

## Approaching Elements of Folk Music in Romanian Choral Creation

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**Abstract:** *Most Romanian musicologists believe that Romanian musical creation is based on the folk vein. This, it is true, knew three main approaches that assumed a complexity of procedures through which sublime expressiveness was obtained: the folkloric quote, of moderate folkloric inspiration (in folkloric style), of radical folkloric inspiration (in modern style). Observing and exemplifying the common melodic, rhythmic and architectural structures and their processing, the connection between traditional and scholarly Romanian music must be a continuous concern for all Romanian musicians.*

**Key words:** *musical folklore; Romanian choral creation, melody, rhythm, architectural form;*

### Introduction

The perspective directed towards the modal universe is not unknown, but goes at the same time with other generational concerns oriented towards modern modalism. Thus, in the 20th century, several concepts appear intersected. One is essentially post tonal - neotonal - atonalism, dodecaphonic serialism, polytonality. Another is related to the valorization of popular modes, the interpenetration between tonal and modal, attempts to use modal harmony, the use of partial modes, scales with movable, complementary, octavian or non-octavian steps. Concluding all these processes can be included in the organic modes and result in a complex language of synthesis (as in the creation of Bartok, Enescu, etc.).

### 1. Analytical forays

When we start from the springs of the folkloric complex, supporting - me on the arguments of W.G. Berger<sup>2</sup> and Valentina Sandu Dediu<sup>3</sup> regarding judging the music of the 20th century, we can think of a distribution in the creative concept of Romanian composers, on three levels: 1. the folkloric quote ( the theme song comes "ad litteram" from traditional songs belonging to musical folklore; the harmonic plan is supported tonally, modally or tono-modally); 2. of moderate folkloric inspiration (the theme song is created in the style of popular music by referring to "organic" modes (the old modes accepted and imposed by the communities of an era, whose sound content is also found in the harmonic plane); 3 .of radical folklore inspiration (creations that are based only on the extraction of compositional principles from the morphology of Romanian folklore, arriving at the definition of archetypes through various ways of integrating aleatorism, minimalism, etc.; ways obtained through "synthesis" can be applied : the hexatonic range, the chromatic range, the serial range of the chromatic range, Messien's modes etc.).

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<sup>2</sup> Wilhelm Georg, Berger. 1979. *Dimensiuni modale*. București: Editura Muzicală, p. 23.

<sup>3</sup> Valentina, Sandu – Dediu. 2002. *Muzica românească între 1944-2000*. București: Editura Muzicală, p. 73.

In what follows, I will submit two choral pieces from the "folkloric quote" level: "Scoborî Domnul din cer" by Eugen Petre Sandu and "Cântecul bridesei" by Irina Odăgescu.

1.1. "Let the Lord come down from the sky", (popular lyrics), chorus with equal voices: the work is designed for two male choral groups that will later suffer divisions and is rhythmically accompanied by triangle, whip and drum. The first exposition is made up of two distinct melodic motifs: a pentachord with a major third, with three sound centers (G, A, D), with a recitative melodic cadence, which will be concluded by a chromatic tetrachord, with a melodic cadence cold; this whole melodic episode will benefit from a recto-tono melodic support (group two, on the re sound) and a rhythmic one; for the second exposition we witness a reversal of the sound planes: the second group takes over the main melodic exposition which will be completed by a subtone melodic cadence, and the first group renders the recto-tono recitative in perfect ascending fourth; at the end of this episode we witness short moments of heterophony, and the chorus, the chromatic tetrachord, with the same melodic (Phrygian) cadence, is slightly amplified, by dividing the first group. The sound discourse is interrupted for the first time by a parlato recitative, thought responsorial, between the two groups. The third exposure is concentrated and sonically amplified: the melodic motif "runs" from one group to another, at the melodic line level, and vertically the first chords of modal construction (3-4 distinct sounds), formed by the 5p intervals, are born, 8p, 2M, 4p, which appear in various combinations.

Fig. 1. "Let the Lord come down from the sky" by Eugen Petre Sandu

For the second step of the audio speech, I use the same method, stated previously, the parlato recitative. In the fourth melodic stanza, I display the four voices, successively, through imitation at the level of a perfect ascending fourth, obtaining another modal chord: re, mi, sol, la. An opposing first moment of the choral piece is realized through a fabric of recitatives (recto-tono, with parlato), superimposed on harmonic pedals, alternatively, group 1/group 2, on a contrasting movement, in a medium, slightly inconstant speed. The fifth stanza is played at the same fast speed, by the four voices, which participate, as in the previous exposition, in the construction of a chord, traditional this time: diminished chord with a minor seventh. This chordal construction will constitute the unfolding material for the climax of the piece, a second opposing moment, on the same movement developed at a medium speed, in which the recto-tono and parlato recitatives transform into harmonic pedals, which are subjected to chromatic attacks with direct consequences in the expressiveness of the harmonic structure: the diminished chord with a minor seventh turns into a major chord with a minor seventh, a dominant seventh for an assumed tonic, which constitutes the final (sixth) stanza, in the same fast movement, brought to the weakest its harmonic position, the reversal of the second, whose third appears with great delay.

The song ends with that auspicious formula, typical for carols, chanted: "Happy New Year and Happy New Year!". The melodic line, in a general x-ray, has a sinuous outline, in which the descending perfect fourth is highlighted. Rhythmically, one can observe the "handcuffing" of the aksak on a Western measure, 9/8, with heterometrically grouped values: 2+3+2+2, 1+3+3+2. From a formal point of view, a binary architectural structure is detached, within which the A is made up of stanzas with chorus, presented variedly six times, and the B, of the episodes made up of recto-tono and spoken recitatives, some of them on harmonic pedals, in an obviously contrasting tempo.

1.2. "Song of the bride" is a mixed choral piece, with four divided voices, which has folk verses as its literary support. The musical work is based on the folkloric quotation, as indicated by the author on the score: "popular songs from Maramureş" that belong to the family cycle, the second sequence - marriage.

As melodic sound structures we observe the following:

The piece begins on a hexachord with a major third on "ground" that will amplify towards an ionic heptachord, a sound scale that will be present throughout the first section (A):

**„CÎNTECUL MIRESEI“**

*A. Lent*  
1 *Largo* ♩ = 100  
*mp*  
*espressivo ed. lamentoso*

S. PA — DRU — MU — CA — RE MĂRG — EU,

T. PA — DRU — MU

S. PA — DRU — MU — CA — RE MĂRG — EU,

T. CA — RE MĂRG — EU — NU — Î FÎN — TÎ — NĂ —

Fig. 2. "Song of the bride" by Irina Odăgescu (secțiun A)

In the second section (B):

Fig. 3. "Song of the bride" by Irina Odăgescu (section B)

The Ionic heptachord will turn into a Mixolydian that will oscillate on two sound centers: G/C:

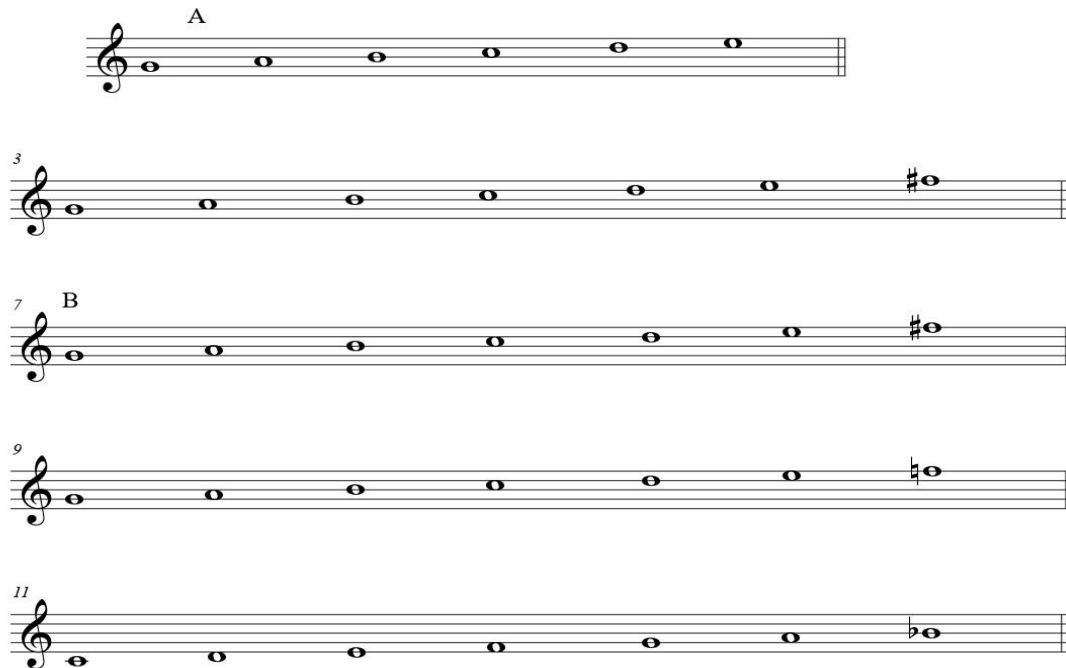


Fig. 4 The evolution of sound systems

The melodic cadences at the level of the main sound exposure are: A a1 = aeolian, a2 = by leap of descending major third; Bb1 = recitative cadence, b2 = recitative cadence, b3 = descending minor seventh leap cadence; A, identical return.

From the perspective of the metrical and rhythmic organization, it can be observed that the folkloric giusto-syllabic rhythm is superimposed on the scholarly metric of 6/8, in which there appear rhythmic cells of the spondee type (dotted fourth + dotted fourth), iamb (eighth + fourth), of the type iambic (dotted fourth + dotted second), trochee (fourth + eighth), trocheic (dotted second + fourth).

Syntax types include imitative exposed monody (Aa1, a2), accompanied monody (Bb1 with f1, f2), homophony (b2). As hypostases of the chordal sound structures and harmonic relationships, I would point out that in section B, classical chords are used on the authentic relationship composed in G major and C major so that at the end of the section, two unresolved dominant seventh chords are presented which, through this procedure, will leads to real suspense.

The notation system is traditional and the architectural form is realized on a developed tripartite lied scheme: A (Lent), ms.<sup>4</sup>1-18, is made up of two asymmetric periods; the dialogue of the Soprano-Tenor voices is in a free imitative process (a1: ms.1-8, a2: ms.9 - 18 which contains a concluding phrase: ms.15-18 in multiplied unison). The B – Allegretto, ms.19 – 48 has a construction consisting of three different articulations in content: b1 (ms.19 – 30) with three phrases, b2 (ms.31 – 41) with two phrases and a concluding motive and b3 with (ms.42 – 48)

<sup>4</sup> ms.= measure.

with three phrases. The return of the A (Slow): ms.44-68, occurs through the inversion of the voices and a small constructive amplification at the end (conclusive motif).

## 2. Conclusions

The approach taken demonstrates the undoubted connection between the creation of the "anonymous author" (folkloric creation) and scholarly creation; if the superimposition of a literary content of folklore origin on a support of scholarly music, light music and its genres is more common, the imagination of expressive melodic – rhythmic lines in which the sound content and rhythmic cells come directly from Romanian folklore and contribute to the realization of some creations professional represents, I think, artistic mastery. So, the two choral pieces have many correspondences that demonstrate that the folk vein, present through the literary and musical constituent it produces, provides a remarkable background through which scholarly art can explore it: "The great diversity of modern or avantgarde-orientation, noted in the European West or in the U.S., also exists in Romanian creation...in various degrees of comparison with native nuances. The latter, coming for the main oral tradition – Byzantine peasant and religious music – led the composers to new language solutions"<sup>5</sup>.

## 3. References

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<sup>5</sup> Valentina Sandu – Dediu. 2004. *Muzica nouă între modern și postmodern*. București: Editura Muzicală, p.135.