

## Recycling the Folk Music

Roxana PEPELEA<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** *The constants of the compositional creation signed by Roxana Pepelea start from the idea of a continuous sonorous and conceptual re-creation of the Romanian folklore, by modern techniques, the most important being polyphony, modal harmony, heterophony or free variation. Pursuing a certain plasticity of the sonorous image in illustrating Romanian spirituality, the composer often resorts to models stemming from a mythical space-time. The appeal to the autochthonous musical potential is sometimes intertwined with the revaluation of several traditional patterns: variation, sonata, fugue.*

Key-words: *Roxana Pepelea composer, Romanian folk music, variations, clarinet quartet*

### 1. Introduction

Roxana Pepelea's creation allows transpiring her endeavours aimed at renewing musical language, from highlighting several elements of Romanian folkloric origin, to enhancing the neoclassical formal structure, often intertwined with the neo-impressionist expression, in a scoring mainly oriented towards capitalizing on the resources of polyphony or heterophony.

Among the models seemingly stemming from a mythical space-time, there stands out the Mioritic model, expressed along the pathway Sigismund Toduță (*Ballad-Oratorio for Soloists, Chorus and Orchestra "The Little Ewe"*), Paul Constantinescu (*Choral Poem "The Little Ewe"*), Carmen Petra-Basacopol (*Ballet "The Little Ewe"*), and Valentin Timaru (*Third Symphony "The Little Ewe"*).

The emblematic work, which illustrates her own becoming, along this pathway, is *Suite for Septet of Brass, Piano and Percussion "The Little Ewe"* (1985).

The Mioritic model is reinvented in further creations, featuring among the works of the recent years, including *Seven Variations for Violin, Viola and Piano* or *"Resonances" for a Quartet of Clarinets*.

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## 2. Seven Variations for Violin, Viola and Piano (2014)

The work *Seven Variations for Violin, Viola and Piano* is a combination between the appeal to universal tradition, by the revaluation of a traditional form, the free variation and the language of Romanian folkloric resonance, an extension over time of some previous attempts: Paul Constantinescu's *Song* from *Three Pieces for Piano* or *Free Variations on an 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Byzantine Melody for Cello and Orchestra*, Theodor Grigoriu's *Symphonic Variations on a Song by Anton Pann*.

The theme at the core of the cycle (*Andantino, con semplicità*) is of folkloric nature: the melody (popular song) is harmonized and structured in three parts – **ABA**. The scoring is mainly quadrivocal, of harmonized chorus. The chromatic slide of the bass, on the formula *passus duriusculus*, is distinguishable.

Tema (*Andantino, con semplicità*)

Fig. 1. Theme, measures 1-4

Along the way, the seven variations part, to an increasing extent, with the symmetric pattern of the theme, according to the model of free variations.

The first variation (*Allegretto*) still remains tributary to the symmetrized pattern. Its variables consist in transposing the theme and chromating the accompaniment in transpositional chords on the piano.

The second variation (*Allegro*), in *scherzando* character, processes various theme cells: the first cell appears at the piano (extracted from the first measure of the theme) in the violin and viola accompaniment – double chords in *pizzicato*; the second cell appears also at the piano, extracted from the third measure of the theme, treated in latent polyphony and rhythmically modified, in triplets); followed by a third cell (extracted from the second stanza, B, of the theme, melodically modified by intervallic amplification), brought in the dialogue of the chords. The form of the variation is with reprise: **ABA**.

The musical score for the second variation, measures 34-36, is presented in three staves. The top staff is for Violin (Vln.), the middle for Viola (Vla.), and the bottom for Piano (Pno.). The key signature has one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 3/4. The tempo and mood are indicated as *f scherzando*. The Violin and Viola parts are marked *pizz.* (pizzicato) and *f*. The Piano part is marked *mf scherzando*. The music consists of rhythmic patterns with some melodic movement, primarily using eighth and quarter notes.

Fig. 2. *Second variation, measures 34-36*

The third variation (*Allegro spiritoso*) emphasizes the spiritual, slightly humoristic character of music. Several cellular/motivic constitutive elements of the theme, presented in different forms (direct, inverse or recurrent) are fragmented and processed in the dialogue of the instruments. The tension is on the increase, up to the imitations in the second section of the variation.

The musical score for the third variation, measures 63-66, is presented in three staves. The key signature has one flat and the time signature is 4/8. The Violin (Vln.) part starts at measure 63 and is marked *mf*. The Viola (Vla.) part starts at measure 63 and is marked *mf*. The Piano (Pno.) part starts at measure 63 and is marked *mf*. The music features a mix of eighth and quarter notes, with some rests and dynamic markings like *arco*, *arco*, and *non legato*. The overall mood is *Allegro spiritoso*.

Fig. 3. *Third variation, measures 63-66*

The fourth variation (*Andante tranquillo*), placed in the middle, is the contrasting variation in terms of movement and character. The piano chromatically slides on an arpeggiated ostinato, derived from the main thematic cell, whilst a quasi-imitative melody blossoms on the strings. Initiated by the violin, this melody is taken by the viola and ended on the piano. After a climax in mixtures (m. 105-

106), the melody is resumed in canon by the strings, on the same ostinato background of the piano.

The musical score for the fourth variation, measures 93-95, is presented in two staves. The top staff is for the Violin (Vln.) and the bottom staff is for the Piano (Pno.). The time signature is 4/4. The Violin part begins at measure 93 with a melodic line marked *p*. The Piano part features a continuous ostinato pattern marked *p sempre legato*.

Fig. 4. Fourth variation, measures 93-95

The fifth variation (*Pesante*) is situated on a higher dynamic plane; the tint intensifies, the atmosphere becomes more tense, by the opposition of two planes: the former, made up of the overlain chords of the piano, which intersect, break the thematic cell in the shrill octaves of the strings; the latter, expressed by the incisive recitative of the piano (m. 122).

The musical score for the fifth variation, measures 118-123, is presented in three staves. The top staff is for the Violin (Vln.), the middle staff is for the Viola (Vla.), and the bottom staff is for the Piano (Pno.). The time signature is 3/4. The Violin and Viola parts are marked *sempre sf*. The Piano part features a recitative-like pattern marked *f incisivo*.

Fig. 5. Fifth variation, measures 118-123

The sixth variation (*Presto energico e ben ritmato*) stands out by its dynamic nature, developed in a continuum of sixteenths, which intensify, acquiring shrill nuances, once with measure 170.

Fig. 6. Sixth variation, measures 159-160

The seventh variation (*Allegro energico*) is intended as a corollary and a conclusion thereof. The debut is made in a fugato, which gathers the three voices-instruments, prefacing the return of the theme (*Alla breve*, m. 234), in a formula dynamically and sonorously amplified. The theme, sounding as a cantus firmus presented in discant, is counterpointed on the piano, in an equal pulsation of eighths (often mixed). The reprises of the theme also include its reversed integral aspect.

Fig. 7. Seventh variation, measures 183-189

The conclusion is the synthesis of the elements: the theme augmented in double values (halves) is counterpointed by itself, in a rhythmically real hypostasis, excepting the thematic head consisting in the delivery of the ictus.

Fig. 8. Seventh variation, measures 234-237

### 3. “Resonances” for a Quartet of Clarinets (2013)

In terms of themes, the work promotes several valences of an imaginary Romanian folklore, “resonating” by specific sonorities of ballad, dance or threnody. It stands out by “the richness of the dynamic and agogic indications, by the metro-rhythmic dynamism – elements enhanced against a traditional structural background (succession of four sections in which the doina, ballad and threnody intonations associate, up to the creation of an imaginary folklore), in a neomodal language” (Iașeșen, 2013, 7).

Conceived as an arc – **ABCBA**, the piece is uninterruptedly performed, in a contrasting succession, in terms of tempo and character, of the constituent sections. Section A has a quasi-improvisatory, narrative nature, with ballad resonances. The scoring is mostly heterophonic, resulting from the intersection of a characterologically folkloric monody (tacked round a specific intervallic, the perfect/increased quart or the quint standing out) with its own variants.

A cry-interjection in the unison of the four clarinets introduces the exposition, on the first clarinet, in repetitive-variational deliveries, of the monody which makes up the motivic nucleus of the entire section.

Andante (♩ = 85)

Fig. 9. Section A, measures 1-5

This monody will evolve along the way, both horizontally (by ornamental accumulations), and vertically (by imitations, unisons, slips), towards a climax, in which the recitation becomes ever more insistent (measures 22-25).

Fig. 10. *Section A, measures 22-24*

“The variational character of the thematic expositions is apparent, almost up to the end of the work, where, by the enhancement of subtle heterophony effects, and by the return to the spirit of the doina, this time transformed by the pronounced improvisational mode, we are actually led to the sonorous justification of the title” (Iașeșen, 2013, 7).

A little reprise is distinguishable at measure 30. It so happens that this moment acquires importance, approaching the proportions of a *sectio aurea*.

Section B (m. 50) contrasts by its giusto, dancing character. The section stands out by its formal clarity, being conceived as a little fugue with three countersubjects. The theme, in asymmetrical meter, is likewise of folkloric resonance.

Fig. 11. *Section B, theme, measures 10-53*

The voices get together in measure 64, where we enjoy the last thematic exposition, along with the three countersubjects. Polyrhythm stands out in the horizontal and vertical dimensions.

64 (in rilievo)

B♭ Cl. 1 *f*

B♭ Cl. 2 *mf*

B♭ Cl. 3 *mf*

B. Cl. *mf*

Fig. 12. Section B, fugato, measures 64-67

Section C brings a new contrast, this time of rubato character, returning, along other coordinates, to the slow tempo and liberty of the construction. Threnody-specific melodic wailings get together, insinuating themselves, little by little, taken from one voice to another, and accompanied by prolong sounds, which create harmonic backgrounds.

109 Lento, rubato (♩ = 50)

B♭ Cl. 1 *p sempre* *p* *lontano*

B♭ Cl. 2 *p sempre*

B♭ Cl. 3 *p* *lontano* *p sempre*

B. Cl. *p sempre*

Fig. 13. Section C, measures 109-116

Gradually, by potentization, the accompaniments metamorphose and culminate in a free, improvisatory, quasi-random section, in overlays of recto-tonal recitatives (pulsating in a micro-polyphony of crescendo/accelerando waves). The sonorous impression is an ongoing vibratory motion, similar to trepidation.



Musical score for Section C, measures 128-131. The score is for four clarinets: B♭ Cl. 1, B♭ Cl. 2, B♭ Cl. 3, and B. Cl. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The score begins at measure 128, marked with a circled number. The tempo/mood is *quasi libero*. The dynamics are *p* (piano). The performance instruction is *cresc. poco a poco ed accel.* (crescendo, little by little, and acceleration). The B♭ Cl. 1 part features a melodic line with eighth-note patterns. The B♭ Cl. 2 and B♭ Cl. 3 parts feature a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The B. Cl. part features a melodic line with a long note value.

Fig. 14. Section C, 128-131

The moment ends in a deep, poignant, tormented wailing.

Musical score for Section C, measures 147-150. The score is for four clarinets: B♭ Cl. 1, B♭ Cl. 2, B♭ Cl. 3, and B. Cl. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The score begins at measure 147, marked with a circled number. The tempo/mood is *quasi libero*. The dynamics are *p* (piano). The performance instruction is *cresc. poco a poco ed accel.* (crescendo, little by little, and acceleration). The B♭ Cl. 1 part features a melodic line with eighth-note patterns. The B♭ Cl. 2 and B♭ Cl. 3 parts feature a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The B. Cl. part features a melodic line with a long note value.

Fig. 15. Section C, 147-150

The returns, on a backward path, of the sections B and A, are made as an abbreviated reprise (in a mirror).

The work *Resonances* for Quartet of Clarinets is a novel musical representation of the Mioritic model. Its importance also consists in enriching the chamber literature dedicated to this less usual ensemble: the quartet of clarinets.

#### 4. Conclusions

The composer Roxana Pepelea resorts to two great veins of music inspiration: the illustration of the Romanian spirituality and the universal music tradition. The

genesis of those language features overlaps thereby with the two great veins of national creation.

In conclusion, as stated by the musicologist Petre-Marcel Vârlan in a study dedicated to the composer, “up to this moment of Roxana Pepelea’s creative path /.../ we are revealed a genuine composer, in full creative force, both in the light of the diversity and mastery of the compositional technique, and in the light of the unitary vision upon the inspiration sources, deeply anchored in the Romanian spirituality, yet not isolating themselves from the extensive force lines of either older or newer universal music” (Vârlan 2007, 19).

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