The exceptions in the rhythm of children's folklore in the Serbian part of Banat

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Abstract: *Children's folklore is a living folk category that persists despite the various influences that shape it daily. The importance of studying this folk genre in the Serbian part of Banat seemed to us all the more necessary as it has the aptitude of characterizing one of the most interesting ethnomusicological issues. Furthermore, it is closely connected to child psychology, as well as pre-school education for children. By means of the total number of collected musical examples (192), as well as musical and non-musical factors, the author tries to prove that all these are closely related, correlated and connected imperceptibly, from the psychological, verbal, textual and rhythmic point of view. The ways and means of using the child to dominate his age group by utilising the secret of counting, influenced by the last syllable / verse, occurs when the child "sacrifices" and emphasises certain word.*

Keywords: *children's folklore, children's rhythm, non-musical factors, exceptions*

1. Introduction

Children's folklore is a living folk category that persists despite the various influences that shape it daily, the influences which change it and modernize its content. The importance of studying this folk genre in the Serbian part of Banat in the period from May 1999 to January 2012, seemed to us all the more necessary as it has the aptitude of characterizing and recording one of the most interesting ethnomusicological issues. Furthermore, it is closely connected to child psychology, as well as pre-school education for children. Children's folklore is preparing the pre-school children to learn in the most natural, free and relaxed manner, within a group of peers.

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2. Material and methods

A study titled "Typology of Romanian children's folklore in the Serbian part of Banat. Rhymes" (Planjanin Simić 2016) is a result of research conducted during the last decades of the twentieth and in early twenty-first century, performed in several stages in 12 settlements[3] in the Serbian part of Banat. This area, together with other parts of Vojvodina, represents a spacious crossroads between Europe and the Middle East. Thus, due to many migrations and colonisations, this territory exemplifies a fruitful mixture of diverse cultures and nations (Karin 2012, 55).

The entire collected, recorded and analysed musical-folkloric material is founded on the personal ethnomusicological fieldwork in the period between 25th May 1999 and 16th January 2012. In the course of that research, the majority of examples were obtained from Romanian ethnic group, i.e. performed mainly in the Romanian language, while there are also samples recorded in the Serbian language, which make an equally relevant repertoire of the studied region. Musical samples which represent a part of the collected material of the mentioned study will be presented in this paper.

Several scientific methods were applied in the process of collecting of musical-folkloric material:

- the method of direct observation,
- comparative method,
- interviews and
- experimental method.

The main criteria for classification the ethnomusicological material was: the purpose of children's songs, their function, thematic contents, and analysis of musical structures of certain folkloric sub-categories of children's folklore. In that sense, there is a distinction between songs that adults dedicated to children, i.e. folklore for children (for instance, lullabies and songs for playing with children), and children's folklore, which comprises of songs that children sing themselves, (re)creating them at the same time.

3. Results and discussion

In many European countries, including Serbia, there is no uniform classification system for vocal musical tradition. Based on the recorded and analysed samples, as

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[3] Ethnomusicological research was conducted in the following settlements: Uzdin , Kuštilj, Vojvodinci, Mesić, Jablanka, Pančevo, Dolovo, Banatsko Novo Selo, Zrenjanin, Sočica, Torak and Markovac.

well as the models established by researchers who already addressed this topic (Fracile 1989, 522), the musical material was structured into the following sub-categories: *rhymes*, *formulaic songs*, i.e. children's songs dedicated to different birds or animals, and *songs that follow certain children's games*, which have the shape of "kolo" (circles) in two opposed lines or which are performed with particular hand and leg movements.

Considering the recorded samples during the research in the mentioned folkloric zone, the *songs that follow certain children's games* have been further divided into the following sub-categories, based on the form of the games:

- Songs following "kolo" (circle) dance
- Songs following "hand" games
- Songs following other games:

(1) Ball games with singing

(2) Gate, bridge or passage type of games

(3) Games performed in two opposed lines.

A separate category is defined for songs of various themes. [4]

Our intention is to highlight the new information from the latest field research and the obtained results, as well as the fact that this paper does not only indicate the poetic-melodic elements specific to the Romanian folklore in the Serbian part of Banat but also the exceptions in using the children's rhythm.

An indispensable element in children's folklore is the rhythm. In the history of music, the rhythm was defined in different ways. Hence, Plato defines rhythm as an "order of motion," and Vincent d'Indy writes: "Rhythm is order and enunciation in space and time." However, all the considerations of rhythm cannot be abstracted from the psychophysiological phenomenon. Constantin Brăiloiu defines the rhythmic system as "a coherent ensemble of artistic processes dominated by intelligible laws", or "a definite set of procedures"(Cristescu 1992, 203-210).This paper will focus on the children's rhythm, which does not mean that there are no other rhythms in children's folklore: dance, aksak, western, etc.

According to the famous musicologist Constantin Brăiloiu: "The concrete characteristics of children's rhythm are so stressed and obvious that we immediately recognize them. Whether they are the children of my Parisian goalkeeper, Serbian boys or Italian hooligans who recite on the street ... I can identify them as soon as the children utter a sound. It lives in our Western European subconscious as the only vestige of a millenary heritage... It is a form of

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[4] Their functions are different, they do not belong to any of the previously stated categories and for some of these songs, the real purpose can only be speculated. Due to the lack of similar examples and the appropriate terminology for classification, it was necessary to name this sub-group "songs of various themes".

"primitive" art that is based on a number of principles of great simplicity, but exploited to the limit of possibilities. It is very frequently encountered, despite the diversity of spoken words (Brăiloiu 1967, 128). "In the kinesteal (body) execution, "a specific rhythmic structure emerges from a muscular rhythmicity required by the respective childish manifestations and impelled by interconditioning with vocal execution" (Sulițeanu 1988, 211-227). The children's rhythm is vocal, but it does not necessarily imply music: it exists apart from any melody. The rhythmic device is predetermined and words are adjusted in numerous and varied ways. Duration is not influenced by syllables. Their length has no justification other than the place they occupy. The basic beat is the optimum. "The children's rhythm is based on a small number of principles of great simplicity, but exploited to the maximum of possibilities and, moreover, constantly covered by the resources of variation (here almost unlimited) (Brăiloiu 1967, 128). Because of the importance of this study and of Brăiloiu's conclusions[5], we will briefly review the principles of the system, as well as the exceptions encountered during this research. These principles can be formulated as follows (Brăiloiu 1967, 128):

  I. Durations (in principle, syllables) linked 2 by 2, consist of variable length series; their rhythm is, thus, binary. Instead of disyllabic groups, there may be trisyllabic groups, which are less common and are rarely found in the folkloric subcategory of the song-formula as in the examples: songs that follow certain children's games.

  II. The whole series, like every pair of syllables they contain, begin with a thesis which, in the Germanic languages, coincides with the word stress; the licenses referring to the replacement of the metric stress with the "tonic" emphasis remain valid for the Romance languages.

An interesting thing about children's creation is that the word stress coincides with the metric stress of the rhythm. Only this principle is not respected in all cases. There are exceptions, which we will describe in a series of examples. This statement contradicts those of the above-mentioned authors, such as Gheorghe Oprea, who states that in children's counting rhymes, "the word stress coincides with the metric emphasis of the rhythm; this principle is respected in all cases" (Oprea and Agapie 1983, 215). Exceptions to the rule always occur in the last verse / last syllable of counting, when the child reaches a crucial moment and syllabic manipulation, that is to say, the count is restored by the one who counts in his favour. In this way, even the emphasis of a certain word in the last verse of the counting is "scarified". The ways and means the child uses to dominate his age group using the **secret of counting**, by influencing the last syllable / verse, occurs

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[5] Which are explained and described in detail in the book by Comișel. E. 1982. *Folclorul copiilor. Studiu și antologie,* Bucureşti : Ed. Muzicală, p. 40.

when the child "sacrifices" the stress of certain words, especially **in the last verse**. Here are just a few examples that illustrate this (examples gathered from the children of the Serbian part of Banat):

Thus, in the examples 35 and 42, in the last verse, the word stress in "**tră-bă**" (should) have been moved from the first syllable to the second syllable or in other words, from the beginning of the word to the end of it:
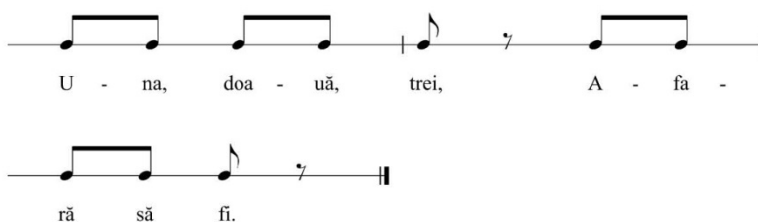
Ex. 35

Ex. 42

Similar situation occurs in the example with the word A-FA-RĂ, where the stress is moved from the last verse. Namely, the stress is moved on the first and last syllables instead of falling onto the middle syllable. In the following examples, we will show this phenomenon as it appears in the gathered rhymes (examples 37-38, 19, 64, 33 and 36).

Ex. 37

Ex. 38

U   -   na,   doa   -   uă,   trei,   A   -   fa   -

ră   să   fi.

Ex. 19

Oa– uă   l'e,   u - nu,   doi,   trei,   a - fa - ră   să   fi.

Ex. 64

A   -   fa   -   ră   -   să   fi.

Ex. 33 and Ex. 36

Similarly, in the example 11, the word stress in A-ME-RI-CA shifted from the second syllable to the third, and one more stress was added, namely the stress on the first syllable of this word:

E - lem,   be - lem,   buf,   A - me - ri - ca   truf.

Ex. 11

III. The over-all duration of the series, which we are most interested in, can be measured by means of a so-called prime unit, which is sometimes expressed, and sometimes implied, and which equals a normal short syllable. It will be presented by eighths: multiples within this eighth create the counting of the total defining series: they are worth 4, 6, or 8 etc., whatever the real number of the series they enclose.

IV.   The unequal series (heterochronous) is sometimes mixed, and it may happen that even series with a distinct internal structure (heteromorphs), either isochronous or heterochronous, are aligned as true "rhythmic stanzas."

V.   Any series may be preceded by an anacrusis, but only at the beginning of a musical composition is it allowed to add a supernumerary duration to the initial series. When done so, in this position, it seems to be taken from the previous pause.

As musicologist Constantin Brailoiu pointed out in his study of the rhythm of children's music: children's folklore uses only three durations: the eighth, the sixteenth and the fourth. These units are grouped into varied, binary or ternary cells. According to Constantin Brăiloiu, these are "types of rhythmic series" (Brăiloiu, 1967, 131-168).

In this research, we rarely encounter rhythmic groups of sixteenths in the documented examples:

I   -   li - loc, cioc.

Ex. 29

Când oi da cu puş-ca–n ti - ne   sări cu__ coa- da - n   sus___

Ex. 178

The rhythmic strokes of children's folklore are constructed from equal verses as a number of syllables (isometric) or unequal (heterometric), of equal (isomorphic) or uneven (heteromorphic) series of identical or isocratic structure (heterocrone) (Oprea and Agapie 1983, 82).

The most common of all and the one in which the system features appear with the utmost clarity is the series that lasts as long as eights, or 8 normal syllables. An "octosilab" one might say; would still be a hasty conclusion: 6 or 4 syllables are sufficient to fill the frame of the verse, provided that their duration in chanting or singing compensates for the sum of the 8 short ones" (Brăiloiu 1967,129).

There are also rhythmic schemes longer than the above mentioned, i.e. consisting of 10 and 12 eights. In her study, Emilia Comisel remarked: "During singing, the child often shakes or omits the last syllables of the text, thus creating longer, rather than frequent, scheme rhymes of 10 and 12 eights" (Comișel 1982, 44).

The following examples show how children shake syllables and how 8 eights rhythmic schemes become 10 and 12 eights schemes. Our intent is to prove not only the existence of this "curious phenomenon" (the children's omission), but to demonstrate why these shortcomings arise. Due to the fact that it directly influences the rhythm of the counting, we consider that it is important to mention them. The word stress coincides with the metric accent of the rhythm. Exceptions to the rule always occur in the last verse / last syllable of the counting, when the counting child reaches the crucial moment and the syllabic manipulation, that is to say, the count is restored by the one who counts. In this way, even the stress of a certain word in the last verse of the counting is "sacrificed". The secret of the counting is in the consciousness of manipulation and the opportunity to manipulate - when one is given the opportunity to "modify" and to know one's turn, depending on the number of children.

When it comes to interpreting the counting, one has to take this opportunity to rescue oneself. In order to achieve this, the child can use different skills: selection, textual adaptation, persuasiveness, syllabus, precision, slow interpretation of the last verse of the counting, use of mathematics, logic, intelligence, ability to count in adapting to others and their variable number in that almost magical prefix and in the "manipulation" of the last imperceptible syllable, but which is in their favour. Just as in real life, children recognize the right opportunity and time.

The so-called non-musical factors (Planjanin Simić, 2016) that accompany the counting are constant and directly influence the latter aspect. They establish a direct causality with the collected counting's. The mentioned non-musical factors are:

A. Emotional motivation – meaning the state dominating all the children during the counting, depending on the „roles" they are attributed, as well as on the psychical domination within the specific age group.

B. Age / time instances related to the child's age, and the time for mastering the counting's. These are:
   1) memorizing a counting heard while socializing with other children,
   2) enhancing the counting's inventory and discovering „counting's' secret",
   3) using the mentioned secret and practicing manipulation by means of the last syllable,

4) using the mentioned secret while adjusting the last verse of the selected counting, using one of the following tricks: recomposing (for one own's advantage) the last verse or the last word / syllable, depending of the actual context and depending on the number of participants and their age – as mentioned in this paper.

5) using countings as a dialogue, which gives the child upon whom the counting ended the opportunity to rescue himself or herself, on the basis of the given answer. All of the five mustered modes are just a few of the solutions used by children, as observed during research.

C. textual intelligibility and phonetic conveyance (counting adaptation, respectively), depending on: 1. creativity and age, the capacity to „translate" certain strange words, during counting; 2. the overall assimilated vocabulary;

D. the „age" of the counting. Textual intelligibility is related to time origin of the counting. This may be observed in word transformations through time. Frequent usage of a certain counting leads to it's (re)interpretation. This suggests a direct link and indicates the development from an intelligible counting to a partially intelligible counting and to an unintelligible counting.

Using the **secret of countings** and, at the same time, adjusting the last verse of the count can be achieved in one of the following ways: by means of reconstructing the last verse of the count or the last word / syllable in accordance with the needs at a given moment.

It all relates to the number of counters and their age:

1. moving the word stress by "tailoring", i.e. adjusting the count to the child's own advantage (which has been demonstrated in the examples)

2. the vocal separation of the word, i.e. the gaining of additional accents

3. adding, that is, extending a certain number of syllables or words to the end of the counting (Planjanin Simić 2016, 191-204).

4. expanding the counting by: adding an integral verse or several verses at the end of the current counting, i.e. combining two shorter countings (Planjanin Simić, 2016).

5. shortening of a certain counting at the time of interpretation (if possible) in order to obtain the desired result, namely to "remove a specific child from the counting" according to the wish of the child who counts.

6. the use of countings in the form of a dialogue, which gives the child uttering the last syllable the opportunity to "save himself or herself" on the basis of the response given at the time of execution.

This paper has merely offered a few solutions which does not imply that there are no others. Children adapt the count, the last verse, or the last syllable,

according to the number of children participating in the counting, according to their age (whom they will exclude form the counting - whom they will deceive) etc.

Each individual count is merely the result of the child's counting desire.

The example "Green leaf of sorrel flower" (Ex. 189) has a very interesting form and is a true rarity. The first syllable of the last word of the verses seems (2, 4, 6) to be the first syllable of the first word of the next departed verse, at the same time. Only by uttering the first syllable of the last word the child can avoid mentioning "the license" word. By incomplete utterance of that word which is not expressed, its true meaning is concealed with the word that follows from the next verse, which means that the following word is not inappropriate. That "new" word is actually the beginning of a new thought, that is, a new poetic image.

Likewise, another example where a lot of ligature is used is "Mickey Mouse is playing football" (Ex. 145), where the phenomenon of counterpoint of the rhythm (rhythm is counterpointed) between the chanted content and the hand movement, the rhythm is a pulse that the girls interpret by moving their hands.

Ex. 145

The exceptions mentioned have shown that: "The rigorous symmetry that reigns here proves that this system originates, if not in dance itself, than at least in a regular movement with which it is related" (Brăiloiu 1967, 179). The researcher Ghizela Sulițeanu explained the adaptation of the different languages to the children's rhythmic system "through the transition of the rhythmic stress determined by the movement" (Sulițeanu 1988, 224).

4. Conclusion

An indispensable element in children's folklore is the rhythm. In children's creation, the word stress coincides with the metric accent of the rhythm (Oprea, 1983, 215), but this principle is not respected in all cases. The textual extensions that come from the desire for psychological influence inside the age group also influence the rhythm at the end of the counting at the moment of interpretation. In addition to the aforementioned, we have noted other phenomena: by using the legato we can move the stress. Exceptions to the rule always occur in the last verse / last syllable of the counting, when the counting child reaches a crucial moment and syllabic manipulation, that is to say, the count is restored by the one who counts in his favour.

This paper has proven that the content and the existence of the children's folklore, as well as the countings, may seem evident to adults. But the true significance of children's folklore can be hidden; the value of children's daily interpretation cannot be compared to any other human activity in the later period in life. All the elements, as well as the factors that accompany children's creations, influence the psychophysical, intellectual and emotional development of the child, as well as his/her intelligence. A more comprehensive study of the folklore of the Banat area is yet to come and the conclusions presented in this paper show merely some research results. In the unity of various musical forms of expression, through a comparative analysis of the present forms of musical folklore in Banat, we could determine the changes in the process of interaction of the contemporary and traditional (Karin, 2012, 56).

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