

## Innovative style and construction elements in the creation of folklorist Sabin Vasile Drăgoi. *Divertisment rustic* – Carol 1: *Oh, what wonderful news!*

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**Abstract:** *Sabin Vasile Drăgoi, a composer, folklorist and leading Romanian pedagogue, is recognized for his essential contributions to the development of Romanian music, especially through the valorization of folk traditions. He was a prominent representative of the musical nationalist movement of the first half of the 20th century, marking an important stage in the synthesis between traditional elements and those of European musical modernity. The “Divertisment rustic”, entertainment composed in 1928 reflects his constant concern for the valorization of traditional Romanian music, based on folklore elements that he integrated into his classical musical language. The style of the work is full of vitality, and the folk motifs are reinterpreted in a refined and modern manner. Through the way he uses folklore elements – modal melodies, asymmetrical rhythms, tonal harmonies with modal influences – Drăgoi creates a bridge between tradition and modernity, offering an accessible yet profound work.*

Key-words: *folklore, analysis, particularities, harmony, forms*

### 1. Introduction

Sabin V. Drăgoi, a composer, folklorist and leading Romanian pedagogue, is recognized for his essential contributions to the development of Romanian music, especially through the valorization of folk traditions. He was a prominent representative of the musical nationalist movement of the first half of the 20th century, marking an important stage in the synthesis between traditional elements and those of European musical modernity. Sabin V. Drăgoi, a composer, folklorist and leading Romanian pedagogue, is recognized for his essential contributions to the development of Romanian music, especially through the valorization of folk

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traditions. He was a prominent representative of the national musical trend of the first half of the 20th century, marking an important stage in the synthesis between traditional elements and those of European musical modernity. His compositional style is, first of all, remarkable for the way in which he integrated folk elements into symphonic, choral and chamber music. In this regard, Drăgoi continued the line opened by George Enescu, but developed a personal approach, in which folk motifs and rhythms are elaborated in complex musical forms, respecting their essence, but transforming them into a modern aesthetic context. In addition to symphonic works, choral compositions occupy an important place in his work. The Suite on Romanian Folk Themes is an eloquent example of adapting traditional songs into a cultured structure. In this suite, Drăgoi demonstrated an ability to maintain the melodic and rhythmic authenticity of folklore, while adapting it for choirs and orchestral ensembles in an innovative way. His compositional style is distinguished by the use of modal structures, specific to Romanian folklore, combined with neo-Romantic harmonies and sophisticated contrapuntal techniques. Drăgoi was aware of the expressive potential of folkloric material and transposed it into musical contexts that respected the standards of European cult music, without compromising its origins. His work as a folklore collector was as significant as his work as a composer. Drăgoi traveled extensively through different regions of Romania, documenting folk songs, carols, and traditional dances. This activity contributed to the preservation of musical forms that, at that time, were threatened with extinction due to the rapid urbanization and modernization of Romanian society. His folklore collections were used not only by him in his own creation, but also by other composers and researchers interested in valorizing national traditions. Through this work, Drăgoi provided an invaluable source for the study of Romanian traditional music, contributing to the development of ethnomusicology in Romania.

## 2. Objectives

Sabin V. Drăgoi, composed *Divertissementul rustic* in 1928. This work reflects his constant concern for the valorization of traditional Romanian music, based on folklore elements that he integrated into his classical musical language. The style of the work is full of vitality, and the folk motifs are reinterpreted in a refined and modern manner. The *Divertissement Rustic* is a musical composition representative of the way in which Drăgoi managed to combine Romanian rural traditions with Western classical musical techniques and forms, thus unifying the two sound worlds into an accessible and enjoyable composition for a wide audience. As we will see below, a musical analysis of *Divertissement rusticum* involves exploring the

formal, harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic aspects of the work, taking into account the folkloric influences and compositional techniques used. This piece reflects one of Drăgoi's major concerns, namely the integration of Romanian folk music into a classical musical language. His work represents a point of reference for those seeking to understand the synthesis between modernity and tradition, offering a model for integrating national heritage into contemporary artistic expression.

### 3. Material and Methods

The *Divertissement rustic* follows a cyclical or suite form, typical of entertainments of the Classical and Romantic periods. The work is divided into five distinct parts (or movements), each with a distinct atmosphere, but united by recurring folk themes and motifs.

1. **Colindă I** (Carol) *O, ce veste minunată!* – Andante molto e cantabile  
**Colindă II** (Carol) *Sub cel roșu răsărit* – Meno mosso
2. **Doină** – Andante – Allegretto giocoso
3. **Bocet** – Largo
4. **Dans** – Allegretto
5. **Cântec de nuntă** – Adagio quasi una marcia solenne – Allegretto giocoso

The formal structure is clear and well-defined, with moments of contrast between the more lyrical and the more rhythmic sections, typical of folk dances. Drăgoi was an adept at collecting and studying Romanian folk music, and this is evident in *Divertissementul rustic*, where he draws inspiration from traditional melodies and folk dances. The melodic themes are characterized by popular modes, such as Dorian, Mixolydian or Lydian, which are typical of Romanian folklore. Also, the frequent use of ornamentation, through trills or groups of rapid notes, elements that evoke the style of traditional vocal and instrumental interpretation, is observed. Another notable aspect is the use of thematic repetition, a common feature in folk music, which gives the work an immediately recognizable and captivating character. Rhythm is one of the most important elements of the rustic entertainment, borrowing much from the **metric asymmetries** of traditional Romanian dances. Drăgoi uses **mixed measures** and syncopated rhythms, which create an energetic dynamic and rhythmic variety specific to folk games, such as *hora*, *brâul* or *sârba*. This rhythmic variety contributes to the **vigorous and rustic character** of the piece, emphasizing the vital energy of traditional music. The harmonies are generally tonal, but include modalities, based on folk modes, which gives it an authentic Romanian character.

#### 4. Results and Discussions

Drăgoi often uses simple, open chords, characteristic of folk accompaniment, but also subtle modulations, which bring an interesting harmonic color. These harmonies are enriched with overlapping consonant intervals, such as the fifth or fourth, which are prevalent in folk music. The present analytical study will present the Carol *O, ce veste minunată! (Oh, what wonderful news!* from Sabin Drăgoi's *Divertisment rustic*, a piece that exemplifies his innovative approach in processing Romanian folkloric material, and will also present in detail all five songs that constitute *Divertisment rustic*. Carol I *O, ce veste minunată! (Oh, what wonderful news!* from Sabin Drăgoi's *Divertisment rustic* is a piece that exemplifies his innovative approach to processing Romanian folk material. This work highlights the composer's talent for transposing the simplicity and depth of traditional Romanian melodies into an academic musical framework, preserving the expressive authenticity of the folk sources, but giving them a new aesthetic and technical dimension. The present analysis will explore the melodic, harmonic, rhythmic and timbral structure of the carol, highlighting the techniques of processing and incorporating folkloric elements into the cult musical discourse. The melody of Colinda is built on a traditional Romanian carol theme, characterized by simplicity and deep lyricism. Drăgoi uses a melodic line with an archaic outline, in which small intervals (seconds and thirds) suggest a sense of peace and intimacy, reminiscent of the way carols are traditionally performed. The main melody is easily recognizable, having a narrative character that evokes the festive atmosphere specific to Romanian carols. It is conceived in a periodic phrase, with four-bar sections, typical of simple folk forms, and Drăgoi repeats and subtly develops it, maintaining a cyclical structure.

Drăgoi also capitalizes on traditional intervals and modes – especially the Dorian and Mixolydian modes, which are frequently found in Romanian folk music. This gives the melody a specific archaic and authentic character, inviting the listener into a musical experience that preserves the traditional spirit. The harmony used by Drăgoi in this carol is neo-romantic, but nuanced by modal influences, which adds depth and a touch of mystery to the sonic atmosphere. Although he uses a modern harmonic palette, he maintains the characteristic simplicity of carols, with slow harmonic passages, avoiding excessive loading of the texture. In the same context of developing a harmonic path with maximum inspiration, the author uses consonant harmonies and light dissonances, maintaining the balance between traditional and modern. In some passages, the harmony supports and intensifies the melodic expressiveness, and in others he lets it dominate, giving the carol an almost monodic structure. This variation of the harmony creates a feeling

of suspension and contemplation, evoking the spiritual state specific to the winter holidays. Drăgoi uses a predominantly homophonic texture, emphasizing the clarity of the melodic line and offering minimal harmonic support. The orchestration is discreet, emphasizing the feeling of simplicity and warmth, and the timbres of the chosen instruments – especially those in the middle and low register – give the carol a pastoral, intimate quality, specific to Traditional Romanian Carols. Without deviating from this traditional Romanian village sound, Drăgoi also uses timbral contrasts to bring variation and aural interest, creating a varied atmosphere without distracting from the central theme. This homophonic texture, combined with occasional dialogues between orchestral sections, creates a rich and evocative sound effect, suggesting a solemn and festive atmosphere.

*The analytical browsing of the score shows the author's concern for understanding the fundamentals of the folklore music material and their effective involvement in the configuration act, and the moulding of the ethnophonic cult discourse from the virtues of the monody core is reassessed on the superior level of the ethical issue, and ultimately, it gets weight and gravity. (Rucsanda 2012)*

In this first Carol, Drăgoi demonstrates a creative approach to folkloric material, maintaining its traditional character, but at the same time transforming it through modern compositional techniques. The main theme is worked on in a variational manner, bringing new subtleties with each reappearance. This technique ensures a balance between repetitiveness and development, transforming a simple folkloric theme into a complex musical discourse. However, through his harmonic and formal enrichment, he manages to capitalize on the artistic potential of a simple carol, transforming it into a representative piece of Romanian cult music. In this musical study, I will refer to the first Carol (Star song) given the extensive structural analysis I have conducted and which will be published separately, as will all other parts of the *Divertisment rustic*:

### **Andante molto cantabile**

The ending on the I step of the carol indicates a tonal treatment, C major, of the theme, in its entirety. But, the first period cadences on the II step, modal I, with an F#, the dominant of the dominant.

Andante molto e cantabile ♩ = 88

Fig. 1. „Carol I”, Part I, Phrase 1 + Phrase 2, measures 1 – 8

The measure is binary, with divisional rhythm. The anapest formula, consisting of eighths and fourths, often appears. Period I is presented by the string section. The cadences are on the V step in the first phrase, and on the II step in the second phrase. The theme of the carol is presented by the first violin.

#### Harmonic structure:

Part I, Phrase 1 + Phrase 2

I – VI | II | I – VI7 | V | VI | II | VI7 | II |

The second violin and viola bring a counterpoint based on a rhythm similar to the theme, sometimes in reverse, like the viola's second measure. The cello has a more personalized counterpoint line, bringing syncopations in measures 2 and 6, and sixteenth notes in measure 3. The strings continue the carol with phrase 1 of the second period. After four measures, a crown brings the cadence to the VI step, interrupted, so that, by adding a three-measure motif, it cadences to the I step.

Fig. 2. “Carol”, Part II, Phrase 1, measures 9 – 15 (strings only)

**Harmonic structure:**

Part II, Phrase 1

V – I | II6/5 – V | I – II6 | I – VI | V2 | IV | I |

The polyphony continues in eighths and fourths and in the opposite direction, in measures 5 and 6. The cadence on the second step, with F#, indicates a possible Lydian, also having a B flat, the lowered VII step, a combination between Lydian and Mixolydian, with the mobile VI step, A – A flat (Lydian mode):

**Meno mosso**

The appearance of Eb and Ab bring the major step with the VI and VII step lowered. It can be interpreted as a Mixolydian with the VII step lowered, adding the VI step lowered. The cadence is on the I step, authentic. The measure is binary, with divisional rhythm. The theme is resumed by the flute, with harmonic and polyphonic support in the winds, harp, piano and strings.

Mono mosso

Flute *mf*

Oboe *p*

Clarinet in B $\flat$  *p*

Bassoon *p*

Horn in F *p*

Harp

Piano

Violin I *pizz.* *p* *arco*

Violin II *pizz.* *p* *arco*

Viola *pizz.* *p* *arco*

Violoncello

Contrabass

Fig. 3. *Carol, Part II, Phrase 2, measures 11 – 18*

The cello and double bass support a pedal on the C-G fifth, a pedal completed by piano, oboe, clarinet, bassoon and horn. The pedal is interrupted towards the end of the phrase by a cadential formula, in measures 7-9. The harp supports harmonically through arpeggiated chords, bringing the changes of steps, step VI – A flat and step VII.

### Harmonic Structure:

#### Part II, Phrase 2

V16/5 | V16/5 | V9 | I7 | I7 | II7 | V | I |

### Variation I

Variation I introduces a C, step I, mobile, C – C sharp, and steps IV and V, altered accordingly. In the second period, B flat also appears, step VII lowered. The first



phrase cadences on the dominant, and the second phrase cadences on the second step of the C mode.

**Harmonic structure:**  
Part I, Phrase 1 + Phrase 2  
I | II - V | I | V | I | V - V7 | I | II |

Fig. 4. “Carol”, Variation I, Part I, Phrase 1 + Phrase 2, measures 19 – 26

The string section performs thematic variations on the theme presented by the cello. The polyphony is rich, in sixteenth-note values, reminiscent of baroque polyphony. Violin I, Violin II, viola, enter, at intervals, with imitation, which creates a stretto. The double bass goes parallel to the viola. From the fifth measure of the second phrase, with anacrusis, the winds enter: on the cello theme. The flute and oboe play in unison, the clarinet and bassoon bring imitations at intervals, creating a stretto with the same formulas as the strings. In the melodic step, the cadence occurs on the 1st inversion of the tonic chord.

On the theme of the cello, the violins, flute, oboe, clarinet, and bassoon bring a sixteenth-note motif, imitated at intervals of 1 beat, or played simultaneously. The horn marks with an interval of a fourth or fifth. The double bass has a melodic line formed by eighths or dotted eighths.

**Harmonic structure:**  
Part II, Phrase 1 + Phrase 2  
V | II - V | I7 | VI | V | V7 | I6 |  
V - VI | II7 | I7 | VI | V | II | I7 |

The musical score is presented in two systems. The first system (measures 28-41) includes parts for Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Fgt.), Contrabassoon (Cn. Fa.), Horn (Hrp.), Piano (Pian.), Violin 1 (Vir. 1), Violin 2 (Vir. 2), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Contrabass (Cb.). The second system (measures 42-55) includes parts for Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Fgt.), Contrabassoon (Cn. Fa.), Horn (Hrp.), Piano (Pian.), Violin 1 (Vir. 1), Violin 2 (Vir. 2), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Contrabass (Cb.). The score features various dynamics such as *f*, *mf*, *dim.*, and *p*, and includes articulation marks like accents and slurs.

Fig. 5. "Carol 1", Variation 1, Part II, Phrase 1 + Phrase 2, measures 28–41

The polyphony remains consistent, the imitations appear in the strings, then in the winds, with thematic support in the cello. The double bass resumes the contrapuntal melody.

### Variation II Lo stesso tempo

In this variation, the mode of C has the minor seventh, like the Mixolydian, the mobile I step, C-C#, the II and V steps altered accordingly. The first phrase cadences on the VI step, the first inversion, and the second phrase on the II step. The theme is presented to the oboe, the clarinet, bassoon and horn counterpointing in the first phrase with melodies developed on small intervals, generally seconds with gradual movement, on an anapest rhythm of eighths and fourths.

The musical score for Variation II, titled "Lo stesso tempo", is written in 2/4 time. It features a woodwind section (Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, Horn), a string section (Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Violoncello, Contrabasso), and piano. The tempo is marked "Lo stesso tempo" with a note value of quarter note = 1. The score begins at measure 13. The woodwinds enter with a melodic phrase in the first phrase, characterized by small intervals and an anapest rhythm of eighths and fourths. The dynamics range from forte (f) to piano (p). The string section provides harmonic support and counterpoint. The score includes dynamic markings such as "dim." and "p".

The musical score for 'Carol 1', Variation 2, Part I, Phrase 1 + Phrase 2, measures 41-49, is presented for a full orchestra. The instruments included are Flaut, Oboi, Clarinet Sib, Fagot, Corn în Fa, Harpă, Pian, Vioară 1, Vioară 2, Violă, Violoncel, and Contrabas. The score shows a complex polyphonic texture with various instruments playing different parts of the melody and accompaniment. Dynamics include *mf* and *f*.

Fig. 6. "Carol 1", Variation 2, Part I, Phrase 1 + Phrase 2, measures 41 – 49

The second phrase brings the string section with a polyphonic plan compared to the wind section, while the first violin accompanies the oboe thematically. The phrase cadences on the second inversion of the tonic.

#### Harmonic structure:

Part I, Phrase 1 + Phrase 2

IV | VII | IV4/3 | VII6/4 | VI | VII6 | IV7 | II |

Part II, Phrase 1 + Phrase 2

V6/4 | V6/4 | III2 | IV | V4/3 | VII | I6/4 |

III | VII6 | VII6 | I7 | I7 | VII9 | III | V | I |

The image displays a musical score for a piece titled 'Carol, Part II, Phrase 1 + Phrase 2, measures 50-65'. The score is arranged in two systems. The first system includes Flaut, Oboi, Clarinet Sib, Fagot, Corn in Fa, Harpă, and Pian. The second system includes Vioară 1, Vioară 2, Violă, Violoncel, and Contrabas. The score features various musical notations such as dynamics (p, pp, dim.), articulation (accents), and performance instructions (allarg., meno mosso, rit., con sord., pizz.).

Fig. 7. Carol, Part II, Phrase 1 + Phrase 2, measures 50 – 65

In the second period, the polyphony is achieved by the wind instruments, through a gradual march of eighths, and in the second phrase of the period the harp brings descending arpeggios of fifths and fourths. The string instruments evolve in tremolo, in values of second, suggesting the ison. This ison is interrupted in the seventh measure for a cadential formula, on the perfect fifth C-G, bring the dominant, then the tonic.

## 5. Conclusions

The carol from Sabin Drăgoi's *Divertisment rustic* is an exemplary work of integrating traditional Romanian elements into the context of classical music. Through melodic simplicity, subtle variation of harmony and texture, and natural rhythm, Drăgoi manages to transpose the essence of a secular tradition into an academic musical framework.

*The generation of Romanian composers achieved great success in the sphere of compositional construction models, cultivating both a broad chromatic*

*modalism and dodecaphony and intense rhythmic variation, with novel and interesting polyrhythmic effects.* (Roșca 2011, 57)

In the same context, but also as a complement to the records of the interwar musical historical period, musicologist George Breazu placed the composer Sabin Drăgoi, along with Tiberiu Brediceanu and Marțian Negrea, in the direction of the “Romanian characteristic” (Breazu 1941, 525), being appreciated as “a perfect example” through his “personality and spiritual attitude”. (Breazu 1941, 528)

As George Enescu said, “the sun of Romanian music” appeared. And this happened at the awarding of Drăgoi’s work in the 1928 composition competition held by the brilliant musician from Banat.

In turn, Béla Bartók mentions that the entire musical work *Divertissement rustique* encompasses: “almost the entire horizon of Romanian folk music” – respecting the classification of Romanian folklore proposed by the Hungarian folklorist – the work being made up of “five parts, which are nothing more than the five genres of Romanian folk music”. (Breazu 1930, 1)

As we have seen, the first part of the work *Divertissement rustique* begins with the melody of the star song I: *O, what wonderful news!* to which the star song II will be added: *Under the red sunrise*. Through an extensive analytical study already completed, the other parts of the complete work: *Doină*, *Bocet* (Funeral song), *Dans* (dance) and *Cântec de nuntă* (Wedding song) will be published for the first time in a complex analytical musical study for the first time.

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