

Stylistic aspects reflected in the musical choral volume *Cântece pentru copii/Songs for children*, signed by Dan Voiculescu

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Abstract: *In Dan Voiculescu's choral compositions, music and poetry are particularly intertwined, the syncretism of the arts being a fundamental feature in the composer's approach to this type of repertoire. The more detailed analysis, with examples of excerpts from works from the volume Songs for Children, are convincing proof of the compositional mastery that is necessary for the successful creation of a deep connection between musical construction and text. Even the choice of certain elements related to the mode of musical composition (subordinated to the melodic, harmonic, polyphonic, rhythmic, metrical, dynamic, formal structure, etc.) demonstrates the intrinsic nature of the connection between music and the message of poetic lyrics. At the same time, the capitalization of the Romanian folklore resources, the incorporation in certain works of some underlying influence from baroque music and the preoccupation of introducing innovations related to the singing technique of the choral repertoire on equal voices represent some of the multiple stylistic features reflected in this volume.*

Key-words: *Dan Voiculescu, Cântece pentru copii/Songs for children, stylistics, children's choir, polyphony.*

1. Introduction

The miniature genre is widely developed in Dan Voiculescu's creation, both in the instrumental creation and in the one dedicated to the solo voice or choir ensembles. He composes a vast choral creation, dedicated to the mixed choir or for equal voices. Manifesting a permanent preoccupation with the evolution of language, but at the same time seeking to be connected to the traditional means of expression, the composer creates works from which the particularities and form can be deduced with some clarity.

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Dan Voiculescu is one of the musicians who throughout his composition career has accumulated extensive experience in approaching the choral repertoire for children. To these he dedicates a significant number of musical creations that are mostly found in the four volumes of polyphonic choirs on two or three voices: *Songs for children* (1974), *Through Time* (1975), *Echoes* (1976), *Games* (1995). The composer confessed on several occasions that he shows an increased interest in the field of musical education of the child, bringing his contribution through works that allow the young performer an approach to the sonority of modern music.

2. Presentation of the volume *Songs for children*

Songs for Children (1974) includes 20 choral works, which are written in the form of two-voice arrangements. Choral miniatures are based on topics related to the world of children and are addressed to schoolchildren. They can be sorted into the following categories:

Songs for school / educational songs	Singing game / musical jokes	Songs about nature / environment in children's vision	Remakes of folk songs/ carols	Trip songs / camp songs
<i>Cine să te-nvețe / Who should teach you</i>	<i>Ghicitoare / Riddle</i>	<i>Primăvara / Spring</i>	<i>Cântec de leagăn / Lullaby</i>	<i>Ecoul / The Echo</i>
<i>Solfegiu / Solmization</i>	<i>Baba-Oarba / Blindman's buff</i>	<i>Iscoada / The spy</i>	<i>Scoală, gazdă, dă-mi colac / Get up, host, give me a dinner roll</i>	<i>Din tren / From the train</i>
		<i>Pe lac / On the lake</i>		
		<i>Rățoiul / The duck</i>		
		<i>Bătăușii / The Brawlers</i>		
		<i>Iarna / Winter</i>		
		<i>Gospodina / The little Ant Housewife</i>		
		<i>Plouă / It's raining</i>		
		<i>Arici, arici, bogorici / Hedgehog, hedgehog</i>		
		<i>Tâlharul pedepsit / The punished thief</i>		
		<i>Inimă de câine / Dog's heart</i>		
<i>Într-un lac / In the lake</i>				

Table 1. Systematization of the works from the volume *Songs for children*, according to the literary theme

As the data from the above mentioned table shows, the songs about nature or the environment have a large share (60%), while the other four categories each comprise two pieces (10% each).

From the table below it appears that Dan Voiculescu chooses lyrics of some famous poets for their poems dedicated to children, these being seductive through musicality, expressive nuances, rhythm, atmosphere around the subject, showing a return to the syncretism of primordial arts. The sources of the lyrics that the composer chose for the songs in this volume are:

Piece's name	Lyrics' author
<i>Ghicitoare / Riddle</i>	Tudor Arghezi
<i>Arici, arici, bogorici / Hedgehog, hedgehog</i>	Tudor Arghezi
<i>Tâlharul pedepsit / The punished thief</i>	Tudor Arghezi
<i>Inimă de câine / Dog's heart</i>	Tudor Arghezi
<i>Într-un lac / In the lake</i>	Tudor Arghezi
<i>Iscoada / The spy</i>	Tudor Arghezi
<i>Pe lac / On the lake</i>	C. A. Munteanu
<i>Răţoiul / The duck</i>	C. A. Munteanu
<i>Bătăușii / The Brawlers</i>	C. A. Munteanu
<i>Din tren / From the train</i>	C. A. Munteanu
<i>Cine să te-nvețe / Who should teach you</i>	Ion Serebreanu
<i>Ecoul / The Echo</i>	Ion Serebreanu
<i>Primăvara / Spring</i>	Veronica Porumbacu
<i>Gospodina / The little Ant Housewife</i>	Otilia Cazimir
<i>Plouă / It's raining</i>	Nina Cassian
<i>Baba-oarba / Blindsman's buff</i>	Versuri populare (culeg. Nelu Ionescu)
<i>Cântec de leagăn / Lullaby</i>	Versuri populare (culeg. Ioan R. Nicola)
<i>Scoală, gazdă, dă-mi colac / Get up, host, give me a dinner roll</i>	Versuri populare (culeg. Traian Mîrza)
<i>Solfegiu / Solmization</i>	-
<i>Iarna / Winter</i>	-

Table 2. *Systematization of the miniatures from Songs for children by the author of the lyrics*

3. Stylistic aspects reflected in the volume *Songs for children*

The palette of resources and compositional techniques included in the miniatures of this volume is related especially to polyphony - in its multiple appearances, as well as the modalism, in a permanent search to emphasize the musicality and the message of the literary verses.

In the song *Ghicitoare/Riddle*, Dan Voiculescu wants to awaken the child's fantasy and curiosity through the musical envelopment of this poem written by Tudor Arghezi. The riddle, involving a play on words, means an "application of allegory as a figure of composition." (Gojgar 2017, 174). The musical development takes the form of a dialogue between the two voices, and in the first 12 measures each voice repeats the same melodic figure based on a tetratony, with each repetition appearing in a new verse.

This fun game, which trains the mind and cleverness, ends with deciphering the riddle. At the end of the song we find the rhetorical question "Didn't you guess it's the hedgehog?", Followed by the repetition of the word "The hedgehog?" in descending and ascending sense, in the metaphorical form of question and answer, until they overlap:

The musical score for 'Ghicitoare/Riddle' features two voices, I and II, in a 2/4 time signature. Voice I starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic and a tempo marking of *dim. e poco rit.* The lyrics for Voice I are: "N-ai ghic-it că e a - ri-ciul? A - ri-ciul? A - ri-ciul? A - ri-ciul?". Voice II starts with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and has the lyrics: "N-ai ghic-it că e a - ri-ciul? A - ri-ciul? A - ri-ciul? A - ri-ciul? A - ri-ciul?". The two voices overlap in the final measures, with Voice I's melody descending and Voice II's ascending.

Fig. 1. *Metaphorical overlaps of question and answer in Ghicitoare/Riddle*

The musical work *Primăvara/Spring* is a miniature consisting of two parts, with modal writing, composed in a polyphonic style, with dynamic contrasts of the question type (always performed in force) and answer (always brought on the piano). The second section is a sequencing of the first, but with a higher tone. The Dorian mode is the basis of the work. It is often described as nostalgic, yet optimistic, feelings emanating from the existence of the small third at the base of the mode and the large sixth formed on the tonic. It is probably the most popular way to describe spring, which symbolizes life, rebirth, hope, as opposed to winter, which symbolizes introspection, loneliness. Voiculescu also uses Dorian in the second section of the paper, in which the atmosphere is melancholy after the snow melts with its "white color", which symbolizes a new beginning, purity.

The musical score for 'Primăvara/Spring' introduction is in 3/4 time and Dorian mode. It is marked as a *Semplice* (♩ = ca 110). Voice I starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic and has the lyrics: "Ci - ne su - ie că - tre mun - te?". Voice II starts with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic and has the lyrics: "Ur că o i le mă run te.". The two voices are polyphonic, with Voice I playing a higher line and Voice II a lower line.

Fig. 2. *Primăvara/Spring – introduction*

The title of the musical composition *Ecou/The Echo* brings us to acoustics and sound reverberations. Dan Voiculescu transposes the echo effect in this choral miniature using as an expressive tool the repetition of the last musical interval in a sentence, with the afferent syllables, but the repetition is made by the other voice, as an answer. The use and play of repeated syllables demonstrates the composer's ability to turn the piece into an effervescent „play" during a beautiful day of camp, which ends with the arrival of night and "peace":

Calmo (♩ = cca 42)

mf *p sub.*

I Ne-am ju-ca si ne-am as-cun-de

II *p* Un de? Un de? Un de? Un de?

Fig. 3. Beginning of the song *Ecou/The Echo*

32 *mf* *p*

I Lar-ma zi-lei s-o im-pa-ce.

II *pp* Pa-ce! Pa-ce! Pa-ce! Pa-ce!

Fig. 4. The end of the song

Moving the song from one voice to another leads to an oblique movement by the pedal method (ison). This, „passed from one voice to another by alternating the phrases of the song itself... gives us good opportunities to polyphonize a song.” (Comes 1965, 191). This is the procedure underlying the choral miniature *Solfegiu/Solmization*, in which the main melody is distributed in a sinusoidal image at the two voices, the change occurring after each measure.

Pe lac/On the lake represents an accessible musical poetry, with playful implications and whose lyrics written by Constantin A. Munteanu arouse laughter. The composer stimulates again the fantasy of the receiver, creating an image that includes melody, words, noises. The text of the poem also contains onomatopoeias (sounds of animals or insects), used to facilitate communication with children and for their amusement. Onomatopoeias are usually found exposed by the second voice, on a rhythmic-melodic ostinato, generating three different images: the repetition of the syllable *mac/quack* suggests the ducks walking on the lake,

swimming among the water lilies; the repetition of the syllable *zum/whirr* on glissando illustrates the up and down flight of the tired bumblebee; the repetition of the syllable *oac/ribbit* creates the image of a choir of frogs laughing at the ducks, who are frightened by the noise of the bumblebee. To create suspense the composer uses rhythmic formulas of sixteenth notes, which he insists on in the following two measures. This musical moment also signifies the climax of the song. To maintain the suspense, measure 19 is equivalent to a general break. After measure 22, a gradual relaxation begins, by solving the mystery related to the source of the noise that scared the ducks. At the end of the play there is a quasi-random passage, performed by children's voices divided into smaller groups and coordinated by the conductor:

Fig. 5. Quasi-random passage from the composition *Pe lac/On the lake*

Another random passage is found in the song *Gospodina/Housewife*, similarly framed in a rectangle to make it stand out. The composer also combines a series of onomatopoeias, exclamations and sounds of indefinite pitch, marked in the score with \times :

Fig. 6. The end of the song *Gospodina/Housewife*

An interesting polyphonic construction is identified in *Bătăușii/The Brawlers*. Here, for greater clarity of the form in which it is written (tripartite form – A-B-A), he uses the compositional technique of the canon, while section B represents an inverted canon:

11 *mp cresc.*
 I Pă - să-ri-le, stând mi - ra - te, Se în - treabă: -Ce au, frațe? Ce au, frațe? Ce au, frațe?
mp cresc.
 II Pă - să-ri-le, stând mi-rote, Se întrebă: -Ce au, frațe? Ce au, frațe? Ce au, frațe?

Fig. 7. Beginning of section B (inverted canon)

The choral miniature *Inimă de câine/Dog's Heart*, written on the lyrics of Tudor Arghezi is another jewel of this volume. The poetic text allows the application of the process of melodic-rhythmic obstinacy to the second voice in contrast to the course of the first voice, resulting in interesting sounds that seem to tend towards bimodalism. The special way in which the work is written, having popular expressiveness due to the augmented second, the augmented fourth and the mobile seventh (leading tone-subtonic) is the following:

Fig. 8. Modal scale in *Inimă de câine/Dog's heart*

4. Conclusions

One of the basic aspects that describes Voiculescu's choral creation for equal voices is polyphony, "a precious way to make musical discourse more and more complex" (Voiculescu 1982, 3). The composer uses certain primitive polyphonic instruments (Comes 1965, 187-191) that are related to the enrichment and exploitation of the potential of the monodic song from which it starts. Depending on the playful qualities offered by the literary text, Voiculescu uses: vocal dialogue (*Ghicitoare/Riddle, Primăvara/Spring*), ostinato on onomatopoeia (*Iscoada/The spy, Pe lac/On the lake, Plouă/It's raining, Din tren/From the train*), pedal-note (*Iscoada/The spy, Ecoul/The Echo*), canon technique (*Iscoada/The spy, Scoală gazdă, dă-mi colac/Get up, host, give me a dinner roll, Iarna/Winter, Tâlharul pedepsit/The punished thief, Rățoiul/The duck*).

Dan Voiculescu is among the most important disciples of Sigismund Toduță, being part of a generation of Cluj composers who have several common features

(Greavu, Pepelea 2020, 119). The exploitation of modalism is manifested in works by approaching the premodal stairs (*Baba-oarba/Blindman's buff*), the usual modal stairs (*Primăvara/Spring, Scoală gazdă, dă-mi colac/Get up, host, give me a dinner roll*), but also by creating certain modes that include intervals less common in vocal practice, but with a strong popular scent (*Într-un lac/In the lake, Inimă de câine/Dog's heart*).

In order to make the contemporary choral language better known, Dan Voiculescu adds elements of modern writing, on short portions, such as the free passages from *Pe lac/On the lake* or *Gospodina/The little Ant Housewife* highlighted by framing in a rectangle.

The choral repertoire signed by Dan Voiculescu stands out with a special expressiveness. It "grows by joining the literary text, giving rise to works that shape, sensitize, discipline and increase the emotional capacity of children. At the same time, the symbols, metaphors and the emotional meaning of the words contribute to the intrinsic value of these works" (Greavu, Pepelea 2019, 26).

Dan Voiculescu provides future conductors and performers with a series of methods of expression, so that by interpreting the songs in this collection he manages to convince and conquer the audience through a game of sounds, musical phrases and dialogue between voices, symbolizing subtle presences of humor and playfulness in children's creations.

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