

THE OLD AND THE NEW STYLE OF THE GENUINE ROMANIAN POPULAR SONG

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Abstract: *Next to the “doina” (specific Romanian lyrical song) and the ballad, the genuine song, with its evolutive layers, belongs to the informal vocal musical genres. The term of song (“cântec”) was attributed by C. Brăiloiu to suggest its differences compared to other musical genres such as the “doina”, the ballad, “cântecul de joc” (popular dance song), family repertoire, etc. The thematic is extremely varied, expressing all the life experiences of a simple man (love, nature, longing, sorrow, estrangement, army, war, outlawry, etc.) highlighting the complexity of life’s aspects and experiences in the rural communities. The sound arrangements evolve from pentatonic structures to chromatic quints. Just as B. Bartok has noticed there are zonal differentiations within this genre according to the Romanian linguistic dialects within which the respective musical idioms have developed, with specific musical features.*

Key words: genuine song, structure, function, thematics, Romanian spiritual patrimony.

Introduction

Within the significant occasional musical genres (along with the “doina”, the ballad, the popular sorrow song, the family repertoire), the genuine Romanian popular song appears as a distinct genre. The term of song was mentioned for the first time by the researcher C. Brăiloiu in order to suggest its differences by comparison to other genres (the family repertoire, the popular traditions related to the events of the year, the ballad, the “doina”, the popular dance song) from which they differ both thematically and from a structural and functional viewpoint. The association of some genuine literary song lyrics to “doina” melodies makes it difficult to delimitate the two genres from a strictly poetic viewpoint. This combination is facilitated by the octosyllabic verse pattern but also by the personal contribution of the creator, interpreter, which explains why beside the “classical” form of the genuine song, other intermediary forms have been identified, such as: the song-doina (Muntenia and Moldova), the doina-song (Năsăud and Sălaj), song-dance song.¹

2.The genuine old-style song

The thematic of the old style expresses all the life experiences of the simple man, love, longing, sorrow, estrangement, army, war etc.

Despite its unitary character (it is generally spread throughout the country), the genuine song also presents marked local differentiations, both from a diachronic and from a synchronic viewpoint, taking on distinct evolutive forms: the old-style song (delineated during the Medieval period), the modern style song (a result of the interpenetration of the idioms and of the impact of the cultivated and foreign creation). The unitary character of these evolutive layers is assured by: the use of the same versification system (namely octosyllabic), mainly pentatonic and heptatonic diatonic sound structures, rhythmic arrangements in which

¹ Oprea Ghe., *Studii de muzicologie*, Editura Fundației România de Măine, București, p. 26.

parlando-rubato (rarely *giusto-syllabic*) is predominant, and by melodic stanzas that are usually simple.²

The folklore-researcher and composer B. Bartok notices zonal differentiations among the linguistic dialects: Transylvanian, Moldavian, and Wallachian, within which the respective idioms developed.

So, within the Wallachian sub-dialect (Oltenia, Muntenia, Dobrogea), the musical idiom of the Sub-Carpathian Muntenia has become prominent, synthesizing the specific musical features of all (or almost all) the musical genres. In point of the sound organization, the basic feature is the dorian, in which the prepentatonism and the pentatonism can be noticed, with insistence on the 1st and the 5th step; the 4th and the 5th step sometimes appear with an ascending alteration. This feature is also present in the area of Dâmbovița County.

From the six creations selected and analyzed in order to illustrate the stylistic-structural features of the genuine old-style song, the one called “Eu plec mamă la armată” (Mother, I am joining the army) is pervaded by a strong dramatism and corresponds to a diatonic pentachord, while the other 5 – “Munte, munte, brad frumos” (Mountain, mountain, nice fir-tree); “Stejărel foaie rotundă” (Dear oak tree, with round leaves); “La fântana părăsită” (At the deserted well); “Patru boi cu lant în coarne” (Four oxen with a chain over their horns) and “Pădurice, pădurea” (Little forest, dear forest) – are anchored in the genuine thematic specific for the actual popular song and correspond to diatonic structures, their mode being eolic³.

3. The modern-style genuine popular song

The modern style appeared by the beginning of the 18th century and was stylistically outlined by the beginning of the 20th century; it was initially detected by the specialists in the Subcarpathian Muntenia⁴ and then in Transylvania and Moldova, being a result of the merger between the modern, Moldavian and South-Transylvanian styles. The features of the modern style are: high degree of accessibility from a structural viewpoint, musical-structural renewals, modification of the function of some occasional songs, preservation of some old themes in the thematic patrimony, evolution of the musical structures, preponderance of the heptachordic diatonic and chromatic structures (Colian, Ionian, Mixolidian), some sounds’ tendency of turning into sensitive potentials under the influence of the orchestral accompaniment, the enlargement of the melodic arc, the melodic line often going beyond the octosyllabic traditional pattern, the appearance of certain fill-in or genuine refrains through the introduction of interjections such as : *of-of*, *măi-măi*, *Leano*, *mândra mea*. From a rhythmic viewpoint, there appears a tendency of symmetry in measure. Over long *parlando-rubato* systems (specific for the old style) is overlapped the *giusto-syllabic* system. The rhythm and the melody are borrowed from dance melodies. By adding support refrains, the rhythm of the genuine song suffers modifications, a phenomenon characteristic for the passage to the modern style. So, there appear: division, interposition, repetition, changing the cadence formulas. Within the genuine song there occur as well amplifications of the melodic stanzas (internal – before the final cadence and external at the end of the stanzas, which are well delineated from a modal and architectonic viewpoint). The internal amplifications have a very significant contribution to the evolution of the genuine songs, generating complex symmetrical forms.

² Boghici C., *Teză de doctorat*, Iași, 2005, p. 275.

³ Boghici, C., op. cit. p. 277-281.

⁴ Badea, Florin - *Categorii folclorice în contemporaneitate* (Contemporary Folklore Categories), Ed. Transversal, Târgoviște, 2009, p. 79

4.Zonal features of the genuine song. Conclusions

The repertoire of the genuine Romanian songs from the Subcarpathian area of Dâmbovița County presents very various topics (love, nature, longing, estrangement, army, outlawry etc.) highlighting the complexity of the aspects and experiences of the people's lives, which are apparently simple yet actually so profound and rich in feelings and artistic spirituality.⁵

The sound organization of these 6 genuine modern-style songs evolves from pentatonic structures enriched with piens (*Foaie verde-a bobului*) to heptachordic diatonic scales such as dorian (*Îmi luai caval și glugă, Pe șoseaua de la vale; Bate vântul, bate, bate*), eolian (*Pe cumpănă la fântână*) up to mixed chromatic modes (as in *Anicuța neichii dragă*).

The remarkable artistic value of the poetic melodies and images, of an obvious plasticity and depth, characteristic for many of these creations, as well as their vigor and originality, assigns them an important place in the patrimony of the Romanian people's spirituality.⁶

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⁵ Boghici, C., *Ipostaze ale folclorului românesc dâmbovițean*, Teză de doctorat, Iași, 2005, p. 300.

⁶ Boghici, C. – *Categorii folclorice în contemporaneitate* (Contemporary Folklore Categories), Târgoviște, 2009, Ed. Transversal.