

**ADELA-FRANÇOISE BIHARI – BERGSON’S COMIC.
TEXTUAL STRUCTURES/MUSICAL STRUCTURES**
Review

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Tatiana OLTEAN is lecturer at the “Gheorghe Dima” Music Academy of Cluj-Napoca, *Department of Musicology, Music History* discipline. She graduated with a Bachelor's degree (department of *Musicology*, 2003), then earned her Master's degree (department of *Musicological Syntheses*, 2005) and her Doctor's degree (in *Musical Stylistics*, with a thesis entitled *Analytical Perspectives on the Opera-Oratorio “Manole the Craftsman” by Sigismund Toduță*, 2008, under the professional supervision of academician Cornel Țăranu, Professor, Ph.D.) at the same institution. Her musicological interests include analytical aspects of the works of Romanian composers, performing arts and the mythology-music binomial.



While for some people the doctoral degree in the field of arts is a required stage in their academic and teaching career, for others the preparation for the defence and publication of the thesis is an opportunity to demonstrate their high degree of thoroughness, subtlety and propensity for certain thought-provoking and original analytical approaches and studies, a true revelation of their vocation as knowledge seekers.

Adela-Francoise Bihari's professional activity and accomplishments are distinguished by quality and variety: her teaching activities as a score reading Ph.D. lecturer at the Composition Department of the Gh. Dima Academy of Music are intertwined with her work as a pianist at the Romanian National Opera in Cluj-Napoca and with the fulfilment, on a reflective and utterly personal level, of an undisguised “curiosity” inherent to the quest for knowledge, based on musicological studies and recently materialized in an exciting book: Bergson's comic and his view on the application and identification of different layers and categories of the comic in opera, in terms of the correlation between the literary and the musical text.

The clear and transparent approach, the lack of prejudices and commonplaces and the utterly natural and unaffected phrasing make for an exciting read for a wide range of audience. This fact has convinced the editors of *Casa Cărții de Știință* to publish part of Adela Bihari's doctoral research results and to continue with a new volume in 2010, which will hopefully be the subject of a future issue of this journal.

Adela Bihari's book "hits the nail on the head" with great naturalness and wit. The musicologist's discourse is based on experience and, more importantly, on the creative intuition of the singer who does not leave to chance any subtlety of expression indicated in the score, going beyond the redundant explanation of the obvious. The text is interspersed with illustrative musical examples and with rich – albeit not tiring! – references to areas of other arts and sciences that are inextricably related to the topic, such as the theatre and its history, the history of the performance genres, or general aesthetics and philosophy. The reader is completely swept away by the plot, as in a story or novel: following the clear structure of the text, based on categories of the comic, the author does not explain, but shares, and does not show, but discloses, which, in addition to the scientific rigor, takes the act of reading beyond the boundaries of a mere bibliographic "consultation".

The expository chapter dedicated to Henri Bergson's philosophy is highly concentrated and synthetic and guides the discussion along two lines: on the one hand, there are the *premises that trigger the laughter* (the indissolubility of the relationship with the human being, the insensitivity, the need for an "echo" in the social space), while on the other hand, there are the *typologies of the comic* in Bergson's vision (the comic of forms, movements, situations, language, character). Moreover, the author explains the meaning of Bergson's phrase "du mécanique plaqué sur du vivant" – the core of his theory of the comic – and her relationship with the comic hypostatized in well defined dramatic-musical situations. The ensuing chapters deal in turn with each comic typology and are filled with musical illustrations and fine analyses of famous comic scenes from the international repertoire (the Don Pasquale-Malatesta duet in Donizetti's famous opera, the Calumny aria in Rossini's *Barber*, the mocking parody of Gluck's Orpheus in Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld*, Dulcamara's aria in the *Elixir of Love* etc.), but also from the local culture (Aglaia's scene from Valentin Timaru's opera *Lorelei*), extending the analysis up to Tom Johnson's recent work, *An Italian Opera* (2006). Naturally, not all the categories of the comic are equally represented in opera, nor are they all implicitly related to the musical text: the comic of forms and the comic of movement are related particularly to the visual side of perception, being nevertheless a good prerequisite and a fecund framework for the comic of situation, language and character, which, in the author's view, are the best represented comic typologies in the dramatic musical performances.

Extremely useful and insightful are the comparative analyses between the comic situations created by playwrights in their works and the musical setting of the librettos based

on the original texts, featuring the most ingenious combinations of the different types of comic.

The comprehensiveness and thoroughness of the study and of the approach are given not only by the scientific text itself, but also by the extensive and up-to-date bibliography provided by the author.

This is how the interweaving of all the interests and passions of an author-musicologist, performing-musicologist and performing-author have resulted in a volume that captures the finest details of the comic expression in the dramatic musical discourse, and which by its wide addressability makes musicological research accessible to a broad spectrum of audience.