

The typology of modal systems in the vocal genres of the Romanian folklore Diachronic and synchronic approaches (Researcher's plan)

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Abstract: *In an era of globalization, where barriers of all kinds (ethnical, social, economic, but also cultural and even linguistic) have been overcome, it is important to rediscover folklore, which has become almost extinct from its “natural habitat”, surviving only in books, folklore collections, cultural histories, in television and radio programmes, or in the concert hall, which is not its environment.*

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In an era of globalization, where barriers of all kinds (ethnical, social, economic, but also cultural and even linguistic) have been overcome, it is important to rediscover folklore, which has become almost extinct from its “natural habitat”, surviving only in books, folklore collections, cultural histories, in television and radio programmes, or in the concert hall, which is not its environment.

The modal system (specific for the Romanian folklore and for the psalmic music of Byzantine origin) allows us to tap into a valuable tradition “*on the basis of which the voice of Romanian culture can be heard in a world concert which could easily dim or neutralize this unique voice, drowning it in a sonorous mass, often amorphous*” (Buciu 2013, 10).

The theoretical background for the modal system of the Romanian folklore has been sketched starting from the end of the 19th c. and the beginning of the 20th c., following the model and theoretical synthesis of the modes of the Western church culture. Thus, as also noticed by the musicologist C-tin Rîpă about the Romanian music, “...the dominant modal background is made up of small oligochordic and pentatonic structures” and “...the essence of the system is represented by small units, limited scales of bi-, tri-, tetra- and penta-chords or tones”. On the other hand,

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it has been agreed that our traditional music is built on six diatonic eight-interval modes: Ionic (DO-DO), Doric (RE-RE), Phrygian (MI-MI), Lydian (FA-FA), Mixolydian (SOL-SOL), Aeolian (LA-LA), and later on the Locrian (SI-SI).

This modal theory is not in accordance with the social and cultural reality of our country because for centuries there have been church schools teaching the theory of the Byzantine mode (Octoih), different (and more diverse) than the Gregorian one of Western origin. The likely explanation is that very many Romanian musicians, who trained at Western schools at the half of the 19th c., adopted Glareanus' theory and, after their return to the country, they applied it to traditional Romanian music.

Thus, we have both a quantitative and a qualitative inventory of musical scales (or sonorous structures, as they were called by the musicologist Gheorghe Oprea) of Romanian folklore starting with the oligochordic and up to the ones that exceed the eight chord music. From this point of view, the musicologist Traian Mîrza stated the following: "...in the Romanian folklore we can find ... seven chord structures of pentatonic origin (by filling in the empty intervals), or pre-modal structures (by gradually amplifying or superposing tetrachords), or acoustic structures, modes with mixed features, others chromatic, clear structures next to some which are more difficult to define."(Buciu, 2013, 17)

These limited scales are not present today only in their archaic forms, but they acquire new forms, as a result of the evolution of music by adding new diatonic or chromatic scales. The most important gain seems to be the semitone, interval which did not exist in the above mentioned structures. Consequently, hemitonic bi-, tri-, tetra-, and pentachords emerged, by adding a new sound (polar attraction):



Fig. 1. *Polar attraction*

by filling in the empty intervals in bi-, tri-, and tetratones:

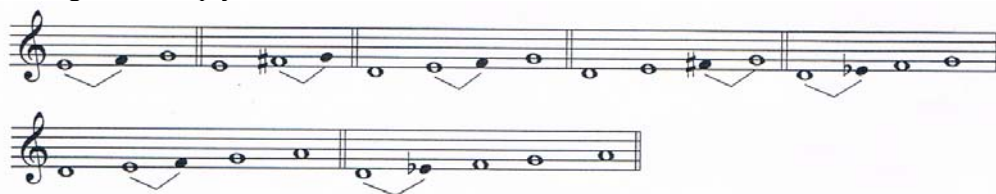


Fig. 2. *Filling in the empty intervals*

This is the way chromatic tetra- and pentachords emerged:



Fig.3. *Chromatic*

Or hemitonic three and five sounds systems:



Fig.4. *Sound systems*

We will notice how eight tones and pentatones represent the nucleus of larger scales, hexachords, hexatonies or heptatonies by oligochordic transpositions or superposition or by occurring against an oligochordic or pentatonic background. There are also stand-alone heptachordic scales, without deriving from the above mentioned sources, but they are either less frequent or have suffered the influence of the 19th-20th c. cult music (for example, the Ionic with a rhythm on the first or the sixth interval – Aeolian rhythm). (Comișel, 1986)

Designed from the point of view of an instrumentalist, interpreter, teacher and conductor of a traditional music orchestra, the present paper aims to provide very useful material for all those who wish to study Romanian traditional music. Folkloric sonorous systems represent a very complex, but difficult, topic which entails going through a large number of previous contributions in this field. The research in the field of Romanian ethnomusicology revealed the existence of modes in different categories or areas, without offering a unitary vision or specifying the proportion of certain sonorous structures in the Romanian material.

My intention is to provide a synthesis of the topic and to perform a typological classification of the sonorous structures identified in the Romanian folklore. The notion of sonorous system was explained by Prof. Gheorghe Oprea, who conducted the first study on this topic. (Oprea, 1983)

My doctoral research is entitled: “The typology of modal systems in the vocal genres of the Romanian folklore” – systems approached from both a diachronic and a synchronic perspective will be structured as follows:

I. Introduction.

II. Diachronic presentation of modal systems. This chapter will include several subchapters which will deal with the modal systems in Romanian traditional music, which will be briefly overviewed in this project as well.

II.1. Oligochordic systems which are: monochord, bichord and bi-tone, trichord and tri-tone, tetrachord and tetra-tone. As their names suggest, modal

systems can be divided into the ones containing the element “tone” (formed of adjoining intervals and intervallic leaps) and the ones containing the element “chord” (formed only of adjoining intervals). This last observation is also valid for the modal systems presented in the following chapters. The oligochordic systems are most frequent in children’s folklore.

II.2. Pentatonic and pentachordic systems, next to hexaphones, represent the basic mode of carols, which we find in ceremonial songs, lamentations, lullabies, lyrical songs. The diatonic scale types of the pentachord are: a) Ionic-Mixolydian, b) Doric Aeolian, c) Phrygian, d) Lydian, and e) Locrian. By turning a tone in an augmented second, the chromatic pentachords were created, richly represented in our folklore and then extended to chromatic hexa and heptachords: a-chromatic pentachord 1; b-chromatic 2, c-chromatic 3, d-chromatic 4, after the chromatic heptachords in question. The pentatone is of two types: anhemitonic (sonorous structure including five sounds-augmented seconds and a small tierce structure), and hemitonic (tones, semitones and big tierces). (Comișel, 1967)

II.3. Hexaphonic systems (hexachords, hexatonies). They can be subdivided into two main categories: 1. Hexachordic modes. 2. Hexatonic modes, also called defective heptachords. The material under investigation showed, beyond any doubt, that hexaphonic modes are the richest and most diverse in our folklore. The hexachordic modes namely the six consecutive seconds scale (so without the seventh interval); can be divided into three major categories: 1. Hexachords which by comparison with natural heptachordic modes have an ambiguous nature (the lack of the specific interval). 2. Hexachords which do not have an ambiguous nature as compared to natural heptachords. 3. Hexachords which are not ambiguous in comparison with natural heptachords, but they are ambiguous compared to acoustic modes. In addition to hexachords, hexatonies or defective heptachordic modes are also very frequent and much more varied in our folklore.

II.4. Heptachordic systems (natural, acoustic and chromatic modes). They represent the natural evolution and development of the modal categories under investigation in this paper. I would like to emphasize again the oligochordic, pre-pentatonic or pentatonic substrate of many pieces of traditional music. There are also melodies on a standalone heptachordic scale, which are part of the newer layer of folklore. We could state that at present the pentatonic and even the oligochordic or pre-pentatonic systems co-exist with the heptachordic modal system in the Romanian traditional music. I would also like to add the fact that the diatonic eight tone scales suggested in the traditional theory are purely conventional, the modal ambitus being that proposed by the melody in question.

The diatonic modes traditional in the Romanian folklore are the following: Ionic, Lydian, Mixolydian – major modes, and Doric, Phrygian, Aeolian, Locrian – minor modes. Each of them has its own characteristic interval. The acoustic modes are: acoustic 1 (Lydian-Mixolydian), acoustic 2 (major melodic), acoustic 3 (istic), acoustic 4 (Phrygian with a descended 6th interval), acoustic 5 (minor melodic),

acoustic 6 (Doric with a descended 2nd interval) and acoustic 7 (acoustic1 with an elevated 5th interval). The chromatic modes are the following: chromatic1 with an augmented second between intervals 3-4, chromatic 2 with an augmented second between intervals 2-3, chromatic 3 with an augmented second between intervals 1-2, chromatic 4 with an augmented second between intervals 5-6 and a flat five interval 1-5, chromatic 5 with an augmented second between intervals 6-5 with two small consecutive seconds (2-3 and 3-4), chromatic6 with an augmented second between intervals 6-5.

In what follows, I will present several examples of analysis of certain folkloric compositions (this short presentation will only include a random selection of some of them).

The hemitonic mode I – also called the Bihor scale FA-SOL-SI-DO-RE:



Fig.5. *Hemitonic mode I*

Hexachordie Ionic-Mixolydian:

B. Bartok:
"Căntece populare românești
din comitatul Bihor", nr 53

Fig.6. *Hexachordie Ionic-Mixolydian*

The Ionic mode:

Colind

G Breazul
"Colinde", pag.133

Le - roi leo lci in ceas - tor cur - ti lci in ceas - tor
cur - ti Le - roi - leo Si_n ceas - tor dom - nii Le - roi - lea
Si_n ceas - tor dom - nii

Fig.7. *Colind*

III. The model systems encountered in vocal folkloric genres. **III.1.** Repertoire for children **III.2.** Wedding repertoire **III.3.** Funeral repertoire **III.4.** The repertoire of winter traditions **III.5.** The repertoire of spring-summer traditions **III.6.** Ballads **III.7.** Lyrical songs **III.8.** The song itself. In this chapter (and the ones previously enumerated), I will present the modal systems encountered in each subchapter using examples from already existing folklore collections and from my personal material. **IV.** Principles of modal harmonization in traditional music. **IV.1.** Modal rhythms **IV.2.** From accompaniment to heterophony in traditional music **IV.3.** Formal elements specific of modal music (Drăgoi, 1931).

In the last chapter, “V. Harmonization in the modal style”, I intent to discuss the main techniques of modal composition I usually employ in harmonizing the pieces I interpret with a small folk music ensemble, and to present a few examples of such harmonization, analysed from the point of view of the sonorous systems.

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