

Hybrids, Hints & Hooks

Music for violin/piano & solo violin by
Dan Dediu



Irina Muresanu • violin
Valentina Sandu-Dediu • piano



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Music for violin & piano and solo violin by Dan Dediu (b.1967)

Don Giovanni/Juan 'SonatOpera', Op. 53 (1995)

1	I.	Ouverture / Act I	9:37
2	II.	Act II	10:47

Sonata for Solo Violin, Op. 7 (1987)

3	I.	<i>Allegro</i>	7:20
4	II.	<i>Andante rubato</i>	7:24

À la recherche de la Marseillaise de Stravinsky, Op. 134 (2008)

5		<i>Con forza</i>	8:55
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A Mythological Bestiary, Op. 133 (2008)

6	I.	Griffin	5:21
7	II.	Unicorn	5:15
8	III.	Mandragora	2:44
9	IV.	Sphinx	3:50
10	V.	Hippogriffin	3:11
11	VI.	Dragon	5:23

Total playing time 69:50

Irina Muresanu (violin, all tracks)

Valentina Sandu-Dediu (piano, tracks 1, 2, 6-11)

Program notes in Romanian: pages 8-11

Foreword

My desire to share this extraordinary music with the world is only one of the reasons for bringing this recording to life. Adding to that, the honor of being the dedicatee of two pieces on this CD and decades of friendship and music-making with Dan and Valentina, which started in our student days in Bucharest and continued regardless on my taking residence on the other side of the Atlantic shortly afterwards....

Dan Dediu is a musical wizard who conjures styles and ideas from different eras, molding them into a cohesive musical discourse that is unmistakably his own. His erudition and creativity are a continuous source of awe: Dediu is capable of narrating a detailed background story about the subject of an obscure Dutch painting spotted in a museum or deliver in just 48 hours a piece based on an oenological theme, jokingly conceived on the terrace of a far-away winery.

Similarly, his music sweeps the listener into a magical land where both mythological creatures (gryphons, unicorns, dragons and such) and well-known characters or tunes (Don Juan, La Marseillaise) are seen from a different perspective – or from a different timeline - and turn out surprisingly anew.

This recording would not have been possible without the almost telepathic collaborative ability of pianist Valentina Sandu-Dediu, a faithful interpreter of Dediu's music and a powerhouse on her own.

Irina Muresanu, July 2021

The Music

All four works on this album share the process of *hybridisation*, i.e. they start from existing music and combine it and then transform it in a new manner. Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni* is mixed with themes from Richard Strauss's symphonic poem *Don Juan*, Rouget de Lisle's French hymn *La Marseillaise* is filtered through Stravinsky's arrangement for solo violin, and snippets cut from across the history of music paradoxically join together to sound like hybrid mythological beasts. Dediú revisits the music of the past with great refinement, masterfully combining subtle hints and effective hooks from this colossal reservoir. The sonic result is an attractive one, at once vernacular and ecumenical.

Instrumental *virtuosity* is another common feature of the pieces in this collection. From the pizzicati and spicy effects of the mottled and piquant Griffin to the fiery cascades of sound and telluric rhythms of the Dragon, from the spiralling melody and eerie harmonies of the Sonata Op. 7 to the harmonics in the variations that compress the form towards the end of the *La Marseillaise*, the whole musical development is permeated by the trepidations of virtuosity.

Finally, *modularity* is a third common stylistic feature. The narrative trajectory of Dan Dediú's music is built from imaginary characters strung together through miniatures in a modular, puzzle-like design. These imaginary or *livresque* characters form the expressive basis of the various dramatic situations staged by the composer's overflowing imagination.

This manner of composition can be called *metastilism*, for it starts from one or more historical styles and then comments on them, illuminating uncharted nooks and dusty and forgotten niches, from which musical ore is extracted and transformed into a new, creative language, like philosophers commenting on ancient texts, extracting new meanings and forging new concepts.

The two cycles for violin and piano – *Don Giovanni/Juan* and *A Mythological Bestiary* – were specially composed, a considerable distance apart, for the performers on this recording, the charming and charismatic duo of Irina Muresanu and Valentina Sandu-Dediu.

SonataOpera *Don Giovanni/Juan*, Op.53 was written in 1995 for Irina Mureșanu and Valentina Sandu-Dediu. It takes the dramaturgy of the large-scale form from Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni* and some thematic cells from the symphonic poem *Don Juan* by Richard Strauss. Thus, with these constraints as a basis - like rules of counterpoint or harmony - I imagined an expressive musical route, at the same time liberated from and oriented towards tradition. However, the result is original music, full of diversity, constantly changing and capricious. Vocality, lyricism and virtuosity are the hallmarks of this two-part composition in both Act I and Act II. Here is their structure below:

Track 1: Ouverture / Act I:

Aria (Donna Anna, Don Giovanni, Commendatore, Leporello)
Duetto (Donna Anna, Don Ottavio)
Recitativo collérico (Don Giovanni, Leporello)
Aria (Leporello)
Recitativo romantico (Donna Elvira)
Duetto (Zerlina, Masetto)
Finale

Track 2: Act II

Aria desolata (Don Giovanni)
Duetto (Donna Anna, Don Giovanni)
Recitativo ritmico (Don Giovanni, Zerlina)
Cadenza crepuscolare (Don Giovanni)
Duetto (Don Giovanni, Leporello)
Terzetto (Leporello, Don Giovanni, Commendatore)
Finale

It can be seen that the 15 microsections of the work are related and create a network of complex correspondences between the thematic and formal levels, resulting in a particular expressiveness - combining the playful with the elegiac, the comic with the tragic, the ironic with the serious, the lightness with the weight.

Dan Dediu was 19 years old when he composed the Sonata, Op.7, in 1986. Two contrasting movements form a musical universe: the first movement, vivid and nervous, develops virtuosity and energy; the second movement, enhancing the poetical and onirical qualities of the instrument, deploys a middle section with a tonal *chaconne*, colliding stylistically with the rest of the atonal-modal musical material. This triple tension between tonal and modal, melodic and ornamental, theme and non-theme - becomes a landmark of this piece. On the whole, the large-scale-form experiments and the choice of a hybrid tonal-modal-atonal musical material, unexpected inserts, *feintes* and *trompe d'oreille* are specific devices of Dan Dediu's chameleonic compositional style.

À la recherche de la Marseillaise de Stravinsky is the story of a palimpsest: gradually, in the text of a composition, another text appears, as if it rises to the surface like a submarine, a kind of Marseill-Yellow Submarine. There is a one-page version of the French anthem that Igor Stravinsky transcribed in the First World War for a violinist, apparently for Samuel Dushkin. Alexandru Gavrilovici, a Romanian violinist based in Switzerland, bought a copy of this page and gave it to me, with the request that I provide it with a compositional "montage" that would offer the possibility of a concert performance, the transcription being insufficient to stand on its own as a piece. I thus imagined this piece as a kind of musical "ring" that highlights the diamond of "La Marseillaise" in the polish of the jeweller Stravinsky. It's a kind of musical skeuomorphism or, if you like, a "steam-punk" style à la Dediu.

A Mythological Bestiary, Op.133 is made up of six parts: *Griffin*, *Unicorn*, *Mandragora*, *Sphynx*, *Hippogriffin*, *Dragon*. Six fantastic beings from various European mythologies are musically depicted in an emblematic cycle for violin and piano, in which instrumental virtuosity is a defining component. The composer embarks upon creating music of great plasticity which evokes – through musical and expressive gestures – certain ontological qualities that define the mythological beings in question. In *Griffin*, the hybrid of lion and eagle is noticeable in the multiple instrumental effects. In *Unicorn*, purity and nostalgic nobility are emphasized. *Mandragora* combines the subterranean pulse of the piano with fragmented melody and sudden twitches of the violin. *Sphynx* presents an surreal calm in its linear, hypnotic discourse. *Hippogriffin* swings between flight and canter (griffin and horse). And the fire of *Dragon* heats the atmosphere to the point of incandescence. "A Mythological Bestiary" was written for Irina Muresanu as a commission from the Harvard Musical Association in Boston, where it was premiered in April 2009.



Toate cele patru lucrări aflate pe acest CD au în comun procesul *hibridizării*, adică pornesc de la muzici existente pe care le combină și le transformă apoi într-o manieră nouă. Opera Don Giovanni de Mozart este mixată cu teme din poemul simfonic Don Juan de Richard Strauss, imnul Francez La Marseillaise al lui Rouget de Lisle e filtrat prin aranjamentul pentru vioară solo făcut de Stravinski, iar fâșii decupate din întreaga istorie a muzicii se alătură paradoxal pentru a sonoriza ființe mitologice hibride. Dediu revizitează muzicile trecutului cu mare rafinament, alegând să amorseze aluzii subtile și cârlige eficiente din acest rezervor colosal. Rezultatul sonor este unul atractiv, deopotrivă vernacular și ecumenic.

De asemenea, *virtuozitatea* instrumentală este o altă însușire comună a pieselor de pe acest CD. De la pizicatti și efectele piperate ale pestrișului și condimentatul Griffon la cascadele sonore înflăcărâte și ritmurile telurice ale Dragonului, de la melodia spiralată și straniile armonii ale Sonatei Op. 7 până la flageoletele variațiunilor ce compactează forma spre final a Marseillaisei, toată devenirea muzicală este străbătută de trepidația virtuozității.

În fine, *modularitatea* este o a treia trăsătură stilistică comună. Traseul narativ al muzicii lui Dan Dediu se construiește pornind de la personaje imaginare, a căror inserție în realitatea muzicală este realizată prin miniaturi ce se înșiruie într-un design modular, asemenea unui puzzle. Aceste personaje imaginare sau livrești constituie baza expresivă a diverselor situații dramaturgice puse în scenă de fantezia debordantă a compozitorului.

Această manieră de compoziție se poate numi *metastilism*, căci pornește de la unul sau mai multe stiluri istorice pe care le comentează apoi, luminând cotloane necercetate și firide prăfuite și uitate, din care se extrage minereu muzical ce va fi transformat într-un limbaj nou, creativ, asemenea filosofilor care comentează texte antice, scoțând din ele sensuri noi și forjând noi concepte.

Cele două cicluri pentru vioară și pian – Don Giovanni/Juan și A Mythological Bestiary – sunt compuse special, la distanță de timp considerabilă, pentru interpretele acestui CD, fermecătoarele și harismaticele Irina Mureșanu și Valentina Sandu-Dediu.

SonatOpera Don Giovanni/Juan Op.53 a fost scrisă în 1995 pentru Irina Mureșanu și Valentina Sandu-Dediu. Ea preia dramaturgia formei în mare din Don Giovanni de Mozart și câteva celule tematice din Don Juan de Richard Strauss. Astfel, având aceste constrângeri la bază – asemenea unor reguli de contrapunct sau armonie – am imaginat un traseu muzical expresiv, totodată eliberat de și orientat spre tradiție. Cu toate acestea, ceea ce rezultă este o muzică originală, plină de diversitate, permanent schimbătoare și capricioasă. Vocalitatea, cantabilitatea și virtuozitatea sunt caracteristicile acestei compoziții construite din două părți: actul I și actul al II-lea. Iată mai jos construcția acestora:

Ouverture / Actul I:

- Aria (Donna Anna, Don Giovanni, Commendatore, Leporello)
- Duetto (Donna Anna, Don Ottavio)
- Recitativo collérico (Don Giovanni, Leporello)
- Aria (Leporello)
- Recitativo Romantico (Donna Elvira)
- Duetto (Zerlina, Masetto)
- Finale

Actul al II-lea

- Aria desolata (Don Giovanni)
- Duetto (Donna Anna, Don Giovanni)
- Recitativo ritmico (Don Giovanni, Zerlina)
- Cadenza crepuscolare (Don Giovanni)
- Duetto (Don Giovanni, Leporello)
- Terzetto (Leporello, Don Giovanni, Commendatore)
- Finale

Se observă că cele 15 *microsecțiuni* ale lucrării intră în relație și creează o rețea de corespondențe complexe între planurile tematic și formal, ajungându-se la o expresivitate aparte – ce îmbină ludicul cu elegiacul, comicul cu tragicul, ironicul cu seriosul, ușurința cu greutatea.

Scrisă la vârsta de 19 ani, în 1986, *Sonata pentru vioară solo* se articulează în două mișcări: prima, rapidă și trepidantă, mizând pe virtuozitate și forță de susținere, cea de-a doua, lentă, poetică și visătoare, al cărui mijloc dezvoltă o *chaccone* tonală, ce intră în coliziune stilistică cu restul materialului, de extracție modal-atonală. Tensiunea triplă dintre modal și tonal, dintre ornamental și melodic, precum și dintre temă și non-temă – constituie linia de forță a acestui opus timpuriu. De altfel, experimentele cu forma extinsă și materialul hibrid tonal-modal-atonal, inserții neașteptate, *fente* și *trompe d'oreille* vor constitui și pe mai departe constante ale stilului cameleonice al lui Dan Dediu.

À la *recherche de la Marseillaise de Stravinsky* este istoria unui palimpsest: treptat, în textul unei compoziții, își face apariția un alt text, de parcă el se ridică la suprafață asemenea unui submarin, un fel de Marseill-Yellow Submarine. Există o versiune de o pagină a imnului Franței, pe care Igor Stravinski a transcris-o în primul război mondial pentru un violonist, se pare că pentru Samuel Dushkin. Alexandru Gavrilovici, violonist român stabilit în Elveția, a cumpărat o copie a acestei pagini și mi-a dat-o și mie, cu rugămintea de a-i asigura o "montură" componistică care să ofere posibilitatea de a fi prezentată în concert, transcripția fiind insuficientă pentru a se susține ca piesă de sine-stătătoare. Am imaginat, astfel, această piesă, ca pe un fel de "inel" muzical care pune în evidență diamantul "La Marseillaise", în șlefuirea bijutierului Stravinsky. Un fel de skeuomorfism muzical sau, dacă vreți, un stil "steam-punk" à la Dediu.

Un bestiar mitologic op.133 este format din șase părți: 1. Grifon 2. Inorog 3. Mandragora 4. Sfinx 5. Hipogrif 6. Dragon. Astfel, șase ființe fantastice, aparținând diferitelor mitologii europene, sunt portretizate muzical într-un ciclu emblematic pentru vioară și pian, în care componenta de virtuozitate instrumentală este definitorie. Pariul compozitorului este acela de a crea o muzică plină de plasticitate și de a evoca gestual și expresiv anumite calități ontologice ce definesc ființele mitologice respective. În *Grifon*, componenta hibridă leu-vultur este detectabilă în multiplele efecte instrumentale, în *Inorog* se accentuează puritatea și noblețea nostalgică, *Mandragora* combină htonianul puls al pianului cu melodică fragmentată și crispările subite ale viorii, *Sfinxul* prezintă un calm ireal al discursului linear și hipnotic, *Hipogriful* pendulează între zbor și trap (cal și grifon), iar *Dragonul* încălzește, cu flăcările sale, atmosfera până la incandescență.



Biographies

Romanian violinist **Irina Muresanu** has won the hearts of audiences and critics alike with her “irresistible,” (Boston Globe) exciting, elegant and heartfelt performances of the classic, romantic and modern repertoire. The Globe also praised her as “not just a virtuoso, but an artist” and the Los Angeles Times has written that her “musical luster, melting lyricism and colorful conception made Irina Muresanu’s performance especially admirable”.

Irina Muresanu is a laureate and top prize winner in Montreal International, Washington International, Pro Musicis International and Queen Elisabeth violin competitions. She has performed in renowned concert halls throughout North America, Europe and Asia.

A champion of contemporary music, Irina Muresanu has a substantial discography on BMOP, Avie Records, Albany Records, Centaur and AR RE-SE labels, most recently working closely with composers Thomas Oboe Lee, Elena Ruehr and William Bolcom. Her solo violin project “Four Strings Around the World” is a celebration of diverse musical cultures through the unifying voice of the violin, an omnipresent instrument all around the globe. This project is the recipient of the prestigious New Music USA grant and a Creative and Performing Arts Award from the University of Maryland. The CD recording of “Four Strings” by the Grammy-winning Sono Luminus garnered great critical acclaim nationally and internationally.

Irina Muresanu currently serves on the faculty of the University of Maryland and has taught at Boston Conservatory and in the Harvard and MIT Music Departments. She plays an 1849 Giuseppe Rocca violin and an Étienne Pajeot bow.

Valentina Sandu-Dediu graduated in musicology in 1990 from what is now the National University of Music in Bucharest, where she has been teaching music history, musicology and stylistics since 1993. She is the author of more than 40 studies and 300 articles, several broadcast series, has written and edited volumes published in Romania and Germany, including: *Romanian Music after 1944* (Pfau Verlag, Saarbrücken, 2006); *About Style and Rhetorics in Music* (Bucharest 2010 / 2013), *Parallel Octaves* (Bucharest, 2014; *In Search of Consonances* (Bucharest, 2017); *New Histories of Romanian Music* (Bucharest, 2020).

Another side of her activity is focused on concert performances and recordings, as a pianist in chamber ensembles (CDs released in Romania with Aurelian Octav Popa, Diana Moș, Irina Mureșanu; in Germany / Neos with Dan Dediu, and in Boston / Albany with Ray Jackendoff).

Valentina Sandu-Dediu was a Fellow of the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, currently she is Rector at the New Europe College in Bucharest, Institute for Advanced Study. In 2008 she was awarded the Peregrinus Foundation, Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences.



"The music of Dan Dediú could be described as versatile, nervous, with a specific feature of dynamic restlessness. He works with forms, which consists every time in an alternation of good perceptible sonorities, pithy microuniverses." (Lothar Knessl).

Dan Dediú was born on 16th March 1967 in Braila, Romania. He graduated in composition from the Music University in Bucharest (1989) and attended post-graduate courses at HMdK in Vienna (1990/91). Scholarships and Fellowships were offered by Alfred-Toepfer Foundation, Hamburg, Alban-Berg Foundation, Vienna, New Europe College, Bucharest, Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, Zuger Kulturstiftung Landis & Gyr, Switzerland, Bavarian Ministry for Culture, Germany. Among his teachers are composers Ștefan Niculescu, Dan Constantinescu and Francis Burt. In 1995, he earned his PhD in Music with a thesis on the subject of "The Phenomenology of Composition".

Dediú has served as artistic director of the New Music Festival in Bucharest "International Week of New Music" (1999, 2001, 2007, 2008, 2016-2019). In 2003 he founded Profil-Sinfonietta, a Romanian new music ensemble and in the same year is appointed professor for composition at the National University of Music, Bucharest. Between 2008 and 2016 he chaired the same institution as elected rector.

His over 170 compositions are performed worldwide (for example Wien Modern, Neuköllner Oper, Warsaw Autumn, Enescu Festival, Cabrillo Festival, Konzerthaus Berlin, Philharmonie Hamburg, Mexico City) and cover all the genres: 5 symphonies and 20 orchestral pieces, 7 string quartets, 11 concertos, 4 operas, piano, chamber and choral music. Much of his music has been recorded by Albany Records, Cavalli, NEOS, NM Extra, Move Records and Casa Radio. He has received prizes and awards for composition in Vienna, London, Paris, Berlin, Budapest, Bucharest, Dresden, Ludwigshafen. Also, he is the recipient of two honorary doctorates in Romania, at University of Arts Iași and Craiova University.

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Program notes by Dan Dediu and Irina Muresanu

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