

THE GENUINENESS OF THE POPULAR ACCOMPANIMENT NOWADAYS

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Abstract. *It would be superfluous to highlight all the aspects related to this theme. I prefer to underline the data that cannot simplify the topic under discussion: the instrumental accompaniment and its genuineness. All professional musicians have a developed harmonic sense, as some lyrical melodies sung in Maramureş say; the famous interpreter Alexandru Titruş has displayed large array of musical techniques, without leaving the domain of genuineness. “Țitura” consists in a harmonic support of veneered-like chords, sometimes interrupted by small melodic representations played on cello and on dulcimer.*

Keywords: *folklore, instrumental accompaniment, harmony, fiddlers, genuineness.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the preface of G. Fira's monograph *The Wedding in Vâlcea County*, Constantin Brăiloiu wrote: “The most important attribute of the professional repertory is the accompaniment. Though it is usually independent and homophonous, here the melody relies on harmony; and we must express our regret that no folklorist [in 1928 – our note] has put down so far the instinctive harmonies of the folk music band. The peasant, certainly, does not practice harmony, yet he enjoys it and he requires it from the fiddler (...) Carefully written down accompaniments have given us new knowledge on the harmonic bases of the folk song.”

From the very beginning, we must mention that most of our folk music collections avoid putting down the instrumental accompaniment, so the materials are not numerous and do not cover the entire Romanian folk region. This is both because of the complexity of the folk research in itself, and because of the idea that the aspect we refer to is less important compared to other parameters of the folk music [1].

On the other hand, the essentially monodic character of our folk music determined the authors of these collections to give priority to the characteristics of the melody to the detriment (where such is the case) of the harmonic apparel. Folk reality, more specifically the functioning of certain genres like dance songs, old folk songs or newer folk songs, oblige us to reevaluate the problem, taking into account as well the desire of keeping the song's genuineness. We do not insist on the fact that many melodies require no accompaniment and so they should be presented as such by means of the mass media. Moreover, we fight against certain pseudo-choir and pseudo-instrumental songs belonging to certain composers and interpreted by the folk carriers themselves [2].

When we state that the genuineness of the instrumental accompaniment is a topical problem of our folk music, we take into account as well the fundamental research in the area of folk harmony and polyphony of certain famous researchers like: Tiberiu Alexandru, Gheorghe Ciobanu, Pascal Benteoiu, Ghizela Sulițeanu and others. The viewpoints consent on the idea that there are two main folk music bands – a rural and an urban one – or a traditional and a concert one, and in my opinion, a third one should develop, rooted in the Romanian tradition and at the same time corresponding to the requirements of the show world.

2. DISCUSSION

At the basis of the first type, the researchers place the ancient accompaniment of certain folk instruments, while the harmonic outlook of the second is visibly influenced by the classical harmony, as it appeared more recently, because at the beginning of the 19th century a document mentions that fiddlers give up their entire harmonic talent as soon as they join the Wallachians in their songs.

Referring to our fiddlers, Franz Liszt mentioned “the accompaniment of a bass pedal... which keeps the harmony constantly bound, as if heavily tied to the furrow” and Alexandru Berdescu remarks the clashes that result from the simultaneity of the interpretation of a song and the pressing of a harmonic invariable pedal – a procedure still used nowadays in certain areas.

Relatively recent research works notice that, for Transylvania, the horizontal sense is more valued by the folk harmonists than the vertical one, on condition that the chords may be correctly led in the sense of the rhythm.

The origin and the evolution towards such harmonic combinations are clearly highlighted by the above-mentioned researchers.

During the last century, for instance, some urban fiddlers sang for certain opera orchestras; even if they only listened to them, as they have always been receptive to any fashion, they introduced certain high pitches in the folk music as well. This explains the gradual formation of a fiddler’s style, which is still dependent even to date on certain principles of western harmony. However, as Tiberiu Alexandru concludes in his important study called *Armonie și polifonie în cântecul popular românesc* (Harmony and Polyphony in the Romanian Folk Song) – “certain new forms of folk polyphony have been signaled in certain creations of some amateur bands, as well as in the music of folk concert orchestras”. In our opinion, he refers to an endeavor of respecting the genuineness of folk music similar to the one we can find nowadays.

According to the Romanian researchers, genuineness is the confirmation of the submission of the folk music to the basic laws of the folk creation and circulation: syncretism, functionality, oral and collective character, folk origin. But, in order for a certain folk fact to be genuine, it must correspond to a series of factors, of which the most important are the musical style, genre and zone of origin [3].

Considering these factors, we cannot deny the existence of certain extremely valuable authentic bands, from this viewpoint, especially when they appear in a traditional folk environment. Some “evasions” from the area of genuineness are generally manifest in the large circulation of certain songs and in their interpretation by individuals who do not belong to the respective zonal style. In this sense, the ambition of certain folk music bands from the urban area to sing songs from all the zones of the country, without being made up of people who know well the respective styles and genres seems to me totally unjustified.

Practically, two aspects of the instrumental accompaniment must be followed: the harmonic functions and the rhythmical deployment. They are both equally important; if the first one cannot always be seized on a first audition, the second is characterized by certain so-called *țituri*, which we can easily recognize as specific of an area or another. As far as the verticality is concerned, we have shown that it has been largely influenced by certain procedures of the classic harmony.

The rhythm of the accompaniment displays a great zonal diversity – closely connected to the genre but also especially to the technical attributes of the accompanying instruments [4]: *kobsa* for Muntenia and Moldova, guitar for Gorj, *zongora* for Maramureș, cymbal

especially for Muntenia and Moldova, viol and secondary violin for most of Transylvania and Banat, whistling instruments for Banat, Central Moldova or SE Transylvania and, more recently, yet without a clearly delimited zonal distribution – accordion, harmonica, mouth organ.

According to the way they function, to the environment where they work and the instrument placed at the core of the compartment of accompaniment [5], the specialists (like Pascal Benteoiu, Constantin Arvinte, Gheorghe Oprea, Speranța Rădulescu and others) have shown that theoretically there can be 36 types of folk instrumental bands; yet there are a few types that have not been validated by the folk practice.

To the variety of rhythms and harmony triggered by this instrumental typological diversity, one can add the variety derived from the characteristics of each genre; when the characteristics of a genre or of a species are not well known, errors can occur, as for instance: accompaniment of a genre with the kind of *țiitură* specific of another, the accompaniment of a song that was originally *parlando – rubato* by a rhythm of *sârbă*, *horă*, *brâu* or *învârtită*. Improper for certain genres, the accompaniment becomes necessary for others, consolidating their function in the life of the village; this is what happens to dance melodies, for which both the amateur and the professional bands often use ingenious instrumental combinations [6].

Even if the instruments that are used can create a harmonic support that includes as many sounds as possible from the chord and their doubles, there are many cases when we encounter concert stucks that develop at the unison. Such is the case of *Joc de doi* (Dance for two) where the cymbal and the contrabass schematically double the melody interpreted by the violin; this could be considered as a manifestation of the heterophony. It seems therefore that the interpreters, when they do not prefer richer apparel for their songs, are aware that doubling the song does not go against the norms of common sense.

Sometimes, surprising direct colorful parts appear, played on the cymbal or on the contrabass, which cannot be found in the melody and which favor the passage towards new modal centers. This is how valuable and renown interpreters respect tradition, being at the same time partly influenced by a certain fiddler's practice which has considerably grown.

3. CONCLUSIONS

A song's aesthetic value can only be fully rendered starting from its modal structure, and not using a borrowed harmonic language; it is a joy that there are practitioners who begin to replace, when they occur unjustifiably, trying on the other hand to respect the rhythmical formulas specific to certain areas.

In this sense, it is necessary to bring the theoretical arguments of the folklorists and the solutions of the practitioners closer together. It is necessary to harmonize the ethnomusicological theory and the folk musicians' practice in order to keep the authentic vein of our valuable folklore.

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