

THE COMPOSITIONAL CONTEXT IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE MAIN REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MUSICAL CULTURE FROM BANAT, THE ROMANIAN AND EUROPEAN MUSICAL CULTURE

V. L. DEMENESCU¹

Abstract: *This study follows the development lines, which attract the creations toward the rural folk music direction, the transformation of original melodies (rural or lectern music) according to the affinities for the neo-romantic, neoclassical, folkloric, impressionistic or expressionistic orientations, characteristic to some representative creators.*

Key words: *modal harmony, musical language, dialects, popular melody.*

1. Introduction

The 20th century, considered relevant as regards the elaboration, the broadcasting, and the knowledge of a new sonorous world, is characterized by the detachment of the major-minor functionality, in favor of modal sonorities. The compositional orientations, the currents and the directions of the 20th century can only be the result of an upper musical endowment that helped the European composers to succeed with the force of their creations, and with a new impulse, to cultivate a fertile ground for the next generations [2], the ground of music able to artistically and harmonically absorb the features of traditional folklore.

Following the same ideal, because of the folk melodic thesaurus, which was ready to receive valorization, the Romanian composers started off on a road of

renewals, managing to make spectacular changes, due to the variety of possibilities offered by the European musical idioms, at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, due to the relationships between the Romanian composers and the western musical environment, or due to their studies at the western schools of composition.

Comparing the initial data of the autochthonous traditional Melos with the studies made within the national school of composition, one could notice the gradual emancipation of stylistic processes [5].

The consequences of these new directions are debated by Romanian musicologists, who do not hesitate to call the specialists' and the public's attention to various studies, ample paper works with an analytical character, thus offering a solid basis regarding the historical and

¹ Faculty of Music, Vest University of Timișoara.

progressive aspect of the original musical creation.

Alongside the development of the two segments of composition and of musicology, the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century sustains the necessary steps regarding the organization of a new cultural society. The organization of musical education was accomplished by the foundation of the Conservatory for Music and Declamation in Iaşi (1864) and of the Conservatory of Music in Bucharest (1864).

The main problem of the Romanian art creators seems to be the cultivation of modal harmony. Gavriil Musicescu and Dumitru Kiriac form such stylistic orientations, grafted and derived from the two traditional lodes of Romanian song, the folkloric, and the clerical.

Romanian music at the beginning of the 20th century, with all its aspects, on the level of the architectonic form and musical languages, is the result of the interference between West and East, between the folkloric and cultured creation, between laic and church music. Sonorously, the consequence of the interference offers a European language with diversified aspects.

The connection of Romanian creation to European creation of that period is made with the common elements within the musical language typologies, identified in the musical creation of the national schools' representatives. Thus, the modal harmony, imposed through the polyvalent functionalism as well as through modal cadences, is met in *Seven Songs on Lyrics by Clement Marot*, by George Enescu, in *Concert for String Orchestra*, in *Rustic Entertainment*, by Sabin Drăgoi (1894-1968), and in *The Christmas Byzantine Oratorio*, by Paul Constantinescu (1909-1963) [4].

The tritones with a double major-minor aspect are also met in *The Third Sonata for Piano and Violin*, by George Enescu; the

harmonies of fourth are present in *24 Popular Songs and Doinas*, by Sabin Drăgoi, and in the ballet *At the Market*, by Mihail Jora (1891-1971); the accompaniment and the modal cluster are present in the suite *Impressions from Childhood*, by George Enescu.

In the folkloric creation of a people, the tune not only plays a very important role, but it also represents the trace of mental and historical structure of that people. This affirmation is also valid for the Romanian people and for the popular song born from the people's lives along centuries [6].

Gottfried Herder pleads in his work *“Concerns about the Philosophy of Humankind”* for the liberty of all nations to express themselves in their own languages. This shows that all nations have their own national values, which define the characteristic Melos that distinguishes one's origins. Thus, within the expressive framework of every people, music and melody represent the basic elements for the creation of the national specific, which is passed off from one generation to another, through the inherent evolutions that metamorphose the human being and its concepts.

The Romanian popular melody has its roots in the cultural, social and geographical evolution of the Romanian people; their tumultuous history has contributed with all kinds of influences to creating the popular melody along time. It reflects the spirituality and artistic genre of a nation, and many art personalities have been interested in the deep beauty of folklore.

The evolution of Romanian music leads us to the conclusion that the popular melody is at the basis of our musical school. Our folkloric song entails a special, unusual mystery, and it requires deep knowledge to understand its meaning.

The expressive power of music comes from the blending of verse and melody,

which are different from one region to another. In order to not destroy the authenticity and originality of customs of certain regions, we must avoid certain processes of deliberate and uncontrollable obscuration of the specific of certain folkloric melodies.

One knows that since ancient times, people have built a series of popular, rudimentary, or modern instruments, which had the role to amplify the expressivity of the used sonorous material, and to complete it when it exceeded the possibilities of the human voice. This led to the crystallization of two distinct styles in popular melody: the vocal and the instrumental style.

The main characteristic of Romanian popular music is that it is predominantly vocal, the instrumental style being more suitable for dance tunes, pastoral, and fiddler's songs.

Another important feature of Romanian folklore is the idea and the horizontal development of tune, the monody, which is present when the tune is performed by a group of interpreters.

In time, we notice a permanent development of popular song, which acquires new elements: ornaments, melismas, a wider range, and dialectal melodic formulas. These elements need a colored harmony if they are included in the professional creation, to keep the expression of tunes significant.

Because of the historical and social-cultural circumstances, which have formed the Byzantine religious music, adopted in general by the South-East European people, because of the various heterogeneous influences, and because of the autochthonous popular music influences that have marked it [1], because the different musical ideas of some of its reformers, because of its oral circulation for centuries, because of the deficiency of notation systems as well as of

psychological determinants, which have given it a certain physiognomy, Byzantine religious music has been not only adopted, but also adapted to various people, according to their specific musical thinking and feeling. Thus, it has received a new, original expression and dimension, specific to the people that have adopted it.

Generally regarded, all these people form, from a clerical music's point of view, the same spiritual community, as the last researches on compared South-East European folklore show, each of them contributing by their original and specific aspects to the crystallization of their own national church music.

The causes that have lead to forming these national variants of the same original Byzantine music are decisive; thus the differences imposed by them are present not only in each nation, but also within the same nation, in small social communities like villages. In other words, Byzantine church music may show artistic expression differences from one social unity to another.

In fact, the variant of unity is an aesthetical law known ever since Aristotle, confirmed by various modern experimented researchers, who have proved that the lack of variation in unity would lead to monotony and dullness. This aesthetical law of variety in unity governs the arts of all times, being expressed in fine arts, in music, language, clothes, customs, etc. Therefore, no one has ever thought to homogenize and generalize dialects, popular music, or the clothes specific to a region. Such an attempt would not only create adverse reactions, it would also be considered absurd.

Thus, referring to church music, not only the national variants of Byzantine music, but also the regional variants within the same people, or its dialects, correspond folkloric regions. Folkloric regions and musical dialects do not only exist in our

country, Romania, but in all countries; they are determined by the contribution of the autochthonous element, specific as expression of soul and spiritual community to a social group [3]. Thus, for example, in his work, entitled *The Serbian Orthodox Church Popular Song*, which appeared posthumously in 1969 at Beograd, the Serbian bishop Stefan Lastavici establishes numerous variants of local dialects (*napev*), differing from one another in richer or poorer melodic lines.

As regards our church music, one of the most individualized local dialects is the dialect from Banat, a dialect of great artistic beauty, differing from other dialects in its rich and varied melodic, nuanced expressivity, as well as in the organic interpenetration and unity between the musical substance and the sacred content of the text. Our church music, in general, as well as the music from Banat, has reached the present structure as a result of a natural evolution, after it assimilated all influences along centuries, which created an entity of autochthonous elements by spiritual needs specific to the thinking and musical predisposition of our people. In some regions, like in the old Romanian counties, which have been influenced by the Greek and Turkish music, foreign influences have imposed in a different way due to historical and social-cultural circumstances; these circumstances are different from the ones of the Romanian people from Ardeal and Banat.

2. Modal Structures in the Byzantine Cantata from Banat

The music performed in the Church of the Orthodox Orient is known as Byzantine music; musicologists and historians of the modern era, those who have focused their attention towards the study of medieval arts, named it that. In

the first centuries of Christianity, the church cantata had as model the synagogue canticle, which had been joined, along centuries, by the musical influences of people from Minor Asia, Syria, Antiochia, Armenia and the Ancient Greece. Together with the apparition and development of Christian hymnography and with the passing of time, the church canticle suffered a certain synthesis, beginning to get a determined specific. The creation and evolution centre of canticle was Byzantium, the capital of the East Empire; from here it spread towards other great monarchal centers from Greece, Mount Athos, Palestine, Alexandria and the Romanian countries.

Along centuries, in the Romanian countries, the Byzantine music was an objective reality, an integrant part of the art and culture of the Romanian people. This specific art has been kept, developed and passed off in a traditional spirit, together with its manuscripts written by Romanian copyist musicians, well-known of the neumatic singing and writing, who opened schools close to the great monasteries in the country.

The human voice cannot be defined by mode or tone notions, but by the complexity of elements: the musical scale, the genre to which it belongs to, the sonorous system, the system of cadencies and melodic formulas. Speaking of a musical scale, we consider a fragment of scale, counting sometimes three, four, or five sounds, and other times even going beyond the octave. The groups of three, four, or five sounds sometimes form sonorous systems; from their chaining or joining are created scales with a greater range.

In psalm music, for example, the systems of four or five sounds can be met in the diatonic genre, as well as in the chromatic genre. Their use slowly leads to the forming of cadence systems

approximately specific to each voice, as well as to the creation of a melodic formula, determined by the melodic tessitura, which appears between the basic sounds of each voice: tonic and dominant (this differs from voice to voice, or, sometimes, from a category of canticles to another, within the same voice).

The cadences and melodic formulas are two categories of elements met in Byzantine and Gregorian cultured music. In cultured music, there are melodic formulas that show, starting from different heights, the same melodic tessitura. This happens in psalm music with the seventh and the eighth voice's hymn.

The more the canticles spread orally, the more typical the melodic formulas and the cadences became. This phenomenon is met in the entire lectern music. The reduced number of melodic formulas constraints the ones who perform this music orally, making it seem, for the less skilled people, poor and monotonous.

Terentiu Bugariu speaks about three models in the church canticle from Banat: the proper voice, called the voice itself, the equivalent of verse style, the voice of "stihoavna", an Orthodox Church song, and the hymn's voice, which is similar to the irmologic style.

Timotei Popovici affirms that each of the eight voices usually has two or three tunes approximately different, which in our country are called the voice itself, the hymn's tune and the antiphon's tune. The same division is made by Dimitrie Cuntan, except the fact that he adds a fourth tune called the "podobia". Aurel Popovici mentions the following patterns: the voice's tune, the antiphons' tune, the hymn's tune and the "pobobia" tune.

The musical art from Banat was remarked through its originality, related to the mentality of the people of that region.

The national feeling of the Romanian population from Banat in the period under

the domination of the Hapsburg Empire rises again in the second half of the 19th century with the foundation of the choral societies and reunions, explaining thus the development of music and the attempts of folklore harmonization. Among the oldest bands from Banat stands the Lugoș choir (founded in 1810), and the ploughmen choir from Chizătau (founded in 1857).

The knowledge of the essential data of the history of music from Banat is very important, because it proves the existence of an artistic climax. The study of musical values inherited in time completes the horizon of knowledge, and this is an efficient way to form and cultivate traditional thinking.

Following the ascension of the representative composers from Banat, related to the size of the Romanian and European composition, we conclude that the apogee of the creation from Banat is similar to the apogee of the Romanian and European creation, and this fact sustains the choice of this article's subject. Thus, 1922 is marked, concerning the creation from Banat, by the conclusion of the *Three symphonic paintings* by Sabin Drăgoi, and in the European creation by the publication of *Sonata Nr. 2 for Violin and Piano* by Bela Bartok, by the opera *Master Peter's Puppet Show* by Manuel de Falla, by the first version of the orchestral work of *Mussorgsky's Pictures at an Exhibition* by Maurice Ravel, by the plays entitled *Fünf Klavierstücke* by Arnold Schönberg, and by the opera *Mavra* and *Wind Octet* by Igor Stravinsky.

The year 1923 brought for the creation from Banat the apparition of *Suite of Folk Dances for Piano*, *The Romanian Dance of Concerto for Piano*, the *25 Doinas for Piano* and the *Eight Miniatures for Piano* by Sabin Drăgoi as well as the opera *The Girl from Cozia* by Emil Montia.

The opera *Prince Charming* by Herman Klee, a composer from Banat, and the choral poem *King of Mountains* by Thimotei Popovici, complete the compositional picture of the year 1924, which includes the opera *Doctor Faust* by Ferruccio Busoni, *String Quartet* by Gabriel Faure, *Kammermusik Nr. 2* for piano obbligato and *12 Solo Instruments op. 36* by Paul Hindemith, the rhapsody for concerto for violin and piano *Tzigane* by Maurice Ravel, *Concerto in Mixolydian Mode for Piano and Orchestra* by Ottorino Respighi, *Winds Quintet op.26*, *Serenade op 24* and *Suite for Piano op. 25* by Arnold Schoenberg, *Concerto for Piano and Winds* by Igor Stravinsky, and *Symphony VII op.105* by Jan Sibelius.

The Prelude, Fugue and Toccata for piano, *Five lieder* on lyrics by Reiner Maria Rilke and *Romanian Rhapsody nr.1* by Zeno Vancea mark the year 1926, together with *The Third Sonata for Piano and Violin "in Romanian folk character"* by George Enescu, *Two Romanian Dances for Winds, Battery and Piano at Four Hands* by Theodor Rogallski, *Lyrische Suite für Streichquartett* by Alban Berg, *Concerto for Clavicorn, Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Violin and Cello* by Manuel de Falla, *Simfonieta* by Leos Janacek, *Concerto for Wind Orchestra op.41* by Paul Hindemith, the poem *Tapiola op.112* by Jan Sibelius, and *Oedipus Rex* by Igor Stravinsky.

In 1927 the opera *Năpasta* by Sabin Drăgoi and the *Psalm 127* by Zeno Vancea were finished. In the same year George Breazul founded in Bucharest *The Phonogramic Archive for the Gathering and Study of Musical Folklore*, and the Romanian repertoire was enriched with *The Chamber Symphony op.5* by Mihail Andricu, the *Fantasy for Symphonic Orchestra* by Mihail Mihalovici, *Concerto grosso nr.1 op. 17* by Filip

Lazar; the European repertoire was enriched with: *The String Quartet nr.3* and *Micro-Cosmos* by Bela Bartok, *Kammermusik Nr.5 and Nr.6* by Arnold Schönberg, and *The Second Symphony* by Dimitri Sostakovici.

What we attempted to underline in the last part of the article sustains the idea that the modal musical thinking represents an important conquest of the European and Romanian musical language, including the musical language from Banat, through the extraordinary above mentioned works.

References

1. Cinci, E. Sfânta Liturghie – creația supremă a gândirii religioase. Panciova – Serbia. In: *Revista pentru artă și cultură Lumina*, anul LVIII, nr. 7-8-9, 2005, pag.51.
2. Demenescu, V. L. *Modele de gândire modală în creația muzicală europeană din prima jumătate a secolului XX*. Timișoara: Editura Eurostampa, 2006.
3. Măniuț, P.M.; Măniuț, L.C. *Cronica ideilor contemporane - studii și publicistică*, vol. 1 (compendiu al dominantelor de gândire ale culturii și civilizației secolului al XX-lea). Braşov: Editura Universității „Transilvania” din Braşov, 2005.
4. Stoianov, C. *Coordonate stilistice ale creației lui Sabin Drăgoi și Zeno Vancea*. București: Revista *Muzica* nr. 4, 1990.
5. Stoianov, C. *Repere în neoclasicismul muzical românesc*. București: Editura Fundației *România de mâine*, 2000.
6. Vărădeanu, V. *Originea muzicii noastre bisericești* - manuscris. Arhiva Episcopiei Aradului.