

Music Language of Zeqirja Ballata in Piano Work “*Echi Delle Montagne Maledette*”

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Abstract

Zeqirja Ballata (1943), a Kosovar composer, is in step with the works of his time, more precisely belonging to the postmodernist period. Throughout his musical opus, he showed consistency to the contemporary stylistic elements of the second half of the twentieth century. Among the 157 musical works by the Kosovar composer Zeqirja Ballata, this paper brings the results of the analysis of the musical language used in *Echi delle Montagne Maledette*. The work in question is atonal, with dominant dissonance followed by short consonance. Comparing with other piano works of Z. Ballata, this work has less dissonant elements. The purpose of this study is to identify stylistic compositional characteristics, and evaluate their impact on the promotion of the contemporaneous style, for which, the analytic format of T. Mančev (2001) served as a theoretical base. The type of research is case study. Employing a qualitative research method, or analysis, the work was analysed including the following musical parameters: general and historical data of the piece, structure, linear expression, consonant structures, rhythm and its components, dynamics and synthesis of musical parameters in the process of concretization. The paper also contains notation tables and examples illustrating concretization moments.

Keywords: work, pianistic, linearity, consonance, dissonance, postmodernism.

1. Introduction

The topic “Music language of Zeqirja Ballata in piano work “*Echi delle Montagne Maledette*” is based on a multidimensional communication with Ballata (since 1981). Published musical opinions, both formal and informal were a significant driver of this study. His composition, dating from the second half of the 19th century onwards, is considered as postmodernist, contemporaneous, and of a personalized expressive style. Zeqirja Ballata (1943) - an academic and complex author, was born in Gjakova and finished his education in Prizren, Ljubljana, and Italy (specializations). He worked periodically in Kosovo and Slovenia, creating around 160 musical works. Currently, he lives and works in Prishtina.

The purpose of this study is to identify stylistic compositional characteristics, and evaluate their impact on the promotion of the contemporaneous style, for which, the analytic format of T. Mančev (2001) served as a

theoretical base. The analysis of this piano work is comprised of: structure, rhythm, linear expression, consonant structures, dynamics, notation, the synthesis of parameters, and duration.

This analysis is based on the analytical format of Tome Manchev presented in his book: *Dviženjeto suštinski element kaj simfoniskoto tvoreštvo* (Mančev, 2001). According to this analytical format and theoretical basis, the detailed analysis of the musical parameters and the interdependence between them, enables the detailed musicological knowledge forming a basis of logical knowledge useful, first of all for the performers. This is a way of approaching the pedagogical attitudes of H. Neuhaus: from the two ways of piano learning: psychological and musicological, then choose the second one (Neuhaus, 2000).

D. Mitchell's attitude: reintegration is one of the main tasks of the new music creators: to achieve the status of rules; to discover the principle which can serve as a rule (D. Michel,

1983), we find it useful to put into a logical flow the means of expression used in the *Echi delle Montagne Maledette*.

2. Methodology

The type of research is case study. Employing a qualitative and historical research method, or analysis, the work was analysed including the following musical parameters: general and historical data of the work, structure, linear expression, consonant structures, rhythm and its components, dynamics and synthesis of musical parameters in the process of concretization. The diverse nature of certain parameters brought the need to use tables and notation fragments for the purpose of presenting the results of the analysis and in order to concretize and justify the discussion, as presented in this paper.

3. Discussion

3.1 Background and History

“*Echi delle Montagne*” was published in the diptych entitled *Dve sklavbi za klavir za levo roko*, a title accompanied by a translation into Italian *Due pezzi per pianoforte a mano sinistra*, (Two pieces for piano), and contains the pieces *Echi delle Montagne Maledette* (Echoes of the Accursed Mountains) and *Fantasia rustica* (Rustic Fantasy). *Due pezzi per pianoforte* was published in 1970 in Ljubljana by Društvo Slovenskih Skladateljev (Association of Slovenian Composers), with publication number ED. DSS ŠT. 379 (Ballata, 1970).

Based on the research so far, there is a tendency of Mr. Ballata for expression in diptych, or in other words, a significant connection with the number two. Similar to *Capriccio* no. 1 and no. 2 (Ballata, 1968), *Dance* no. 1 and no. 2 (Ballata, 1992), *Sonata* in two movements (Ballata, 1965), two works for four hands or two pianos. This collection also contains two piano works, this time written only for the left hand. Unlike the aforementioned diptychs, which have universal titles and are numbered, in this case we are dealing with poetic titles.

The chronology of their creation is relatively close. *Echi delle Montagne Maledette* was composed in 1963, while *Fantasia rustica* in 1964. Both are dedicated to pianist Tatjana Bučar (first player of this piano work), were composed for the left hand, and thematically, they bring a similar overview with regards to content. Despite the slight thematic differences,

they both have a common origin of inspiration.

Echi delle Montagne Maledette (The Echoes of the Accursed Mountains) brings the emotion of the symbolic and traditional meaning carried by the Accursed Mountains.

The title of the work, in addition, defines the national element included within the overall artistic musical reflection. It is a solo piano work, expressed in a total of 94 measures, with tempo-character *Andante con variazioni*, with variable metric measure, with dynamics that is framed within *p*, while culminating in *ff*.

From the unstructured interview with the composer, regarding the subjective and objective peculiarities of the creation of this work, we are highlighting the following:

I was living in a period when many students fled to Albania, even female students. It was a time when I experienced a sort of internal turmoil, I thought that something difficult was happening, or would happen. It is no coincidence that I call this turmoil The Echoes of the Accursed Mountains. These thoughts brought me to this title. That is why there are elements of folklore here, but in an obscure structure. It was this period of police pressure that affected the people's discontent that would erupt in form of the student demonstrations of 1968. Such an artistic expression is a reflection of the conditions and circumstances of musical development in Kosovo. Although the world, by and large, had seen this technique of composition developing, in Kosovo on the other hand, this work was considered stylistically bold and contemporary. It is important for the fact that, together with the Rustic Fantasy, they are the first works and, to date, the only left hand works in the creative opus of Albanian composers (Čipa, 2019).

3.2 Structure

The structure of *the Echi delle Montagne Maledette* is as follows: with an introductory section, and three other period type sections, interconnected with intermediate elements. The first period, from B:1-11, plays the introduction function. In itself it contains hidden melodic voices. The first voice is C, H, A, GS, followed by the pedal bass in F # (B: 1-4), while in B: 5-8 the hidden melody is D, H, A, G# amplified with a melodic tone hidden in the bass. Furthermore, this segment contains a hidden tone in the inner line. In B: 9-11 the bass cadences in F#, while from the half of B:11 the melody starts in the interval of diminished fifth. This melody is heard since the first bars. This motif, which starts in the middle of

the B:11 ends in the B:24 with chromatic imitation on the descent while maintaining the accompaniment as in the beginning. From B: 24 to B 36 follows a developmental period both in terms of rhythm and harmony; it lasts up to B: 37, where it cadences with the inverted interval of the introductory section and of the first theme transformed into diminished fourth. From B: 37 to B: 43 a connecting segment with a pentatone appears; cadences on B: 42 in F sound. The B: 43 up to half of the B: 49 is cadence reinforcement for the note C#. Whereas, starting from half of the B:49 to the B: 86 is a new section, partly similar to the first section, but harmoniously built into a modal system. The segment B: 87-94 is the code, which contains elements of the first theme and cadences in the interval of the pure quarter Do # -Fa #. (See the table below for more information).

Table 1. Structure

No .	Structural subjects	Position (table)	Microstructure
1	Introduction	1-11	4 + 4 + 2 +
2	Period	11-24	23+
3	Developmental period	24-36	17+
4	Bridge	37-43	7
5	Reinforcing cadence	43-49	6
6	SECTION	50-86	36
7	Coda	87-94	8

3.3 Linear expression

In the introduction, at the culmination of the arpeggio melodic line of the left hand, the right hand intervenes through the soprano, which develops a separate melody (C#, H, A, then D, H, A):



Figure 1.(B-1-7)

Source: *Dve skladbi za klavir/Echi delle Montagne Malledette*. 1970. ED.DSS ŠT.379.

Pg.1-5

The melody is conceived as a three-sounding motif organized into two descending lines. In addition to the individuality it contains, it also becomes part of the decomposed chord, which in ascending lines the strings of the non-tertian chord of another tonality, different from the descending, thus bringing the sound of a bitonality into linearity. After four repetitions of the 8s, the arpeggio melody is disturbed by the decoration and the dotted eighth followed by triplet in the following bar. This pair of rhythmic figurations, as a means of stimulating movement, is repeated twice.

The flow then enters a kind of self-exit on the B: 9-10, in a cadence segment, where the fourth-fifths overlapped in the parallels correspond to the movement of the intervals: 2-3-5-4. The pedal tone in bass (F#) represents a separate line as *basso continuo*. Hence, the melody has three planes of development (hidden tones). The extreme tones are independent and at the same time complement the middle tone in its linear flow.

The interaction, the identity of the motivic cells, the location and the movement of the subjects described above, will be objects of the most diverse treatment during further elaboration. As simple as the presentation of the motif may seem, it brings great opportunities for modifications and variations such as: change of direction, movement of the bass line, rhythmic regrouping, and reorganization of the metric pulse through the change of the metric measure thus giving a new identity to the same narrative melodic tissue and subjectivizing the motivic fragments. These compositional principles permeate the work in its further sequence.

The melody and thematics with the power of a contemporary musical language with temporary impressionistic elements bring the echo of the Accursed Mountains, expressing feelings such as: turbulence, grandeur, tragedy, echo, savagery, height, mysticism, natural and psychological strains, and a pastoral idyllic. All this, dressed in the thread of personal and national experience, is expressed in a universal musical language.

4. Consonant Structures

The work is written in a free atonal language, within which the structures of tonal

chords are encountered. It should be noted, in this case, the presence of pentatonics in the bridge (B: 37-43) as well as the modal harmony used in the section (B: 50-86). Although visually the work gives the impression that it moves linearly, the retained sounds of external tones create consonance.

The first two units of B:1, through the arpeggiated chord, bring the harmonic (diatonic) dilemma between the F # minor and the F # major resulting from the absence of the third (teza). This harmonic uncertainty becomes even more disturbing in the last movement, where an enlarged septachord is added into the flow. In the linear flow of the melody, the author's typical tendency for fikh-forth movement and unstable resolutions is noticed:



Figure 2.(B-1)

Source: *Dve skladbi za klavir/Echi delle Montagne Maledette*. 1970. ED. DSS ŠT. 379. Pg.1-5

In terms of interval heights, a more dynamic rhythm of harmony is encountered, as mobile as the melody itself. Thus in M-1 the intervals move as follows: 1-5-8-10, the overlapping fifths at 8-6. This is the principle of harmonious organization, respectively of the consonant structures in the introduction, which, thanks to the movement of the soprano (B:1-8) and the bass (B: 5-8), bring different interval structures that dynamize and tension its development.

All this creates the impression of an endless harmonious movement, after which the work enters the group of bars (B: 9-10-11), which cadence the fragment. The composer now summarizes the chord decomposed into B:1 into a consonant (overlapped fifths-fourths), overlapping the 2-3-5 linear motion with a cadence function, explores through diatonics and produces moments of bitonal harmony (the dual quintachord F#-minor and F#-major overlaps the movement of Gb-minor, D- major, C-major and

finally brings the missing third chord that creates again the harmonious tonal dualism of G-minor and G-major).



Figure 3.(B-10)

Source: *Dve skladbi za klavir/Echi delle Montagne Maledette*. 1970.ED.DSS ŠT.379.Pg.1-5

In this consonance state of overlapped fourth-fifths, which is followed by the tendency of resolution in upper tones, the agogic becomes a factor with high influence in resolving the conflict of consonants, arising from the dissonant structure. Thus with *poco ritardando*, the tempo enables certain extinction of harmonious conflict. In the further musical flow, the principles of interweaving consonants remain the same and within the framework of the above-mentioned logic of structuring consonants, regardless of the fact that the creative game with motivational fragments brings completely new scenes and the motivic fragments appear linearly denser, etc. The analysis of the works of Mr. Ballata in general, and of this work in particular, concludes that the harmonious language of the composer is based respectively on: consonance of overlapped intervals, in dissonant structures, in bitonal images, in harmonic dualism arising from non-tertian structures, in verticals released at the beginning of structural parts, in densifications of vertical structures in cadence segments, respectively in releases up to unison, etc.

5. Rhythm and its Components

Metrics - The metric measure in *Echi delle Montagne Maledette* (Echoes of the Accursed Mountains), according to the findings, is presented as an aesthetic tool with a significant role. In the flow of 94 bars the composer has used two types of values: 4th and 8th. The fourth as a metric unit is located in the segment B:1-49, while the eighth in the segment from B: 50-94, which means that we have two states of metric value that

create a difference. Changes in metric measure are significantly more varied. The segment from B:1-49 is traversed by the successive change from 3/4 to 2/4 (see the following table from B:1-37).

The segment from B: 59-87 has an interesting organization of the metric measure of $5/8 + 7/8$, which has its origins in the features of the Albanian folk (source) music. Therefore, in this work, in contrast to e.g. *The two whims, Solo de concert*, etc., the metric dynamics as an aesthetic element is in the background in relation to the metric dynamics, which represents the organization of the metric measure. The argumentation regarding the metric measure is given in the following table.

Table 2. Overview of meter changes

The bar (position) of metre change	1	2	2	3	50	8	9	Frequency
	4	8	7			8	2	
Quantity of metric units	3	2	3	2	5 + 7x 19	5	4	25
Value of metric units	4	4	4	4	8	8	8	2

Metric dynamics - In addition to *marcato*, in this analysis it was of interest to also identify *tenuto*. Both of these signs of articulation, with their discreet and meaningful appearance, have a clear aesthetic role.

Table 3. Metric dynamics

1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	3	4	Fr
0	1	2	3	4	5	8	4	5	6	7	4	8	ek
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	2	↓
4	2	2	1	2	1	3	0	0	0	2	0	1	↓
6	6	6	7	7	8	8	8	8	8	8	9	9	↓
1	5	9	3	7	2	3	4	5	6	7	2	3	
0	2	0	2	0	1	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	15
1	0	1	2	1	2	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	30

Rhythm - Rhythm, here, has the role of a discreet dramaturgical tool. It is organized with gradual and rational development, significantly serving the substantive purpose. Nevertheless, the meter, as a component of rhythm, undergoes

a marked variability, which exerts a high influence on the overall impression of the rhythm effect. Despite the presence of trioles, quintoles, septoles, certain fragments stand out for:

- Movement in 8s,
- Interactions of 8s with 16s,
- Short segments with a dominance of 16s. The cadence segments are mainly organized with movements in 4s.



Figure 3.(B-1, 2, 3)

Source: *Dve skladbi za klavir/Echi delle Montagne Malledette*. 1970.ED.DSS
ŠT.379.Pg.1-5

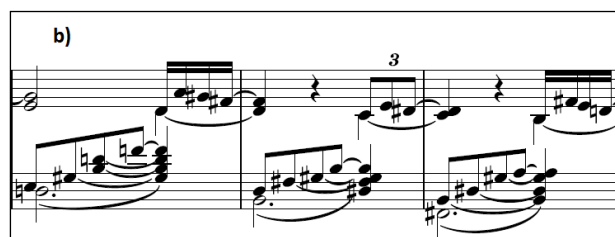


Figure 3.(B-30-32)

Source: *Dve skladbi za klavir/Echi delle Montagne Malledette*. 1970.ED.DSS
ŠT.379.Pg.1-5



Figure 4.(c: B-40-47)

Source: *Dve skladbi za klavir/Echi delle Montagne Malledette*. 1970.ED.DSS
ŠT.379.Pg.1-5

Tempo, agogic and characteristic signs

- The work begins with the tempo-character marked as *Andante con variazioni*, of metronomic

value $\text{♩} = 80$. These character and tempo notes do not remain the same throughout the work. *Alla pastorale* in B: 44, passing through an agogic change in *avvivando*, leads the work in *Allegro giocoso* in B: 50, in which case the metronomic value also changes to $\text{♩} = 208$.

Regarding other agogical and character changes with temporary character in the musical elaboration, the following table shows their location and what they are.

Table 4. Changes in Tempo, Agogic and

Character

No.	Change	Bar	No.	Change	Bar
1	<i>Un poco ritardando</i>	10	6	<i>Liberamente</i>	34
2	<i>Tempo primo</i>	11	7	<i>Alla pastorale</i>	43
3	<i>Un poco avvivando</i>	24	8	<i>Avvivando</i>	47
4	<i>Ritardando</i>	27	9	<i>Allegro giocoso</i> ($\text{♩} = 208$)	50
5	<i>Tempo primo</i>	28	10	<i>Piu vivo</i>	82
///	General character	Andante con variationi ($\text{♩} = 80$)	///	Frequency of changes	10

6. Dynamics

With regards to the dynamics, the score contains a total of 54 characters (see table below; column 4, row 8). The work as a whole takes place around the dynamics *p*. Structural parts also retain the framework of their dynamic character. The segment from M-37 starts *crescending*, leading to the only dynamic culmination *ff*, which however, is not the best. Two dynamic crescendo tendencies are also noted, but they do not reach more than *f* (M-65, 74). These are the points that stand out from the

dynamics framework *p*. Despite such a picture of dynamics, it does not mean that the dramaturgy of the work is static. Controlled and modest dynamics, accompanied by other factors such as pronounced metric, agogic changes and certain moments of rhythmic organization, give the work the necessary drama and movement.

Table 5. Dynamics

Structural subject	Section/bar	Changes	Total
Introduction	1-11	<i>p, cresc., decresc., cresc., decresc. mf</i>	6
Period	11-24	<i>decresc., decresc.</i>	2
Developmental period	24-36	<i>cresc., decresc.</i>	2
Bridge	37-42	<i>mp, crescendo un poco marcato, crescendo, ff, pp, cresc., decrescendo, crescendo,</i>	8
Reinforcing cadence	43-50	<i>mp, cresc., decresc., cresc., decresc., cresc., decresc.,</i>	7
Section	50-86	<i>mf, cresc., decresc., cresc., decresc., f, sub. p, cresc., decresc., cresc., decresc., f, cresc., decresc., cresc., decresc., decresc., p, cresc., decresc., cresc.</i>	22
Coda	87-94	<i>decresc, cresc., decresc., decresc., pp, decresc, ppp</i>	7
TOTAL	94	Dynamic changes	54

7. Synthesis of Musical Parameters in the Concretization Process

In the first four measures three horizontal identities are observed: the *basso continuo*, the middle arpeggio tone, and the soprano in the range of descending tones. These three bring about special melo-rhythmic identities (semi-dotted, octave, quadruple) and, at the same time, interact to create the unique melody line constructed of three different layers of tone colors. These three identities continue to be subjects of narration in the next four measures, but already with gradual changes in both rhythmic and melodic terms. Shortening the values of the soprano notes frees up the acoustic space for modifying the second part of the middle arpeggio tone. Thus, in the flow, the melo-rhythmic change of the middle sound is factorized, which in the third unit brings pairs of measures with ornate 8s and 16s, while in the next measure the triola is presented. This is repeated twice. All these create the first disturbing situation, which will escalate during the process of dramaturgical development of the work. Cadence results in the accumulation of arpeggio sounds in consonant structures in the left hand, while the right, in search of gravity, moves at intervals of 2, 3, 5, 4 to complete the cadence process with *ritardando*. The following segment (period B:11-24) is permeated by the predominance of *mf* developmental dynamics, fragmentation and melorhythmic modification of hidden introduction items. Thus, on one measure is present the *basso continuo*, while in the other it is absent. The middle tone in the first two units opens with an arpeggio stopping the arpeggio tones, while in the third unit the sounds are already grouped into overlapping fourth-fifth structures. The soprano brings the melodic descending string from the introduction, already fragmented at intervals (from 5-2 and from 8-2) melo-rhythmically modified (two descending 8s end in halves); the string is repeated sequentially. Repetition in general and repetition of fragments in particular, aesthetically brings flow tension. The dramaturgical operating factors of this segment are: fragmentation, sequencing, melorhythmic modification, soprano in motion and frequent rhythmic stagnation and dynamics *mf* (unlike the previous dynamic frame *p*).

From this segment should be distinguished the presentation of a quintole (16) with two functions:

1) the division of the segment where the soprano moves at 5-2 intervals and the


subsequent segment where the soprano moves from 8-2; and

2) warns of rhythmic figuration that will be factorized in the further flow.

The developmental period (B: 24-36) begins with an agogically variable segment (B: 24-27) (*un poco avvivando, ritardando*), during which the soprano delivers a chromatic, long-acting (half) and *marcato* melody. Changing the metric measure to 2/4, makes this segment, in syntactic terms, play a dividing function between the previous period and the developmental period. Here the dominant factor is the meter and agogic. The developmental period starts from B: 28-36, more precisely B: 28-35, relying mainly on soprano modifications.

The left hand retains the melo-rhythmic expression and the interactive role as in the previous period, while the soprano comes with the rhythmic replication of the 8th and 16th triolas. Further, the 16s come modifying into irregular figures (16th quintola and septola). Rhythmic figuration is a factor of dramatic development. For the process of performing the interpretation it is important to keep in mind that the beginnings of the above-mentioned rhythmic figures move in descending directions F#, E, D, C, H, A. These sounds with a resonant effect impose the selection of a special color that would enable the dominance and prominence of their melodic and differentiating role in terms of metro-rhythm.

A *liberamente* on the B: 37 introduces the flow into the cadence, which will go towards the bridge (B: 37-42). The latter is characterized by altered measure (2/4), dynamic development from *mp* to *ff*, rhythmic mobility, high register, pedal, culminating character. This segment is followed by reinforcing cadence which brings a special expression by interacting the unchanged metric measure with the change of character in *Alla pastorale*, with the sudden dynamic change (*pp* to *ff*) and with the agogic change (*avvivando*).

On the B: 50 begins a segment, which divides the work into two parts for many reasons and with many factors. In the formal aspect it enters the structural section (B: 50-86), while in the dramaturgical aspect there are radical changes realized with many changed parameters such as: from an *andante* it passes to *Allegro giocoso*, from a temp  = 80 in $\text{♩} = 208$, from the metric measure 3/4 and 2/4 into metric measure 5 + 7/8 (in the cadence zone 5/8, 4/8), the arpeggio material of the middle tone disappears completely, with rich dynamics that goes up to *ppp*.

8. Conclusion

According to the structure, we are dealing with a work with an introduction followed by three sections constructed as periods. Melody and thematics have the power of a contemporary musical language with temporary impressionist elements. The work is written in a free atonal language, within which the structures of tonal chords are encountered. The presence of pentatonics and modal harmony used in certain sections is noticed. In terms of rhythm, the composer uses temporary metro-rhythmic arrangements of traditional Albanian rhythms. Here, the predominant factors are: the character change and the organization of the metric measure, which at certain moments put the piece in an optimistic flow.

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