

## **Revedere/Return by Dan Voiculescu – an exploration of the Romanian folkloric resources**

Laura GREAVU<sup>1</sup>, Roxana PEPELEA<sup>2</sup>

**Abstract:** *Dan Voiculescu is one of the composers that will enrich the musical literature with highly inspirational works, which demonstrates a disposition and investigation of European aesthetic tendencies. He is concerned with expanding the choral repertoire for children and equal voices, managing to enhance it with works that follow the educational-formative purpose of collective singing since school age. He manages to create attractive works for children by expanding the range of choral means of expression concerning the melody, rhythm, harmony, polyphony or form. The choral miniature Revedere/Return is a work of great expressivity in which we find the intimate connection with the popular creation through the exploration of the folkloric modalism and the transfiguration of elements of great antiquity projected in contemporaneity.*

Key-words: *Dan Voiculescu, choral music, modalism, analysis, Revedere/Return.*

### **1. Introduction**

The Romanian musicians will try to express the most intense emotional states without distancing themselves from the popular music, taking advantage of both the popular melos, as well as its rhythmic or modal inflections. About the evolution of the Romanian madrigal, Doru Popovici remarks: “In all these creations we find as common notes the elements of folklore, either presented more directly, or subtly transfigured, as well as a discretion of the expression, an essential characteristic of all native musical art. Another feature of the madrigal is the complexity of ideas and feelings treated, thus refusing to anchor only in the quiet bay of the bucolic climate. The deepest spiritual states and essential problems of the contemporary era were presented not only once convincingly in this important field of our choral art [...]” (Popovici 1966, 336). One of the composers who will contribute to the deepening of this genre is Dan Voiculescu.

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<sup>1</sup> PhD Candidate, Transilvania University of Braşov, [elena.matei@unitbv.ro](mailto:elena.matei@unitbv.ro)

<sup>2</sup> PhD, Transilvania University of Braşov, [r\\_pepelea@unitbv.ro](mailto:r_pepelea@unitbv.ro)

## 2. Poetry in Voiculescu's choral creation

Dan Voiculescu proves to be a fine judge of Romanian poetry through the choices he made. Bianca Țiplea Temeș, in a study of Voiculescu's creation, makes the following observations: "Vocal music – songs and choral music alike – gave the composer a good opportunity to explore Romanian poetry. [...] In the case of choral pieces, his artistic instinct led him towards the poetry of George Bacovia, George Topârceanu, Lucian Blaga, Nina Cassian, Negoită Irimie, Virgil Carianopol, Marin Sorescu, Nichita Stănescu, Mihai Eminescu, Tudor Arghezi, Elena Farago, Vasile Alecsandri, Nicolae Tăutu, Ienăchiță Văcărescu, Șt. O. Iosif, George Coșbuc, Adrian Păunescu, Tristan Tzara, Cezar Ivănescu, and also Wolfgang Goethe" (Țiplea Temeș 2009, 14).

Lyrics of Mihai Eminescu are used by Dan Voiculescu in some works for the mixed choir (*Elegii eminesciene/Eminescu's Elegies*, which includes: *Odă – în metru antic/Ode – in ancient meter*, *Stele-n cer/High o'er the main*, *Peste vâfuri/O'er the woods*, *Replici/Replicas*, *Trecut-au anii/Years Have Trailed Past*, *Glossă/Gloss*, *La steaua/To the star*) and in two choral miniatures for children, which are part of volume II, *Prin timp/Through Time (Revedere/Return, Ce-ți doresc eu ție, dulce Românie/What I Wish You, Sweet Romania Land)*.

## 3. Analysis of folkloric resources used in choral piece *Revedere/Return*

Educated in Cluj-Napoca, as a disciple of Sigismund Toduță, Dan Voiculescu is one of the great personalities who put their mark on the Romanian choral literature, enriching it with works of great beauty and depth. In an article, Bianca Țiplea Temeș characterizes the influence of Toduță over Voiculescu's style, as follows: "Sigismund Toduță was the master who inspired his appreciation of Baroque music, and of an almost geometrical order in musical thinking" (Țiplea Temeș 2009).

The *Revedere* poem is a lyrical creation based on certain folkloric writings collected by Mihai Eminescu, the most important representative of Romanian literary romanticism. It is a poem that combines a series of philosophical ideas, such as the ephemeral life of man in opposition to the eternal nature, the relentless drain of time on man and the admiration for the always young forest, which is equivalent to the Universe.

Of the four lyrical sequences of poetry written in the form of a dialogue, only the first two are found in the choral miniature composed by Voiculescu. Concerning the form, the scheme of this work is:

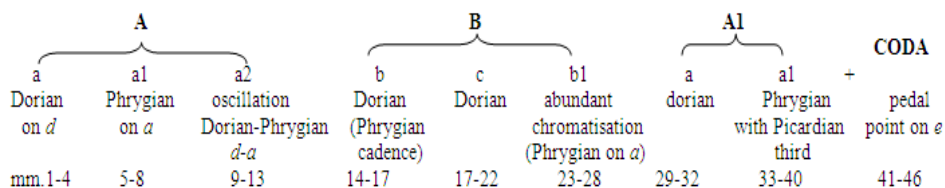


Fig. 1. Musical form of *Revedere/Return*

In the first sequence the protagonist is the lyrical self, who addresses the chorus through the use of diminutives, thus giving off feelings of joy regarding the reunion with an old and dear friend.

Dan Voiculescu uses a modal harmonic-melodic writing to render the atmosphere of this poetry that draws its sap from the Romanian folklore. The work begins in unison, and in the following measure the voices break up and form a minor chord on *d*, which stops meditatively on a half note (Figure 2).

Second verse – *Ce mai faci, drăguțule/Forest dear, how are you?* highlights the modal writing from the first chord. Through the appearance of the *H* note on soprano voice, the speech evolves in the Dorian mode, the note *H* being accentuated also by the major seventh chord of which it is part. This verse presents a downward musical unfolding, equivalent to a response given to the melody of the first verse that went upwards. From a literary point of view, the verse represents a question, and the dissonance found in the last chord of this verse propagates a feeling of anxiety, of tension in waiting for the answer:

Moderato, un poco rubato (♩ = cca 63)

Fig. 2. The first two verses

The following musical phrase is related to the first one, having the same sounds at the soprano in the first two measures, after which a modulation to the Phrygian

mode takes place by using the sound *B*. At the same time, the composer secures this first section stability, given by the rhythm on which the three phrases are built:

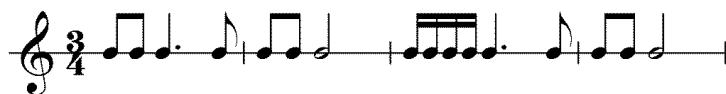


Fig. 3. *Rhythm of the phrases from section A*

The phrase is also divided into two musical motifs of two measures, rhythmically identical, except for the first rhythmic cell of each motif:

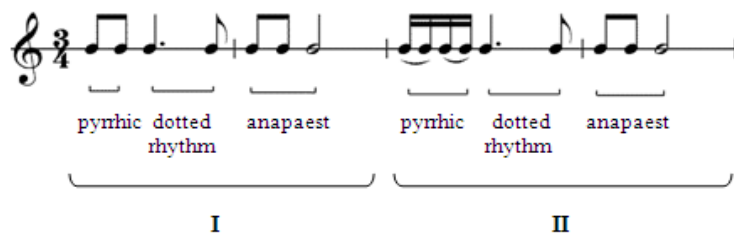


Fig. 4. *Rhythmic imitations in phrases of the first section*

In the second section of the play, which coincides with the transition to the next sequence of poetry, the protagonist is the forest, representing the force of nature in the face of the whims of winter and its threats. At the beginning of this part, the musical development takes the form of an imitative dialogue at a distance of one beat, between the alto and the other two upper voices:

**Poco più mosso**  
*mp cresc.*

14

"Ia eu fac ce fac de mult,

"Ia eu fac ce fac de mult,

"Ia eu fac ce fac de mult,

Fig. 5. *Beginning of section B*

Folk poetry and music share an immutable connection from ancient times. About this relationship, Victor Giuleanu states: “...although they have developed in different ways, music and poetry have kept in common enough elements – duration, accent etc. Taking over the main rhythmic formulas of poetry, music has cultivated and developed them by their own means to a high degree of artistic expression” (Giuleanu 2015, 136). In *Revedere*, the rhythmic organization is based on disyllabic formulas (pyrrhic, trochee) and trisyllabic (anapaest), which can be found throughout the song:

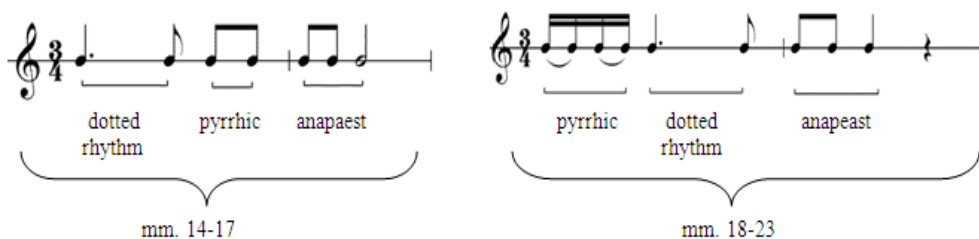


Fig. 6. Characteristic rhythms in section B

The expression term found in measure 14 – *Poco piu mosso* makes the tempo a little faster. We also find the indication *crescendo*, which refers to the increasing of sound intensity. This progressive *gradatio* will culminate with a *climax* on verse: *Troienind cărările/Neath the mounted winter snows*:



Fig. 7. Climax

After this moment, the atmosphere begins to relax. The verse *Și gonind cântările/Ere my singing birds have flown* is sung by the voices I and II alternating with the alto, reducing both the tempo and the intensity (as required by the term *calando*), the composer managing to suggest the removal of the birds and their songs. The musical scale on which this musical fragment is based in:



Fig. 7. Musical scale found in mm. 24-29

In this musical fragment Voiculescu uses a popular mode consisting of more than seven sounds. About these cases, Dan Buciu specifies: "In the songs thought on such scales the chromatic semitone is not used, the two sounds altered differently on a step, always appearing separated by one or more intermediate sounds" (Buciu 2013, 21).

The musical unity of the work is also achieved through the fact that the first eight measures in the last section are similar to those at the beginning of the piece. The only difference is the chord at the end of the eight measures, which is with the Picardy third, which will also be included in the basic chord of the following four measures.

Regarding the form of this piece, the musicologist Elena Maria Șorban makes the following remarks: "*Return* by Dan Voiculescu adopts the development of A B Av, corresponding to 6+6+4 verses, in which the reprise reflects the temporal nuance «*Multă vreme au trecut*»/«*Many, many years have passed*», respectively, «*Și mai fac ce fac de mult*»/«*Done as I have always done*», the variation of the reprise restructures the dimensions, by reverberating the verse «*Ce le-am dat-o tuturor*»/«*That I shared with everyone*<sup>3</sup>», emphasizing the semantic content of the finale."

Three staves of music in 3/4 time, each with a melody and lyrics underneath. The lyrics are: "Pe că-ra-rea spre iz-vor Ce le-am da - t-o tu - tu - ror, tu - tu - ror, tu - tu - ror, tu - tu - ror, tu - tu - ror, tu - tu - ror..." The music features dynamics of *pp* and accents (>).

Fig. 8. Echo of the word everyone

<sup>3</sup> Even though for the article I used poetry lyrics in the English version conceived by Corneliu Popescu, considered the best translator of Eminescu, for this verse I chose my own translation, because the meaning of the word *everyone* is important for the musical structure of the song, but he is missing from Popescu's verse, even if he kept the same sense.

The last six measures have a melancholy tint. The unison of the first voice is used as a form of expression to suggest the permanence of the forest opposed to the impermanence of man. The second voice uses the diminutive *codruțule/forest dear*, demonstrating the friendship and affection of the lyrical self towards the forest.

#### 4. Conclusions

Regarding the feelings that he wants to convey in his compositions, Dan Voiculescu stated in an interview given to the soprano Mirela Zafiri: “Depending on the work, the message emerges from the thematic spectrum approached, falling into the aesthetic categories, from lyrical to dramatic, from the comic to the tragic. Even in works without transparent text these content elements. Otherwise, I want to thank my peers and followers, calling them to be better” (Zafiri 2010).

The stylistic features that could describe this choral creation are:

- the intimate connection with the popular creation and the transfiguration of elements of great antiquity and authentic writing, which they design in contemporary times. About this, musicologist Bianca Țiplea Temeș stated: “Dan Voiculescu reactivates old patterns through a modern harmonic language. The bivalence of his discourse converges to a semantic plenitude that advocates the complex fusion of discursive levels as a viable solution in contemporary creation” (Țiplea Temeș 2010, 127);
- application of polyphonic writing (contrapuntal, imitative); About this aspect, Dan Voiculescu states: “Great resources of the contemporary choral language is given by polyphony – a precious way to complicate the musical discourse. The dialogue, the commentary, the broadening, the deepening, the overlapping of actions and others should not be conceived outside the classical arsenal of the imitative and contrapuntal writing” (Voiculescu 1982, 3);
- exploring the popular modalities, by approaching popular modes with or without mobile steps;
- choosing a poem belonging to the greatest Romanian poet, characterized by trochaic rhythm and short lyrics, reminiscent of the popular *doina*;
- classical form balance that does not exclude the free form balance of clear popular inspiration;
- the unity of the work performed at the melodic and rhythmic level.

In an essay, Mirela Zafiri characterizes Voiculescu’s style, as follows: “from the modal melodic line and the polyphonic pianistic writing, very aerated, to the complex, expressive harmonies, in a chromatic style that shakes the classical tonal balance, we can see the polyphonist raised to Sigismund Toduță’s school” (Zafiri

2010). The composer's contribution to the Romanian choral universe, as well as the qualities of this exponent of the Cluj music school are undeniable, and this legacy represents a reaffirmation of the Romanian music within the universal one.

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