Rhythmic-Melodic Aspects of the Instrumental Folklore Regarding the Violinist Ion Drăgoi

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Abstract: *Ion Drăgoi was a representative of the instrumental folklore from Bacău County, being considered one of the most famous Moldavian 'lăutari' (fiddlers). He distinguished himself due to a vast repertoire, as well as by his interpretive manner, being known in many areas of the country, but also abroad. The vast majority of his repertoire contains dance pieces such as: Hora, Sârba, Bătuta, Țărăneasca, Corăgheasca, melodies that contain a wide variety of melodic-rhythmic elements, which are the subject of research in this paper.*

Keywords: *Ion Drăgoi; fiddler; instrumental folklore; folk dances;*

1. Introduction

The instrumental repertoire in the region of Moldavia is vast and notably varied, being performed on various folk instruments specific to the area. A large part of the instrumental folklore is played on folk aerophone instruments, but we also find it performed on chordophone instruments, especially on the violin.

In the area of Moldavia, the *lăutari* (fiddlers) are the ones who transmitted from generation to generation an authentic instrumental folklore, which has been preserved until now. However, unfortunately today there are very few fiddlers left who carry on the living treasure of the Romanian people. Currently, instrumental folklore is played by various performers who try to perpetuate the instrumental folklore.

The instrumental musical repertoire from the area of Moldavia is found at all performances, competitions or various folk events.

2. Ion Drăgoi (1928-1988) – biography and artistic activity

Ion Drăgoi was born on August 25, 1928, in Bacău, into from a folklore-loving family, his father being a good violinist and folklore collector at the time. Ever since his childhood, Ion Drăgoi wanted to follow in his father's footsteps, so that, learning to play the violin as a child, he often participated with other instrumentalists in the village *hora* (round dance).

Learning to play the violin very well, he became a member of the *Plaiurile Bistriței* orchestra, conducted at that time by Aurel Iancovici. Due to his talent, after his first stage performances, he was invited to collaborate with other orchestras in the country. He also collaborated with the *Electrecord* Folk Orchestra, which was conducted at the time by Radu Simion. Along with this orchestra, he recorded numerous folk pieces which he collected from the Bacău area.

He held numerous tours both in the country and abroad, along with distinguished names in Romanian folklore. He also won countless awards and distinctions at various competitions and festivals in the country, as instrumentalist of an orchestra, but also as a soloist.

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Dedicated to collecting instrumental folklore from Bacău County, he managed to gather a rich musical repertoire, to which he added the one inherited from his father Gheorghe Drăgoi, whom he always performed with remarkable talent and sensibility. By preserving and transmitting the Moldavian folklore over time, Ion Drăgoi was part of the gallery of great Moldavian violin artists. Also, part of his repertoire bears his name, the most famous melody being called *Drăgoi's Corăgheasca*.

Wanting his lifelong work preserved for generations to come, he realised tape recordings as well as vinyl records so that his melodies could be listened to and performed more easily over time.

3. The musical repertoire of Ion Drăgoi as *lăutar*

3.1. Generalities of the Romanian folk dances

Romanian folk dances are very different from one area to another, and the musical repertoire has a great wealth and variety of instrumental pieces. The folk dance, which is closely related to instrumental pieces, has a rich content of means of expression, choreographic drawings, or combinations of figures; it has been preserved over time, being passed down from generation to generation. The folk tunes have the artistic means of autonomous expression, so they can be played both during the dance or separately.

The oldest testimonies found about dance and instrumental folk music in Romania date from the 15th century, being found in the writings of the chronicler Grigore Ureche, the most important being *Codex Caioni*, a work containing various aspects of the melody of folk dance, as well as about the dances from the Romanian and Hungarian culture.

According to Corneliu Dan Georgescu,[2] there are four historical periods in the evolution of the folk dance:

-the *old period*, between the 15th-16th centuries, which contains documents related to the dance pieces; the research is based only on interpretations of data;

-the *middle period*, with limits approximately between the 16th-19th centuries is the period in which the first more exact records appear on the dance music and at the same time the first written pieces;

-the *new period* starts with the onset of the 20th century, a period that stands out through various valuable contributions of some forerunners, which led to the establishment of the method of research in folklore;

-the *contemporary period* includes the last decades and is characterized by the systematic study of folk culture, especially the music of folk dances by applying action plans coordinated by the Folklore Institute, established in 1949.[3]

In the Bacău area, the dance pieces are very rich and varied both in terms of melody and tempo. The main factor of their variety is the musical instrument on which they are performed. Thus, the Moldavian instrumental repertoire has been performed since ancient times on the *fluier* (flute), *caval* (long flute), *tilincă, trişcă, cobză* (lute).

During the interwar period, in some villages of Bacău, various instruments from the military band entered: trumpet, accordion, clarinet and other wind instruments that did not particularly change the melody of the repertoire, but only enriched it.

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[2] Corneliu Dan Georgescu (b.1938) = Romanian composer and ethnomusicologist.
[3] Dan G. Georgescu. 1984. *Jocul popular românesc,* Bucureşti: Editura Muzicală, pp.8-9.

3.2. The instrumental repertoire collected and performed by Ion Drăgoi

The instrumental musical repertoire collected and performed by the fiddler Ion Drăgoi is characterized by a great wealth of instrumental pieces of rare beauty and authenticity, including over 150 pieces in the foreground. The multitude and diversification of this repertoire from the Bacău area attracted the attention of many researchers, due to the existence in the region of a unique and valuable musical heritage, being of a rare authenticity, which preserved a series of archaic elements.[4]

Among the dances found in Ion Drăgoi's repertoire, we mention some that can be found under the same name both in Bacău and in the whole of Moldavia.

Hora is a dance that can be encountered all over Moldavia, and the elements that distinguish it are those related to its melody, being quite rich. From a rhythmic point of view, the hora is part of the divisional rhythmic system. It is danced by both men and women.

Sârba is one of the most popular dances in our country, being danced by both women and men. It is characterized by a great melodic and rhythmic richness. There are two types of *sârba* in the area of Moldavia: the *slow sârba*, which is between 104 and 110 beats per minute, and the *fast sârba*, in which the quarter note reaches a speed of 200 beats per minute, both of which are framed in a binary rhythm.

Corăgheasca (*Corogheasca, Corogheşte, Corăbiereasca, Corăbeasca*) is a dance specific to Moldavia, dating from before 1850. It is practiced by men or men and women, being danced in a semicircle with the arms placed on the shoulders. The dancers perform simple steps, with movements in a syncopated rhythm. It is a dance with a fast development, from this point of view resembling *Bătuta* or *Ruseasca*.

Bătuta is one of the most representative dances in the area of Moldavia; it is danced in pairs, in a semicircle or in a line, with walking steps and stamping on the floor. The characteristic element of the *bătuta* is the rhythm, just like the other dances, the execution speed being 200 beats per minute, and the characteristic rhythmic system being the divisional one.

The instrumental pieces collected and performed by the fiddler Ion Drăgoi are much more varied, including others such as: *Brâul, Ciobănaşul, Bârlădeanca, Alunelul, De doi, Floricica, Hangul, Jumătate joc, Leşeasca, Moţăita, Ovreicuţa, Polca, Raţa, Rusca, Ruseasca*.

As we mentioned in the description of these dances, the main element that differentiates them in particular is the tempo, which varies depending on the dance.

4.Rhythmic-melodic aspects found in Ion Drăgoi's instrumental repertoire

4.1. Melodic aspects

Within the mentioned instrumental repertoire, we find a great diversification of morphological elements, some being found only in the researched area, and others being present in the repertoire of other areas of the country as well.

By 'architectural form' we understand the way of composing a melody, of organizing the melodic means of expression. The units of musical language are: the cell, the motif, the chain of motifs, the phrase, the chain of phrases and the period.

The process of organizing and combining these expressive elements is based on repetition and variation. The variational principle is accompanied by the principle of simultaneity of creation with interpretation, receiving specific features, such as: variations from

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[4] http://akademos.asm.md/files/130-133_29.pdf, Fenomenul Ion Drăgoi – Exponenţial pentru folclorul românesc din zona Bacăului, accessed April 18, 2022.

one interpretation to another, from one stanza to another or from one interpreter to another.[5] Some are specific to folk creations, and others are also found in the cultivated creation.

Taken in order, the compositional processes can be researched at the beginning at a small level, starting from the cell and the motif. Thus, in Ion Drăgoi's instrumental repertoire of dances we find various combinations of motifs, such as:

A. Two identical cells, equal in size:
Bârlădeanca

Bătuta delenilor

Bătută

B. Two different cells, equal in size:
Cărășelul

Hangul de la Glăvănești

Ruseasca de la Bacău

The correlation between the two cells is realised according to the following procedures:
-rhythmic
-melodic
-rhythmic-melodic
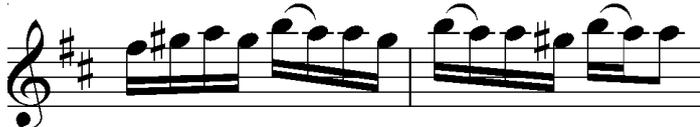Thus, in many of the researched songs we find:
     a. Varied repetition

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[5] Gheorghe Oprea. 2002. *Folclorul muzical românesc,* București: Editura Muzicală, p. 253.

Polca

b. Repetition of the second beat:

Hangul de la Glăvănești

c.Repetition of the first or second beat from the original cell, to which a new element is added:

Joc cu dube de Anul Nou

d. Repetition of the first beat of the original cell, transposed up or down different intervals to which a new element is added in cadence:

Bătuta delenilor

e. Transposing the second beat from the initial cell up or down different intervals:

Ruseasca de la Bacău

f. Inversion of the first cell:

Ciobănașul

The phrase with a definite expressive role consists of two, three or four identical or different motifs. Thus, in Ion Drăgoi's musical material, we found that there are pieces with a 'fixed' pattern, built from a certain number of structures, organized in phrases that are repeated in the same order from one period to another:

- two identical motifs:

Bătuta delenilor

- repeating by changing the cadence cell (or the last beat in the cadence cell):

Cărășelul

- repeating a cell several times:

Ațâca

- retaining the initial cell:

Hora de la Piatra

- transposing the motif up a major second

Hora

4.2. Rhythmical aspects

After a more detailed analysis of the mentioned musical material, we found the existence of rhythmic subdivisions that are present in a very large number:

- The **dactyl** is found in almost all the instrumental repertoire in Bacău:

Bătută

In most cases, the dactyl is built on two eighths from a series of four in a measure. The anapest is also built in the same way, which is present in a large number in the researched repertoire.

-Anapest
Hora de la Corbasca

Analysing some of Ion Drăgoi's pieces, we also noticed the existence of rhythmic formulas that combine the two types of subdivisions:

Dactyl + anapest or anapest + dactyl

Bârlădeanca

Bătuta de la Pâncești

In the Bacău repertoire we also found other rhythmic combinations of values, namely, when a division is deliberately lengthened, in favour of the close one, the so-called *compensated rhythm* is formed.[6]

Rața

From the fusion of different rhythmic values of eighths or sixteenths, syncopated rhythmic formulas arise, present in the researched material:

Hora de la Tescani-Ardeoani

Hora

The triplet is also present in the instrumental folklore of Bacău:

Sârba de la Izvoare

In conclusion, we notice that almost the entire dance musical repertoire in the Bacău area presents a measured, precise rhythm, framed in a 2/4 beat pattern, resulting in a distributive rhythmic system.

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[6] Mircea Cîmpeanu, 2008, *Pe urmele lui Béla Bartók după 100 de ani,* volum editat de Consiliul Județean Cluj, Centrul Județean pentru Conservarea și Promovarea Culturii Tradiționale Cluj, p. 66.

5. Conclusions

Ion Drăgoi is one of the most famous fiddlers in the Bacău area. Even if the repertoire he performed is very wide from the region of Moldavia, for this paper we chose the most representative dance melodies.

The dances from the Bacău area, like all the other artistic productions of this kind from other folk areas of the country, are part of the richest and most varied genre, which denotes vitality and optimism. Some variants of *hora* or *sârba* have a much wider circulation area than Bacău county, others are local and unique. They are played in a precise binary rhythm of 2/4 meter.

The melodic line is simple but expressive, and the rhythm appears as its main supporter in the complex manifestations of the Moldavian folk dance. From the point of view of the structure, the dances from Bacău are characterized especially by the rhythm, which prevails over the melody.

In the researched instrumental folklore are found a multitude of forms, a great variety of tempos and a rich rhythm that unfolds throughout the musical discourse. The melodic motifs of the pieces have different variations during the musical discourse, of which we mention: they may be augmented, diminished or reversed. Melodic variations occur during the repetition of a musical phrase, depending on the performer's imagination. Thus, it can be said that the process of musical creation is very active during the interpretation of the dance, resulting in a great typological richness. Differences between the pieces appear from one area to another, through the style of interpretation, each area having its own style, a phenomenon encountered even in the same area from one instrumentalist to another.

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