eighth-note of the group of four in the cellos and basses. For first time the *basso ostinato* starts to switch instruments. For instance, in measure 60 the *basso ostinato* is distributed among the pizzicato cellos and violas, and the melody is heard in flute, clarinets and bassoons.

The fourth symphonic articulation, measures 65 to 84, the character and texture change. The *basso ostinato* appears in the oboes with an accompaniment in strings, and for first time the key turns to B flat minor. In measure 70, the harmony returns to B flat Major, and the most important element of contrast in this section is the crescendo in measure 80. In the last repetition of the *basso ostinato* before the climax, the tension is increased by the *subito piano* and the different entrances of the horns, piccolo, flute and oboe. In the fifth symphonic articulation, the main theme of the work, the *Chorale of Saint Anthony*, is restated. At this point the climax is achieved at measure 91 with the very large instrumentation on the dominant. From measure 91 to the end the musical tension is released by the reiteration of the key of Bb Major. The process of the structure's resolution is accomplished by the *diminuendo* and *ritardando* several measures before the end. This *ritardando* must be carefully measured until the piece reaches a state of total relaxation.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS

The phenomenology of music is concerned with how the direct perception of the sound through the consciousness creates emotional tension and relaxation in the act of listening. Our consciousness perceives the musical structure as a oneness that opens the listener to transcendence. This perception of sounds creates a structure balanced by a climax, a point of maximal tension.

Even though the phenomenology of music is sometimes instinctively practiced by performers, the awareness of this theory explained in previous chapters allows musicians access to a systematic method that will help them achieve a transcendent performance. I believe these philosophical ideas and practices are vital to the work of a conductor. According to Celibidache, the conductor must reduce all multiplicities of sound and correctly correlate the structure to the particular spatio-temporal conditions necessary to achieve oneness.

This theory establishes that the musical experience is closely linked to the emotional world of human beings in a quest for transcendence. Without this union of sound and human consciousness, music cannot be realized. The explanation of this approach is crucial because it allows us to define the role of the conductor.

The conductor must find the natural connections between the sounds, in order to reach this state of transcendence. In order to achieve this goal, the conductor must have extraordinary musical, psychological, and cultural training, allowing him or her to make a multitude of decisions moment to moment. This spontaneity must be guided by intuition, which will create the necessary conditions for music to emerge in a dimension

of unrepeatable time and space. Ultimately, as Celibidache said, “the conductor must, once he has gained a deep understanding of the score, release all knowledge to let spontaneity arise.”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Tom Zelle, “Sergiu Celibidache-analytical approaches to his teachings on phenomenology and music.” DMA Thesis (Arizona University: 1996), 145.

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## VITA

Lucía Marín is currently serving as Principal Conductor of the UK Philharmonia and Assistant Conductor of UK Symphony Orchestra and UK Opera Theatre. She had previously served as Assistant Conductor of the Lexington Philharmonic Orchestra, the New Philharmonic (Chicago), the Northwest Indiana Symphony Orchestra, the Illinois State University Symphony Orchestra and Opera.

Ms. Marin is an award winner at the Seville's Royal Academy of Fine Arts and XI International Conducting Competition "Mestre Ferríz" and she won the Culture Award in the first edition of "Premios Andaluces del Futuro" in 2009, Conducting Award Musikene in 2009 and 2010, and "Premio Jóvenes Jaen 2014" in Arts.

She has conducted in master classes and workshops across Spain, Italy, Portugal, Austria and Romania. She conducted performances of fully-staged productions of Puccini's *La Boheme* and *Suor Angelica*, Lloyd Weber's *The Phantom of the Opera*, Schönberg's *Les Miserables*, Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffmann* and Daron Agen's *Little Nemo in Slumberland*, and made her debut in China on tour with the UK Symphony Orchestra.

Born in Linares, Spain, Ms. Marín graduated from the Superior School of Music the Basque Country, "Musikene", where she studies orchestral conducting with Enrique García Asensio, a disciple of Sergiu Celibidache. She earned the master's degree in orchestral conducting from Illinois State University, and is currently working toward a DMA degree in Orchestral Conducting at the University of Kentucky, where she is a student of John Nardolillo.