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Revitalizing Melodies from the *Caioni Codex* through Musical Arrangement: A Study of *Suite from Codex Caioni* by Dan Voiculescu

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Abstract: The current conditions generated by a globalized society require the reconsideration and reinterpretation of folkloric materials. In this context, the semantic richness of the Codex Caioni—which reflects both the specific character of the musical culture crystallized in seventeenth-century Transylvania and the musical, stylistic, and aesthetic concerns of its author, in harmony with the evolution of musical life and the European trends of the era—acquires particular relevance.

This paper aims to highlight how Codex Caioni, one of the most important collection of different genres of musical pieces of the 17th century, notated in tablature, was reflected in the Suite for string orchestra (1996) by Dan Voiculescu (1940-2009). We will describe the selected pieces from the Codex Caioni and discuss the elaboration, regarding the form, the intonational material, the harmony and polyphony, stressing the personal style of Dan Voiculescu, one of the most important representatives of Romanian Neoclassicism. A scholar of polyphony, Voiculescu not only restores the music of the Codex within a contemporary context, but also explores the relationship between Baroque art music and Transylvanian folk music, bringing to life a sound world situated at the intersection of local tradition and the European Baroque style.

Key-words: Codex, Ioan Căianu, musical arrangement, Romanian composer

1. Introduction

In the context of the diversification of contemporary performance practices, musical reworking or adaptation has become an essential tool for the performative revitalization of the repertoire. Adaptation, reinterpretation, and recontextualization of existing works allow not only for the preservation of musical heritage, but also for its reintegration into a current artistic framework, aligned with

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the expectations of the audience and the evolution of musical language. Thus, musical reworking is not merely a technical exercise, but a form of dialogue between tradition and innovation, ensuring the expressive continuity of music within the contemporary performance context.

Musical reworking involves adapting an existing work through various procedures without eliminating its stylistic and expressive essence. It may include arrangements (changes in instrumentation), transcriptions (recreating a work for an instrument/ensemble different from the original), paraphrases (free versions with creative interventions), modern orchestrations, reharmonizations or rhythmic updates, and adaptations (for pedagogical purposes).

In the contemporary period, an increasing number of composers are turning their attention toward practices of arranging and recontextualizing existing musical repertoire, viewing these interventions not only as reinterpretative exercises, but also as artistic endeavors with their own aesthetic value.

A representative collection for the cultural synthesis of 17th-century Transylvania is the *Codex Caioni*, compiled by Mátyás Seregély and the Romanian-born Franciscan monk Ioan Căianu (Johannes Caioni). In the 20th century, the manuscript—rediscovered by composers and performers—came to be considered important not only because it encapsulates Ioan Căianu's musical, stylistic, and aesthetic concerns, but also because it reflects the specifically Transylvanian characteristics found in both sacred and secular music, the interweaving of the two, as well as traits of the broader European tendencies of that time.

Composers such as Dan Voiculescu—with *Suite from the Codex Caioni*, Doru Popovici—with *Codex Caioni* op. 22 and *Codex Caioni: for Strings and Timpani* op. 33, and Ulpiu Vlad—with *Codex Caioni: Arrangement for Wind Quintet*, found in the original *Codex Caioni* a model of synthesis between the archaic and the contemporary, between written and folk music.

In the present research, the authors carry out an analysis of the work *Suite* from the Codex Caioni by the Romanian composer Dan Voiculescu, in order to highlight the process of reinterpretation and modernization of the Transylvanian repertoire, as well as the compositional techniques used in this musical arrangement. Through this work, the composer revives the musical atmosphere of the Baroque era and transfigures it into contemporary musical language and aesthetics, adapting traditional elements into an innovative form that is accessible to modern audiences.

2. The Historic and Cultural Context of the Codex Cajoni

Transylvania stands out within the Romanian and European cultural space through an exceptional ethnic and linguistic polychromy, shaped by the coexistence of multiple ethnic groups. Throughout the centuries, music has served not only as an instrument of education and devotion, but also as a medium of intercultural contact, since Transylvania functioned as a bridge between Western traditions and Romanian or Hungarian ones. It is in this context that the *Codex Caioni* emerged—a collection representative of the cultural synthesis of seventeenth-century Transylvania, bringing together a wide variety of musical genres, both religious and secular: motets, Mass fragments, and Baroque polyphonic pieces, alongside dances and folk songs of Western or regional origin, which have been described as representing the secular and sacred repertoire of an organist from the transitional period between the Renaissance and the early Baroque (Suppan, 1995).

The manuscript bears the name of Ioan Caioni (Joannes Kajoni, János Kájoni), a teacher, organist, and great humanist scholar of Romanian origin who lived in Şumuleu Ciuc. Originally from the village of Căianul Mic on the Someș River, Caioni renounced his Romanian origin and adopted the Catholic faith in order to obtain "a noble title and a piece of land" (Cosma 1973, 291–293). He studied in Slovakia, completing theology and philosophy while refining his organ performance technique.

The first description of the manuscript—entitled *The Great Musical Anthology*—was written by composer Marţian Negrea in 1939: "The volume contains 212 written leaves, of which leaves 3 and 4 are glued together, so we can count only 211. The first 9–10 leaves, including the title page, are rather deteriorated, while the rest are fairly clean and legible... One can still decipher the year 1652, both in the upper right corner and near the middle of the leaf, again on the right side; in both cases right at the very edge." (Negrea 1939, 20–21).

The manuscript was begun by Mátyás Seregély in 1634 at the Hăghig Monastery and continued in Alba Iulia and Mănăștur, Cluj. Caioni later filled in the blank pages between 1652 and 1671, contributing approximately two-thirds of the musical material (213 pieces out of a total of 346); the remaining 130 pieces belong to Seregély, while the origin of three songs and two theoretical subjects is uncertain, though they are presumed to belong to Tasnadi Balint (Mocanu, 1973).

An organist and organ builder, Caioni transcribed the pieces using the organ tablature notation employed since the sixteenth century, notating—according to the custom of the time—only the melody and the bass, leaving the harmony to be realized by the performer (Pascu 2003, 155).

The number of voices varies between a single voice and eight voices, combining two four-voice choirs. The representation of pitch through drawn letters expresses ascending and descending intervallic leaps that determine melodic direction and expressivity. The phonetic notation of note durations in the tablature generates characteristic rhythms: court or folk dances, as well as instrumental introductory pieces, are built from short and medium note values, simple or dotted (a natural expression of the instrumental style of the time), while religious pieces are notated using medium and long values. Repeated groups of short values are indicated by commas, meant to delineate these rhythmic units (Secară 2017, 81).

At the beginning of the 20th century, the musicologist János Seprődi named the manuscript *Codex Caioni*, a title preserved to this day out of respect for tradition, although chronologically the manuscript belongs to the late musical Renaissance, not the Middle Ages (Ţugulea, 2023).

Continuing the research initiated by Seprődi, Szabolcsi Bence produced the first scholarly exposition on the codex, defining it and relating it to the evolution of instrumental music in the 17th century (Szabolcsi, 1928). Romanian musicology represented by Romeo Ghircoiașiu, Doru Popovici, Petre Brâncuși, Octavian Lazăr Cosma, Viorel Cosma, Gheorghe Ciobanu, and Vasile Tomescu— has regarded the Codex as one of the earliest written sources of Romanian music, emphasizing the national specificity of its melodies. Martian Negrea provides an analysis of the songs included in the collection, noting the existence of ten Romanian folk songs, similar as musicologist Octavian Lazăr Cosma points out — to the Wallachian ballets in Daniel Speer's manuscript Musicalisch-Türckischer Eulen-Spiegel from the same period, as well as to melodies from the Vietoris Codex, written by two anonymous musicians and dated 1680 (Cosma, 1973, 315-318). Of these ten melodies, nine are dances still well known today, appearing under the following titles: Paikostáncz [Lively Dance], Oláh táncz [Wallachian Dance], Más oláhkettös [Another Wallachian Dance for Two], Otödiktánczhatodon [Fifth Dance in Six], Táncz [Dance], Nyiri táncz [Dance from Nires], Mikes Kelemen Táncz [The Coloman Dance], Apor Lázár táncza [Dance of Lázár Apor], Táncz [Dance]. In addition, the collection includes one religious melody, Cantio jucunda de nuptiis Canae Galileae [The Wedding at Cana of Galilee].

Although "The Song of Voivode Lupu's Wife" was considered by Seprődi to be "the most interesting and pure Hungarian melody," and "The Dance of Lázár Apor" one of the most striking examples of Szekler dance music, Marţian Negrea demonstrates their Romanian origin and, in the case of The Dance of Lázár Apor, reveals its similarities to Banu Mărăcine.

In the first volume, *Musicalia Danubiana Codex Caioni saeculi XVII 14a* (edited by Saviana Diamandi and Ágnes Papp, Bucharest 1993), there is an extensive

introduction in three languages (Romanian, Hungarian, and English) by the editors regarding the manuscript of *Codex Caioni*. The titles of the pieces are listed in this volume. Particularly helpful is the classification of the codex pieces by genre (14a, 90–96): motets, Mass movements, practical church music (for example *Ave maris stella*, *Dies irae*, *Veni Creator Spiritus*), Baroque instrumental works, Western European court dances, regional dances, and secular songs. The two volumes (a and b) resulted from the collaboration between the Union of Composers and Musicologists of Romania and the Institute for Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

Codex Caioni is therefore a valuable document not only from a musical standpoint, but also from a cultural and historical perspective. Many of the works included in the codex are arrangements of pieces of European origin that were adapted to the stylistic norms and musical requirements of 17th-century Transylvania. Thus, we may view the Codex as a bridge between Western musical tradition and Transylvanian folklore, and this process of transfer and adaptation is essential for understanding musical practice of the time. Moreover, Codex Caioni played a significant role in preserving the sacred music of an era marked by continual religious and political conflicts. Church music held a central role in Catholic worship, and Franciscan monks were often responsible for musical activity in churches and monasteries. As such, the Codex reflects this tradition, including liturgical works intended both to support religious ceremonies and to educate the youth.

3. Dan Voiculescu, composer and musicologist

Dan Voiculescu (1940-2009), composer, musicologist, pianist and teacher, went the way of his teacher, Sigismund Toduţă (1908-1991), who created a compositional school at the Academy of Music "Ghorghe Dima" in Cluj-Napoca, following the polyphonic rigurosity, the interest for the baroque-classical forms and the modality. He continued his study in Venice by Virgilio Montari (1968) and in Cologne by Karlheinz Stockhausen. He also attended the International Courses of New Music in Darmstadt (1972, 1978). Between 1963-2000 he taught polyphony at Music Academy "Gheorghe Dima" in Cluj-Napoca and 2000-2009 at National University of Music in Bucharest. He was the President of the Foundation "Sigismund Toduţă" in Cluj-Napoca and editor of the Review *Musicological Works* in Cluj. He did master courses in Romania, Republic of Moldova and Italy. He also participated to conferences and radio broadcasts. He was awarded with the *George Enescu* Prize in 1984 (Cosma 2006, 260). He had an intense didactic activity, leading many PhD students and publishing *The Baroque Polyphony in J.S. Bach's Works* (1975) and

Polyphony of the 20th century (2005), which demonstrate good knowledge in the Baroque polyphony as well as in the polyphony of different styles in the 20th century. His didactic activity was not dedicated only to students. He composed little piano pieces (miniatures) for children in three volumes (1980, 1984, 1990) under the title Book Withoud End (Carte fără sfârsit).

Remarkable is his comic opera, *The Bald Soprano* (1993), after Eugène lonesco. It is a chamber opera, where the absurd is musically illustrated through repetitions and discontinuity. In the same time, the banality is represented through an exaggerated dramatisation. Sprechgesang, recitative, arias in the baroque or bel canto style are used (Arzoiu 2002, 211). Interesting is that the pendulum becomes a person, it has its own motif.

Voiculescu's choral and vocal music is very reach. Besides, he wrote several cycles for piano. In the first cycles (*Five Fables*; *Dialogues*), he used traditional polyphonic proceeds as imitation and inversion (Maistorovici 2002, 164). In *Sonances* one hears clusters in the extreme registers (ibidem, p. 165). Later he was interesed in the toccata genre. He composed *Toccata* (1989), *Toccata armonica* (1991), *Toccata robotica* (1993). Voiculescu also composed for other instruments solo or with piano: oboe, flute, clarinet, trombon, violon, as well as for different ensembles. His symphonic creation is not very reach. He wrote especially for string orchestra: *Divertimento* for string orchestra, *Simfonia ostinato*, *Cosmic Visions*, *Blocks*, *Dispositions*, *Music for Strings*, etc. between 1960-1970.

4. Suite from Codex Caioni for string orchestra – analytical view

As we have already mentioned, in this paper, the *Codex Caioni* will be discussed in the light, how it can inspire composers to elaborate and create works based on pieces included in it.

The Suite from Codex Caioni was composed for string orchestra (1996). Every composer, who elaborates pieces from this Codex builds a bridge with the 17th century. It is interesting to hear, how the old dances have been actualized, composers using the arsenal of the century they live. Regarding Dan Voiculescu, he let the original melodies untouched. The instrumentation, harmonization, polyphonic treatment, and form given to the selected pieces all bear a personal touch. Dan Voiculescu took the dances from the Musicalia Danubiana Codex Caioni saeculi XVII 14b (edited by Saviana Diamandi and Ágnes Papp, Budapesta 1994) that represents the traditional transcriptions of the pieces included in the codex.

The suite consists of five movements (four different dances and one song). Dan Voiculescu wrote the Hungarian and Romanian titles³. 1. Dans zglobiu/Paikos Tancz [Merry Dance], 2. Passacaglia super "Bon iour de almor", 3. Cântecul Voivodesei Lupu/Lupul Vaidaneeneke [The Song of Voivode Lupu], 4. Alia Ballet—Ballet de Bÿgot—Lauf (Rondo). 5. Dans din Nireş/Nyiri Tancz [Dance from Nireş].

Dans zglobiu/Paikos Tancz [Merry Dance] has the number 251 in the codex. The composer kept the binary metrical structure. In Allegretto, on a G-mode, the dance melody with note repetitions is accompanied by the bass, which has only the 1st, 4th and 5th degrees). Obvious is the dissonance of major seventh on the third beat (c-b). The form is binary: A and B. The A has 3 bars, which are repeated, the microstructure having a bar form: a (m. 1), a (m.2), b (m.3). The B is written twice instead of using the repetition sign. It has the same microstructure (a a b). One can see the asymmetrical phrases of 3 bars (Figure 1).

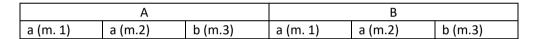






Fig. 1. "Merry dance" (No. 251) and "Romanian Dance" (No. 252) from "Codex Caioni", Musicalia Danubiana Codex Caioni saeculi XVII 14b, p. 405

³ The titles are original in Hungarian in Codex Caioni.

Dan Voiculescu created three variations on this theme. Afterwards, he inserted another dance, which he did not mention in the title—Dans românesc/Oláh Tancz [Romanian Dance] (Figure 1), a calmer melody, adapted from the folklore of the Someș region (Mocanu 1973, 83). Then the first dance returns, with three other variations and a coda. This results in a form similar to the Lied form with trio. In the Romanian Dance, D. Voiculescu created internal variations doing the repetitions with varied dynamics. The whole piece has the following scheme:

Merry Dance (A)							Romanian Dance (B)									Merry Dance (A)
																Coda
		eme varia	Two-part Song									3 variations				
Α			A1			A B										
а	а	b	а	а	b	а	а	b	а	а	b	a1	a2	а	b	

The piece begins in *tutti* (violin 1, violin 2, violas, cello, double bass), where the double bass and the viola have a pedal on G, with the role to fix the tonica.

Violin 2 Violin 2 Violoncello nf Violn 2 Violn 2 Violn 2 Violn 2 Violn 2 Violn 3 Violn 4 Violn 2 Violn 2 Violn 3 Violn 4 Violn 5 Violn 6 Violn 7 Violn 1 Violn 7 Violn 8 Violn 9 Vi

Suită din Codex Cajoni - Dans Zglobiu - Dan Voiculescu

Fig. 2. "Merry Dance" from "Suite from Codex Caioni" by Dan Voiculescu (bars 1-8)

The subdominant and the tonica are in the other voices, not in the lowest. This gives the impression of the choir harmonization of folkloric melodies. One can observe the heterophony between the two violins in the first and the first half of the second measure. The lack of the leading-note in the third measure and the fifths' chord on the second beat in the third measure are characteristics for the modal thinking. In the B-part the pedal on G is preserved by the double bass. The first variation brings the melody one octave higher. This confers more brilliance. The play with different octaves in the first violin will be always present in this dance and in the Romanian Dance. The cadence appears on the minor dominant (d-f-a) in the second violin. The f will be a mobile degree in the whole piece, characteristic for the mixolydian mode. In the second variation the accompanying instruments have eighteenths and tend to be more present on the cadences, where they have little transitions to new phrases. This is the composer's contribution. In this variations one sees the polyphony too, characteristic for a master of this syntax. In the third variation the sixth degree is altered (e-flat) resulting a melodic G major or a mixolydian mode with the sixth degree altered down. Voiculescu's thinking is modal-tonal.

In the middle section (*B*), *Romanian Dance*, the personal contribution concerns the instrumentation. There is an alternation between *tutti* and *soli* (first violin). The movement in eighteenths in the second violin and viola has the function of a counterpoint to the dance melody. The middle section ends with a plagal cadence (fourth degree-first degree), typical for the modal world. In the return of the main section a strange element appears: g sharp. Its appeareance is unique. It is on the last tone of the second phrase. The second variation begins afterwards with the third degree. The piece ends modally with a cadence where the minor dominant is pregnant. This is a sign of the neomodality or of the ancient modality and traditional form, hinted by the second piece, a passacaglia.

Passacaglia super "Bon iour de almor" (Good morning from love) has the numbers 236-238 in the codex. Voiculescu indicated Larghetto as tempo. He composed 10 variations on this passacaglia theme and treated the theme and the first three variations in a Palestrinian style, even if the original melody has many skips and a seventh leap. The rhythm of the theme in the cello is preserved in the second violin and viola. The auftakt appears only in the theme and the first variation. The prevailing of semibreves and minims leads to semiminims in the first violin, then also in the second violin and viola. The double bass doubles the passacaglia theme. The third variation has a dactyl as formula and the f is a mobile degree (it also appears as f-sharp). The fourth variation hints imitations between the violins. This variation has chromatic tones in the theme, played by viola and cello. The second violin introduces the tones e-flat and a-flat, fact that moves away from Palestrina's style. In the fifth variation the bass line (cello and double bass) is rhythmically modified, a common

proceed in the passacaglia form. Voiculescu created two different plans which are rhythmically complementary. Both rhythms are incisive. The sixth and the seventh variations have the theme in the first violin, while the accompanied instruments have a legato movement. There is an ornamented passacaglia theme in the seventh variation. In the eighth variation the passacaglia theme turns in the bass instruments, while the other instruments have descendent lines in semiminims. The ninth variation breaks the continuity bringing rests in both, theme and counterpoint. Unexpected is the last variation in *cantabile*, in the first violin. There is a *coda* of three bars, which ends with a Picardy chord, a Baroque tradition.

Cântecul Voivodesei Lupu/Lupul Vaidaneeneke (The Song of Voivode Lupu) has the 264 number in the codex. It is a secular song, with a story recounted by Vasile Mocanu in his book about Ioan Căianu (Mocanu, 1973). The motif, phrasing, metrical structure, and grave tonality display a distinctly Baroque character, while the Phrygian cadence—found in numerous melodies of our folk music—demonstrates its Romanian origin (Codex Caioni 14b, 833).



Fig. 3. "The Song of Voivode Lupu" from "Suite from Codex Caioni" by Dan Voiculescu (bars 4-6)

Compared to other two pieces of the suite, Voiculescu treated the third piece entirely diatonicaly, even if he did not respect the harmony of the original in the codex. The dorian mode on D becomes phrygian at the end. The original melody is heard three times in a continuous movement of eights in the second violin and viola. Thus, the tempo is *Scorrevole*, *ma lento* [Fluently, but slow]. Interesting is the ison (pedal tone) on the tonica D. It hints to the Byzantine song. There are three apparitions of the melody. By the third apparition Voiculescu uses imitations (bars 4-6).

Alia Ballet–Ballet de Bÿgot–Lauf (Rondo) have the numbers 239-240, respectively 247 and 92 in the codex. Voiculescu alternated these three pieces: two dances and an instrumental dance (Lauf-courante)(Codex 14b, 824), resulting a big rondo form. As a neoclassic composer Voiculescu used traditional forms as passacaglia and rondo. As we have seen.

Alia Ballet (A) is the refrain in C major. It consists of two repeted parts. It is diatonic. The tonal contrast comes with the Ballet de Bÿgot (B), which is in the homonymous tonality (C minor). One can see a melisma in the first violin, which will be present further, when the refrain turns back. Thus, it is melodically and rhythmically varied. One hears here also imitations between the first violin and viola.

Lauf (C). In a ternary meter, the soprano has a melody divided in seven modulating phrases of four bars. On this melody in the G major or mixolydian mode the other instruments have movements of semiminims in an ancient style, which hints to Palestrina. The piece ends with a shorter ornamented refrain.

Dans din Nireş/Nyri Tancz (Dance from Nireş) has as tempo Giocoso and fits with a polyphonic treatment, because its shortness and poihnancy. Indeed, in this last piece, Voiculescu showed his polyphonic skill. The original mode is mixolydian on D, but Voiculescu transposed it on G putting as key f sharp. His thinking is tonomodal, as we have seen. The melody is continued in imitations by other instruments. There are imitation from the beginning between the instruments, the melody (eight bars) being fragmented and played by more instruments. From the ninth bar the theme is in stretto. The same melody is transposed afterwards on A in the cello and double bass, while the other instruments have an isorhythmic counterpoint. A descending transition lends to a fugato (allegretto fugato, ma serio), where the character contrasts with the Giocoso of the beginning. The countersubject is heard together with the theme. In this way, from giocosa, the music becomes seria. The theme and the counterpoint will be the material for the fugato. In the coda there is the 5/4 meter and grace notes, both elements being typical for the folklore.



Fig. 4. Dance from "Nireş" from "Suite from Codex Caioni" by Dan Voiculescu (bars 1-6)

From the analysis of the *Suite from Codex Caioni* for orchestra we can conclude that Dan Voiculescu preferred the dances from *Codex Caioni* (four pieces are dances and only one is a song), treating them polyphonicaly (using imitations, variations on a bass and fugato) in a tonal-modal language.

5. Conclusions

The dances in the *Codex Caioni* bear the imprint of the taste and culture of those who transcribed them, since the selective notation used led to the removal of certain stylistic features essential to Romanian folklore (such as ornaments, augmented or diminished intervals, and chromatic modes). For this reason, contemporary composers have often felt the need to reconstruct or reinterpret these lost elements in order to restore the expressive authenticity and original vitality of the repertoire.

In Suite from Codex Caioni for String Orchestra, the melodies from Codex Caioni are not "harmonized" in the sense of a complete harmonic restructuring (as in the case of a modern reharmonization), but are processed so that they may resound in the string orchestra in a fuller and more complex manner, while remaining faithful to the original melodic structure and line. Although the melodies

are taken from Codex Caioni without major alterations, the orchestration for string ensemble introduces a higher level of timbral depth, achieved through layered registers, dialogue between voices, and articulation adapted to a modern ensemble. This highlights both the existence of intonational and stylistic stilemes common to the 17th-century European cultural space and the intercultural connections and borrowings.

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