

# THE SCHOLAR MUSICAL REPERTOIRE IN THE INTERWAR NATIONAL PEDAGOGY DEBATE

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**Abstract:** *Beyond certain inherent limits, the Romanian interwar pedagogical thought stands out through the modernism of the conveyed message and through the multiple valuating suggestions it offers. The school musical repertoires is the object of study for many theorists who, guessing the educational value of the Romanian folk song, keep close to support the fundamental ideas of the musical education process and the folklore values. The repertoire compounds, the selection, the didactic technology of transmitting the songs are few of the problems we have in integrating the musical creation in the educational process.*

**Key words:** *musical repertoire, musical education, musical pedagogy, interwar period.*

## 1. Introduction

The musical repertoire problem is very wide and complex. The repertoire compounds, the selection of the songs, the didactic technology of transmitting all those, the conditions imposed to raise everything at highest level, expressive interpretation are just a few of the problems we have even today in integrating the musical creation in the educational process. The main objectives of the present study are to organize the previous theories of the representatives of the musical pedagogical interwar teaching and to identify the practical experiences to be used and developed in order to capitalize at a higher level the musical creation inside the musical-educational process. We focused over this interwar period as we consider it a very significant for the Romanian musical pedagogy by its success along the European period and the adjustment of these tendencies to the national characteristics. As the musical-educational system is based on the folklore values of the time, it manages to confirm an important authentic personality in the musical educational Congress in Prague where it is considered “an inaccessible pattern for most of the European traditional schools” (Vasile, 1995, p. 13).

## 2. The Main Problems of The Musical Scholar Repertoire in the General Interwar Romanian Pedagogy Sight

The musical repertoire was mainly a source for the Romanian teachers and specialists

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in the musical area. So, which are the main points of view of the musical theory in the interwar period? We will try to present them as: structure and compounds of the scholar musical repertoire, the didactical algorithm to transmit the song in the two steps – the previous quotation and then the musical quotation, requests evolving regarding the interpretation and the solution to touch the scholar repertoire to the content of the discipline information.

### **2.1. The structure and the components of the scholar musical repertoire**

We appreciate as extremely valuable the proposal to base the process of musical education on the national artistic values, that is, on the Romanian folk song and on the ancient church song, a proposal which was put forward by the theorists of that period (Cristescu, 1923b; Cristescu & Bratu, 1925; Nisipeanu & Geantă, 1927a; Breazul, 1931; Bârsănescu, 1933; Popescu, 1934; Cuclin, Gheorghiu & Popescu, 1935; Gabrea, 1937; Kirişescu, 1943; Brăiloiu, 1998).

Breazul (1938) manages to make the necessary splits between the education for music and the education by music. If in the first case, most important are the reception capabilities of the music, while in the second case is most important to ensure the vocal capabilities.

From this point of view there are three many creation categories able to touch the main purposes of the music for children: popular music and musical cultural productions. What is the way the musical scholar repertoire will be realized? Those specialized in the theory of the music during the interwar consider the aesthetic value, the educational one and the accessibility.

According to Brăiloiu (1974, p. 355) we have to pay attention to identify the criteria to select the musical folklore creation (aesthetic and educational value, according to the accessibility, force of representing and spreading area) and also to support the promotion of the folklore music in college schedules. We are fully agreeing with the observation of the ethnomusician and professor: “The Authenticity is a scientific argument, not a pedagogical one”.

The importance shown towards the didactic musical material by the theoreticians of the interwar period is also reflected in the numerous integration proposals for the school program to contain a compulsory musical repertoire to go throughout the school year.

Passionate supporter of the idea of exploitation of the folk musical creation, Breazul (1933) includes in his textbooks a valuable and representative offer for the Romanian occasional and non-occasional genres, a collection which can still be exploited today, in a double aspect: as a musical material designed for interpretation or as material designed for musical auditions.

To sustain this point of view, we offer the example of the school book for 4<sup>th</sup> secondary grade, published in 1933, which withholds 127 musical creations most of them adaptations of Romanian folklore which belong to the following: T. Brediceanu, D. G. Kiriac, G. Galinescu, I. Chirescu. S. Drăgoi, T. Popovici, I. Vidu, Gh. Fira, Gh. N. Dumitrescu-Bistriţa, Gh. Cucu, Béla Bartók, G. Stephănescu, G. Dima, Achim Stoia, N. Lungu, G. Musicescu, I. Popescu-Pasărea, N. Oancea, Augustin Bena and George Enescu.

However, we consider that the most valuable collection is the one included in the textbooks authored by Brailoiu and Croitoru (1937). From their perspective, we draw

attention to the diversity and the amplex of the material included in the textbook for the 3<sup>rd</sup> secondary grade: folkloric songs (recitative, Christmas carols, folk songs, pastoral songs, folkloric dances, actual songs), religious songs, examples of the universal musical creation of Bertini, Haydn, Schubert, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Grieg, Couperin, Rameau, Offenbach, Mozart, Bizet, Chopin, also French songs, German, Scottish, Bulgarian, Slovakian, Serbian, Czech, Russian songs, and so on.

We also appreciate the method of integration of the folk musical creations, an integration which is carefully done and include only those creations that are able to reflect the theoretical content which is to be taught.

## **2.2. The didactic algorithm in two steps – the musical notation and pre-notation**

We have identified the multiple ways of delineation of the necessary process required in transmitting the song and more importantly for the pre-notation. We must emphasize the algorithm found by Jianu (1925), a similar construction of the one promoted in the contemporary musical pedagogy, with the exception of the last three steps which entail the analysis of creation, identifying the musical genre and constructing an expressive interpretation. We consider them welcome and also mandatory as well:

- ✓ remembering the piece previously learned;
- ✓ discussion points regarding the piece;
- ✓ preparing vocally through intonation of a musical scale and also of other songs previously learned;
- ✓ model interpretation (vocal or instrumental);
- ✓ demonstrating the first musical fragment of the chosen piece;
- ✓ reproducing that first musical fragment with the whole class;
- ✓ checking the assimilation level of the musical fragment by listening to pupils individually;
- ✓ continuing to learn fragments of the chosen piece until the full song is assimilated;
- ✓ analyzing the song by comparison with the ones previously learned;
- ✓ identifying the musical genre;
- ✓ constructing an expressive interpretation.

For the musical notation, the advanced proposals are less valuable because they do not sustain the realization of an independent and conscious solfeggio.

To form a correct way to do a solfeggio means to correctly and independently decipher the musical discourse. Is it an achievable objective? We pronounce ourselves according to the ascertainment made by the theoreticians of the time: No. The level of registered success in primary and secondary schooling in regards to the formation of habits for the correct way to do a solfeggio is insignificant. That is most frequently done by imitation.

## **2.3. The requests raised regarding interpretative vocal activity**

The majority of the methodical recommendations support the vocal interpretative activity. We shall mention the most valuable and likely to be exploited in the actual context:

- ✓ to emphasize the eloquent effects of the elements of musical language (Conta-Kernbach, 1920; Botez, 1935);
- ✓ the vocal interpretation of the song must be preceded by a thorough analysis which should emphasize the particularities of construction and of the content expressed by the text and by the music (Conta-Kernbach, 1920; Cristescu, 1923a);
- ✓ the students should be supported to carry out an independent solmization and not one by imitation (Breazul, 1920; Chirvasie, 1929);
- ✓ the text will be taught concurrently with the melody (Theodosiu, 1923; Nisipeanu & Geantă, 1927a; Popescu, 1934);
- ✓ for a better reception of the interpretation, the songs shall be sing in a low nuance (Theodosiu, 1923; Voevidca, 1923; Cristescu & Bratu, 1925; Posluşnicu, 1935b; Cuclin, 1936);
- ✓ the students must observe the necessary conditions for the singing activity and avoid the vocal interpretation after a great effort (Cristescu & Bratu, 1925; Posluşnicu, 1935b);
- ✓ the song will turn into a game by introducing some rhythmic movements (Culea, 1923; Nisipeanu, 1938; Posluşnicu, 1935a; Cuclin, 1936);
- ✓ the students' independence in the solmization will be ensured by practicing the reading at first sight (Cristescu, 1923);
- ✓ the song must be presented to the students beforehand through the teacher's vocal and instrumental demonstration (Nisipeanu & Geantă, 1927b; Chirvasie, 1930);
- ✓ the vocal interpretation must be done eloquently and with emotional implication (Posluşnicu, 1924; Cristescu & Bratu, 1925; Botez, 1935);
- ✓ all the students must be involved in the vocal interpretation, including those with less musical abilities (Posluşnicu, 1926; Galinescu, 1930; Botez, 1934);
- ✓ the identification of the pitches in solmization will rely on the intonation of the intermediary sounds (Posluşnicu, 1935);
- ✓ in the stage of pre-writing the content of the song will be illustrated by drawing (Botez, 1936).

#### **2.4. Solutions for including musical creations into the school repertoire as informational content of discipline**

The considerations of the theorists of the musical education focused especially on the problems of the informational content and of the musical collection with a didactical destination and less on the problems of the connection of these two large categories of contents. Depending on their weight in the context of the subject's general contents, the theorists are grouped into two distinct categories: the supporters of the idea of the preponderant exploitation of the informational content corresponding to the theory of music, to the harmony, the counterpoint, the musical forms, the history of music and to the learning activities (exercises, solfeggio which facilitate the assimilation of the theoretical information and form the abilities of musical writing and reading) and the supporters of the idea of preponderant inclusion of the practical musical activities (singing, hearing, exercising) designed to form the vocal interpretative abilities, the abilities to hear and to listen to music and to develop the creativity.

We notice in the case of the musical collection, a radical change of the condition, from the position of exemplification means of the elements of the musical language, the song repositions itself to the position of content of the subject with increased importance in the context of the general contents.

Breazul (1936) and Brăiloiu (1937) highlighted, at the time, the difficulties to connect the folk creations, highly modal, to the contents of the western theory and they formulated efficient solutions to integrate it. We bear in mind, for its value, the proposal of Breazul (1936, p. 3) to introduce the students to the musical field through the modal pre-pentatonic scales, that is, through the children's musical folklore – creations that connect perfectly to the age particularities and to their level of musical development – and we also notice the idea of Brăiloiu (1937) to harmonically process the folk songs.

The analysis of the textbooks emphasized the presence of a great number of substitution means (boards, diagrams, tables, musical scales, graphic representations, illustrations), extremely valuable, which present the sound reality indirectly. We point out the textbooks of Poslusnicu (1935b) and Botez (1934) which can offer to the contemporary authors' important hints as far as the pedagogical processing of the informational content and of the integrated musical material is concerned. One of the greatest accomplishments of the Romanian pedagogical thought in the field of school musical education is the system of graphic representation of the songs, presented by Breazul in the textbooks of the elementary education. Figure 1 represents the song *Be good to everyone* in different positions and sonorous lasting (Breazul & Drăgoi, 1935, p. 17).

The figure shows two staves of musical notation in 2/4 time. The first staff contains the melody for the first line of the song, and the second staff contains the melody for the second line. Below the notation, the lyrics are written in Romanian. Underneath the lyrics, there are four rows of graphic representations. Each row corresponds to a line of the song and uses letters 'A' and 'B' to denote different parts of the melody. The letters are placed above the lyrics, and lines connect them to show the melodic contour. For example, in the first row, 'A' is above 'nui să' and 'B' is above 'rău'. The graphic representation uses horizontal lines of varying lengths and vertical lines to indicate the duration and pitch of the notes.

Ni-mă - nui să nu faci rău, Că te ve-de Dum-ne - zeu  
 Tu când vezi un vier-me mic, Nu-l stri-vi, nu-i fă ni - mic.

A nui să B rău  
 mā nu  
 Ni faci

A ve - de B  
 te Dum  
 Că ne zeu

Tu B A me  
 când vier mic  
 vezi un

A vi nu-i B  
 stri nu-i  
 Nu-l ni mic

Fig. 1. A model to graphically represent the musical expression

The songs are also illustrated with colored waves which go up and down according to the melodic course. They also represent the duration of the sounds by proportioned drawings, in order to familiarize the children with the exact system, but less attractive because of its strictness, of the musical writing.

**Hora**

ci - coa - re,  
Tră ma - re,  
1. Frun-ă ver-de de  
Măi să tră-gem ho  
Tră-la-la,  
Tră-la-la,  
Tră-la-la,  
Tră-la-la,  
Pe câmp-i-a cea cu flori,  
Că e soa-re ră-ră-măni,  
Tră-la-la,  
Tră-la-la,  
2. Să jucăm hora pe loc, tră-la, la...  
Să ne fie cu noroc, tră-la, la...  
Tot mai lin, mai lin, mai lin, tră-la, la...  
Ca soarele pe senin, tră-la, la...

1. Frun-ă ver-de de ci-coa-re, Tră-la-la, la-la-la, la-la-la,  
Măi să tră-gem ho-ra ma-re, Tră-la-la,  
Pe câmp-i-a cea cu flori, Tră-la-la, la-la-la, la-la-la,  
Că e soa-re ră-ră-măni, Tră-la-la,

Fig. 2. Non-conventional system of presenting the graphics of a song

The characters from the songs, intuitive figures, which symbolize the notes and uncover the meaning of words, float on these colored waves. This syncretism melos – poetic text – drawing, entirely connected to the content of the song, is able to get the children closer to the song, to arise their interest and the pleasure of taking part in the interpretative act. Figure 2 represents the didactical model in the song *Hora* (Breazul & Saxu, 1937).

We also notice the original proposal of Cristescu (1923) to exploit the song as a musical material designed for self-dictations (if the musical creation was previously acquired by ear) and for the written musical dictations.

### 3. Final Appreciations

All in all, we support the opportunity to value ideas and advanced proposal of the theoreticians of the interwar period with regards to the school musical repertoire. We consider that a connection between the didactic musical repertoire and our own national specific, through a superior musical value of Romanian folkloric song, can grant the current musical education system its own distinct identity in regards to the European educational systems.

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