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**EXPLORATIONS IN THE RELIGIOUS MUSICAL
THOUGHTFULNESS OF THE COMPOSER**

SABIN DRAGOI

(SUMMARY)

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CONTENTS

1. Argument

2. Introduction A history of church music and a few benchmark personalities

2.1. Brief history of universal sacred music.

2.2. The inception of church music in the Romanian area, particularly in Transylvania and Banat

2.3. Benchmark personalities and forerunners of the field in Banat

3. Sabin Dragoi in the Banat music culture

3.1. The personality of the composer

3.2. The life of the composer

3.3. Musical training; affinities with church music

3.4. Teaching activity

3.5. Compositional activity

3.6. Characteristics of the compositional style

4. Sabin Dragoi, theorist of musical folklore from Banat

4.1. *303 Carols with text and melody*, contributions of Sabin Dragoi regarding certain innovative ideas in the modal creation of Romanian carols

4.2. Procedures for harmonizing Romanian carols

4.3. Elements of Banat musical folklore in the work *Monografia muzicală a comunei Belinț (Musical monograph of Belinț commune)*

5. Sabin Dragoi, creator of religious music

5.1. The historical setting in which Sabin Dragoi's religious creation is revealed

5.2. Banat choir music. Origins, appearance, evolution

5.3. Religious choir music from Banat. Appearance and excellence over time

5.4. Church music from Banat in contemporaneity, between traditions and innovations

6. The religious musical creation of the composer Sabin Dragoi from the perspective of some analytical surveys

6.1. Musical thinking in the cult creation of Sabin Dragoi

6.1.1. The harmonic language of *the Popular Liturgy*

6.1.2. Modal landmarks in the musical language of the *Liturgy in E minor*

6.1.3. Harmonization techniques in *the Solemn Liturgy for mixed choir*

6.1.4. The Romanian requiem

6.2. Musical thinking in vocal-symphonic and symphonic religious creation

6.2.1. Stylistic peculiarities in instrumental creation

6.2.2. Harmonic-polyphonic structures in *Sacred Entertainment*

6.2.3 *Constantin Brâncoveanu* - a victory of our orthodoxy

6.2.4. Elements of musical language in *Acestea zice Domnul [These are the words of the Lord]*, for voice, cello and piano

6.2.5. *The poem of the nation* - an offering to the Romanian virtues

Conclusions

Index of Sabin Dragoi's creation

References

Annexes

1. Argument

“To say that the Banat people sang of old seems to no longer require any documentary substantiation, so recognized is the musicality of the people from the parts of Caraș and Timis”, wrote the Banat musicologist Viorel Cosma in 1965.

The present research, which brings to the fore the memory of the founder of the Romanian school - Sabin Dragoi, has its basis in the role played by the one born at the boundary of three counties: Timis, Arad and Hunedoara, in the dimension of a defining universe of this cultural space. The composer's time in Timisoara, after 1924, is marked, in addition to the activity at the Conservatory, by his conducting activity, by his action of founding a male choir model. Supported with a rare solicitude by Ioachim Perian and Iosif Velceanu who self-dissolve their choral formations, in order to offer the most beautiful voices to this young conductor. Thus, the bright road of the conductor Dragoi begins to climb on the trajectory of some accomplishments that were called *Corală Doina, Crai Nou, Corală Bănățeană*. The choristers were attracted by the conductor's personality but also by the repertoire that was refreshed by works of a special beauty: *Trandafir de pe răzoare, Idilă bihoreană, Bănățeană*, etc. Dragoi imposes himself with authority during the great emulations that Banat experienced since 1922, when the *Association of choirs and fanfares from Banat* was established, consecrating the reality of their proliferation in almost all the communes of Banat. The most beautiful songs will be harmonized out of the pattern of the Western major-minor in favour of a modal

thinking, of a sound universe folded with special finesse to the suggestions from the melodic archetype of the used folk reference.

The importance of dealing with such a subject in an academic paper stems from the fact that, despite the above, in the last 3 decades of the twentieth century too few volumes or articles have been written (most being general dictionaries of personalities of Romanian music or other works of a similar nature) about the life and creation of this composer, thus coming to feel, over time, more and more acutely the lack of specialized treatises to deal in depth with his personality and his work.

In conclusion, we can say that the lack of recent bibliography dedicated solely to the composer and an approach to the composer's religious creation in the last half of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century is located almost on inexistent coordinates, this together with the composer's personality of mark both for the musical world of Banat from the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century and for the general framework of the Romanian society in Banat the same period, we deem that an academic treaty of the composer's personality, of his activity and his religious work, brought up to date in terms of musicological research, is necessary. At the same time, the present study joins the general efforts to bring up to light some unexplored aspects of the composer's work, intending to reveal new aspects related to the modal harmonization technique of his religious creation.

Deepening Dragoi's religious creation, I discovered an impressive number of religious scores, both liturgical and in other genres, which are currently sung very little or not at all. Unfortunately, these are not known, even among professionals, this making it difficult for me to collect the complete religious work.

A goal of the present research is related to these issues, trying to explain this dilemma through the detailed analysis of the religious repertoire - why is this great composer insufficiently sung in cult music? Dragoi's composition palette includes many musical genres: vocal music, for piano, chamber music, film music, opera music, symphonic, vocal symphonic, choral. Of these, I will focus my attention on one side of the creation of the composer Sabin Dragoi, namely religious creation, which is very rich, and includes broad genres, such as those mentioned above. Many of these works have not been published for almost a century. This is another goal, to publish these scores by going through a general musical analysis in the hope that they will arouse interest both in the field of musicology but especially to be presented to the public in concert halls or in the church. Most of the reviewed scores are in manuscript, with the composer's signature and other indications and notations.

Given the lack of recent materials to deal exclusively and in detail with aspects related to the life and work of the composer Sabin Dragoi and especially his religious creation, this paper aims to reach the major areas of research to be contained, according to the rigors of Church Music History, of such a material. Thus, each chapter of this work is based on a specific goal, the total of these goals having the mission to outline the entire musicological portrait of the composer Sabin Dragoi.

Throughout the work I intend to highlight all the scientific, artistic, professional and moral aspects of the life and work of this great Romanian composer, who is Sabin Dragoi.

2. Introduction

2.1. Brief history of universal sacred music

“Music is of divine origin and born in the nature of man, it is an activity through which man expresses his soul and body passion. Music is cry - a word that Adam needed after the pain that gripped his soul as a result of the sin of disobedience”.¹

Of all the arts, music gives the most expressiveness and communicativeness, it has the most calming effect on the soul, but it can make man troubled to the depths of his heart and unravel all his secret cages.² Music contributes to the liberation of man from the shadows of thought and his escape to realms not yet explored by reason. Music is the most comprehensive, more specific expression of the soul of the people, especially among Romanians, who are par excellence a musical people, whose song was their confession, consolation, hope, prayer. “I don't sing, as I know how to sing / To calm my heart”,³ the Romanian kept on singing, competing with the chirping of birds. Music has elevated thought and soul to divinity, national music “shows the moral condition and aesthetic taste of a people.”⁴

In Christianity, music will be a component part of worship, representing the most sublime form of praise to God. The early Christians did not care so much about the composition of the songs, but about the prayer expressed deeply with the help of different songs in recitative or singable style, taking an original Christian form in different genres or

¹ Grigorie Băbuș, *Despre activitatea muzicală a lui Anton Pann*, Romanian Orthodox Church, year CIV (1986), no.3-4, p.115

² Pr. Ioan Mihălcescu, *Muzica religioasă în general și muzica noastră bisericească*, Romanian Orthodox Church, year XLIII (1925), no. 5, pp. 276

³ Pr. Gheorghe Cunescu, *George Enescu*, Romanian Orthodox Church, year C (1982), no. 1-2, pp. 167

⁵ P. Gârboviceanu, *Muzica. Definițiunea, efectele și originea ei*, Romanian Orthodox Church, year XIX (1895), no.6, p. 289

⁶ P. Gârboviceanu, *Muzica. Definițiunea, efectele și originea ei*, Romanian Orthodox Church, year XIX (1895), no.6, pp. 293-294

musical colours, perfected in Byzantine schools.

From the 4th century, after the period of persecution, the Christian cult developed, the singers began to organize. As the divine cult developed and at the same time the singing, the need was felt for specialists, for singers trained to sing. From the 4th century we already have mentions regarding this, when at the Synod of Laodicea in 364, through canon 15, it was established: “It is not proper for others to sing in the Church from the leather books than the canonical psalms who ascend the pulpit.” The singers learned to sing in more or less organized music schools, in addition to a connoisseur of singing.

2.2 The inception of church music in the Romanian space, especially in Transylvania and Banat

Music was not absent from the cult of any religion, all religions practicing singing in its simplest or most complex form. In the same way, the Romanian people must have had a form of song present in the rudimentary cult from the beginning of Christianization.

On the territory of Banat and in Transylvania, the existence of religious singing is linked to the religious life dating back to ancient times. The spread of Christianity in Banat became more intense between the years 350-450, with the contribution of Bishop Niceta de Remesiana and the missionaries, his missionary, catechetical, religious musical works being of use. Numerous historians mention this by noting his special activity through sermons, catechesis, church songs and hymns, numerous writings, all written in a simple, easily intelligible Latin, in a fluent style and great clarity.

Regarding the variety of our church music, this is a characteristic that results from its structure and specificity, which does not affect its unity, but on the contrary, enhances it. This natural variety, typical of our church music, may not be seen as a lack of uniformity but on the contrary, as the expressive element that defines and emphasizes the unity of our national church music.

Our church music is unitary and uniform through the expressive content that springs from the very being of our people, and the various forms of exteriorization capitalize on this authentic content. In fact, popular music and Romanian poetry is highly varied as an expressive essence and different in form from one region to another, but through its expressive content it is unitary and representative.

2.3. Benchmark personalities and forerunners of the field in Banat

The religious music from Banat has always been subject to correction and preservation in the patterns of Byzantine singing through priests and monks who came from Wallachia as well as through the choir books printed in Wallachia and brought to Banat.

Among the representative names of the musicians from Banat who wrote down the church songs by printing them, we must note the following: **Priest Terentius Bugariu, Trifon Lugojan, Professor Nicolae Firu, Priest Cornel Givulescu, Nicolae Ștefu, Ion Vidu, Antonio Sequens, Timotei Popovici, Iosif Velceanu.**

Among the outstanding personalities in the field of church music, the following should also be mentioned: professor and composer **Zeno Vancea, Vadim Șumschi, priest Ioan Teodorovici, Dimitrie Cusma, Gheorghe Dobreanu.**

For the 20th and 21st centuries, the most resonant names in Romanian church music in the western part of the country, we note: **Gheorghe Firca, Priest Nicolae Belean.**

Following the entire creation of the mentioned musicians, one can observe a gradual and continuous development of music in the Romanian Orthodox Church. If in the 19th century there was a period of probing in which foreign musical currents are felt, the 20th century represents the epoch of fixing a local style. The composers of this period exploited the pure church melody, their religious choral creation being crossed by the specifics of choir songs from all areas of the country.

3. Sabin Dragoi in the Banat music culture

3.1. The life of the composer

Born in a village on the banks of the Mures River on June 18, 1894 in Seliste commune, Lipova - Arad district, in a region of original and rich folk art, son of Vasile Dragoi, church singer and famous bagpiper, and of Floara (born Cojan), Sabin Dragoi has been fascinated since childhood by the musical atmosphere of his native village; he assimilated the melodic and rhythmic substance of the people in whose midst he lived his childhood and adolescence, learning to appreciate his millennial culture.

He graduated from primary school in 1904 with the grade *Eminent*, and the following year he enrolled the classes of the Civil School in Arad. Then he follows the Normal State School for Teachers in Arad, after which he is enlisted in the army, having the misfortune to stay there for 7 years. In 1918, being mobilized again, Dragoi received approval to complete his musical studies at the Conservatory of Music and Histrionics in Cluj while carrying his military service. In the winter of 1920, Dragoi fulfilled his much-craved dream, that of perfecting and completing his musical training, this time at the Prague Conservatory.

He carries out his professional activity in Deva as a teacher, then in Timisoara. For 4 years, Dragoi will also fulfil the position of director of the Romanian Opera in Cluj, moved in Timisoara, together with that of permanent professor at the Communal Conservatory of the

same locality. The period from Timisoara will end on October 1, 1950, when he is appointed professor of folklore at the Ciprian Porumbescu Conservatory in Bucharest, being also director of the National Institute of Ethnography and Folklore until 1964.

Crowned with glory, he died in Bucharest, on December 31, 1968, at the age of 74.

3.2. Musical training. Affinities with church music

Sabin Dragoi's first contact with music takes place from an early age in his native village on the banks of the Mureş River.

In Arad, in the second year of high school, music was one of the subjects. After high school, he will follow the Normal State School for Teachers in Arad, where music was notable: theory, solfeggio, piano, violin. Now, in his life, the vocation for music is clearly beginning to emerge. He attends the services of the Catholic, Lutheran and Calvinist churches where he discovers the expressiveness of the organ. He also participates in the services of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopal Cathedral, where he meets the amazing expressive resources of the 4-part choir. As the composer himself confesses, this was one of the strongest impulses received to dedicate himself to the art of music.

Dragoi went voluntarily, not being held by the school, to attend any church, every Sunday and holiday to listen to the choir of the Orthodox seminary singing the liturgy of Professor Trifon Lugojan conducted by him. For the future composer, this was an authentic source of inspiration, the orthodox religious music of pew and choral imprinting deeply in the mind and soul of the artist.

3.3. Teaching activity

On August 6, 1922, he was offered the position of substitute music teacher at the Normal School of Teachers in Deva. In 1925, the mayor's office named him the permanent holder of the Municipal Conservatory of Timișoara. The composer was director and teacher of harmony, counterpoint and composition. In 1942 he was appointed director, then full professor of composition at the Conservatory of Music and Histrionics in Cluj, located in Timisoara. In the autumn of 1946, the State Conservatory of Music and Histrionics in Timisoara was established, to which Dragoi was transferred as professor of harmony and counterpoint from the school in Cluj. In 1949, the Conservatory of Timisoara was transformed into an Art Institute, where Dragoi was appointed rector and professor of composition. On October 1, 1950, he was appointed professor of folklore at the "Ciprian Porumbescu" Conservatory in Bucharest, being also director of the National Institute of Ethnography and Folklore until 1964.

3.4. Compositional activity

Sabin Dragoi's creation deals with two major compositional fields, one that focuses on the traditional patterns of classical music, and another on the capitalization of the popular melody and its transplantation within the Romanian cult music. During his pioneering period, Sabin Dragoi is tempted to compose music according to the training he was following, in the traditional classical style. An occasion of honour was when, at the request of the school management, he composed a funeral march dedicated to the commemoration of the death of Franz Joseph's wife.

After graduation, he will compose several choirs, reminiscent of the *Strigat-am* and numerous songs for voice and piano. During his time in Prague, Dragoi approaches the genre of the instrumental suite, writing the first three parts of the *Romanian Suite* for organ and orchestra. During his time in Deva, rich in folk research, he elaborated the *Suite of Romanian folk dances for piano*, based on the folk material collected by him. On the occasion of the anniversary of the proclamation of the Union of Transylvania with Romania, in 1923 he wrote in Deva a jubilee cantata, *Lăudați*, for mixed choir and fanfare. Also during this period in Deva, he composed the work of musical folklore *303 Colinde. The liturgy in E minor for men's choir* was completed in 1926. In 1935, the play *Constantin Brâncoveanu* was staged, which was initially a musical version of the *Akathist of Saint Dimitrie cel Nou Basarabov*. Numerous musical works will follow, of which the most significant were: *Sacred entertainment, Solemn Liturgy and 30 choirs* inspired by the *Musical Monograph of Belinți commune*. Dragoi's most extensive symphonic work was *Poemul Neamului* in 12 parts. The orthodox memorial is musically dressed in the form of *the Romanian Requiem*, for soloists, children's choir and mixed choir.

Dragoi's composition palette includes many musical genres: vocal music, for piano, chamber music, film music, opera music, symphonic, vocal symphonic, choral.

3.5. Characteristics of the compositional style

Sabin Dragoi discovers and promotes aspects that have been exploited only sporadically until then by other composers, through his complex activity as a folklore collector, music researcher and composer. A preponderant place in Sabin Dragoi's creation is occupied by vocal music and especially choral music. We believe that this preference for certain genres comes from the deep analysis of folklore, from which the author retained the singable and expressive character of our songs.

Sabin Dragoi uses in most works a harmony that results from the scale of the song processed with precise functional preferences. Many of his creations, inspired by the

traditions of our folk song, bear the stamp of his professionalism, talent and devoted work. The most insignificant fragments, motifs, or rhythmic groups, for others, receive musical meaning after they have been carefully modelled and placed in the right place by his skill.

4. Sabin Dragoi - theorist of Banat musical folklore

Sabin Dragoi has always shown a special interest in Romanian musical culture, standing out in this direction through a rich research activity of musical folklore in Banat. His preoccupations in this field focused on the language elements specific to the popular creation, on the framing of the Banat musical folklore as a field of science and on its placement on the coordinates of the Romanian cult music.

Sabin Dragoi's most valuable contribution to the theorizing of Romanian folklore is the introductory theoretical study in *303 Colinde*, published in 1931, in which the author conducts extensive musical research from an analytical point of view on a sample of carols from southern Transylvania.

Dragoi's folklore activity is the most important from the interwar period, the folk materials collected by him representing a valuable document for understanding the life and soul sensitivity of the Romanian peasant.

4.1. 303 Colinde with text and melody

This collection of carols was dedicated to the composer Tiberiu Brediceanu, folklore collector and composer from Banat, the first who dared to introduce popular music in the patterns of cult music.

In the introduction to his collection of carols, Sabin Dragoi insists on the main axes that characterize each song: measure, rhythm, melody, modulation, form, tempo:

1. Carols are rich in size. In addition to monometric measures, it also favours polymetric measures. Incomplete measures are rare but possible. Fermatas and breaks are also very rare in carols. Carols favour irregular accents (antagonism between measure and accent).

2. Carols contain a true spring of rhythms. Developed rhythms are preferred. Primitive ones are only rarely seen. Syncope is very common in carols, but only isolated among other rhythms. The rhythmic structure of the carol loves asymmetry.

3. Carol melody is based on the most varied ranges. The limit (ambitus) favours the intervals: high sixth, perfect fifth, low seventh, low octave and sixth. The modulations are many and interesting.

4. The shapes of the carols are extremely varied, favouring the shapes of 2 and 3 melodic lines.
5. The means of variation are many.
6. Ornaments are rare, but so are the melismas.
7. The tempos are many and varied. And there are more harmonies that can be put under these songs.

4.2. Procedures for harmonizing Romanian carols

After the presentation of his work, *Musical Monograph of Belinț commune*, the Committee of the Romanian Social Institute Banat-Crisana entrusts the composer with the task of processing a number of collected songs for mixed choirs and men choirs, leaving the composer to choose them. From 90 songs collected, Dragoi chose and harmonized 30, their choice being based on the following principles: to be unknown, beautiful, of documentary value, suitable for choral arrangement and simple.

Many of these choirs are harmonized carols for mixed or male choirs, but as the author mentions, “this arrangement is not intended for caroling through houses in the Christmas Eve, but for demonstration concerts. However, for a caroling as a custom - for any eventuality - the complete texts can be taken from the quoted Monograph.”

The conciseness and sobriety of the means, the purity and stylistic unity, the beauty of the songs, the sincerity and intensity of the feeling, make the choirs on the songs of the carols from Belinți, exemplary creations for the Romanian choral school.

4.3. Elements of Banat musical folklore in the work *Musical monograph of Belinți commune*

For the most part, this work has the form and structure of the one previously reviewed, namely *303 Colinde*. Sabin Dragoi's research gradually expands in this work, addressing besides carols and other aspects discovered in *doine*, the actual songs, lamentations and folk dances. We notice, from the beginning, the great resemblance between the two works having the same chapters: Accents, Rhythmic, Melodic, Melodic scope, Architectural form, Variations - variants, Ornamentation - melismas, The relationship between text and melody, Tempos.

Sabin Dragoi remains among the few musicians who managed to harmoniously combine the preoccupations of a folklorist with those of a composer, his entire work bearing the living seal of our national specificity.

5. Sabin Dragoi, creator of religious music

5.1. The historical setting in which Sabin Dragoi's religious creation is revealed

The start of the 20th century was characterized by the Romanian composers' effort to recover two centuries of European tradition in the field of composition as well as by the realization of the national folk specificity of the musical works. Examining the history of universal music, we can see that the tendencies of the composers were related to the creation of their own musical genre with a form of expression appropriate to the feelings of their people, which means a national school. In interwar Romanian music, Sabin Dragoi was the composer whose creation was based on his love for national folklore.

Sabin Dragoi's appurtenance to this cultural context of those times highlights the composer's personality, originality and desire to assert himself in the field of new music, but promoting traditional values. Sabin Dragoi was contemporary with great Romanian personalities, with the affirmation of the Romanian musical school patronized by the spirit of Enescu with whom he will collaborate.

5.2. Banat choir music. Origins, appearance, evolution.

Reviewing the opinions of researchers in the field, browsing the musical materials published in the books of church songs in Banat, we can say that church music in Banat is a complex subject. It must be seen in the context of the geographical position, the area of confluence in which it appeared and developed. Considering that Banat is in the extremity of the country, on the border with the western catholic culture, being many times under different administrative-political leaderships, we understand the state and the evolution of the church music of the Romanians from these parts. We must also emphasize the role of the anthologies of church songs, of the mentioned authors, which through their perseverance represented a solid reference base of choir music, being at the same time the best guide and the best textbook for discovering and mastering Banat church songs.

5.3. Religious music for the choir from Banat. Appearance and excellence over time

Banat can primarily assume the beginning of religious choral activity, as the first village choirs appeared in this corner of the country. Speaking about the religious choirs from Banat, created from the love and passion of Banat for music, as well as about the local artistic

and spiritual climate, without the intention to establish a hierarchy, we must emphasize the church origin of all Banat choirs.

The one who promoted religious choral music was the pew song. The first conductors and composers who harmonized choir (pew) songs left us the most eloquent evidence of the way our Banat song was presented, at least a century and a half before them. Through them we can know how it was sung in Banat, after 1700. Comparing the songs noted by them with those practiced today in the Banat church, we can say that they are the same, with slight changes in the ornaments used in certain areas of Banat.

6. The religious musical creation of the composer Sabin Dragoi from the perspective of some analytical surveys

6.1. Musical thinking in the cult creation of Sabin Dragoi

Sabin Dragoi's activity in the field of church music begins at a time when, in the evolution of this music, an event of major significance occurs, namely the onset of choral singing.

Sabin Dragoi's cult creation, in general, demonstrates the fact that the author, showing a noble inspiration and a rare originality, managed to impress and transmit that holy thrill to people's souls. The three liturgies represent for the Romanian cult music, pages of an inestimable artistic value, having at the foundation strong themes that oscillate between tonal and modal, from the processing of which resulted invaluable pages of Romanian musical art.

Referring to Sabin Dragoi's contribution to the creation of an orthodox Romanian music, the composer Filaret Barbu confessed: *“From his first liturgy, he understood his contribution to the creation of religious music. This contribution is the very image of the divine being with a life-giving harmonic power that must be felt, understood and appreciated, as only in this way can it create its true path, becoming divine, natural and human.”*

6.1.1 The harmonic language of the Popular Liturgy

A lesser known Liturgy belonging to the composer Sabin Dragoi is the popular *Liturgy* for men's choir, inspired by the ancient church songs written by Nicolae Ștefu, a well-known teacher and conductor from Arad. This Liturgy, so named for the simple reason that it was intended to be from the very beginning a work accessible and understandable to all, has a predominantly harmonious character, without encountering in its course any other form of treatment. The importance of this Liturgy is overwhelming for the liturgical landscape of the

country, being able to be placed next to the famous liturgies of other composers. Due to its smaller size, the Popular Liturgy does not meet the conditions of a work intended for the concert, it uses strictly the religious service.

6.1.2. Modal landmarks in the musical language of the *Liturgy in E minor*

In Sabin Dragoi's Liturgy for men's choir, almost all the features of musical language are found that lead to a certain specific personal modality of the author. The liturgy in E minor for men's choir was dedicated to the first patriarch of the Romanians, Miron E. Cristea, being completed in 1926 in Timisoara. The liturgy is not a psaltic one, not because of its tonal-modal framework of development, but because of its harmonic invoice.

The melody of the Liturgy is also related to the composer's inventiveness, and adheres to a certain style of liturgical choral singing, familiar to musicians of this kind.

The melodic background of the Liturgy may not enter in the Byzantine voices or in the popular chromatic heptachordic modes, but rather in the variants of the major-minor with modal tint - the natural minor and the melodic major.

6.1.3. Harmonization techniques in the Solemn Liturgy for mixed choir

The Solemn Liturgy in F major for mixed choir was written in the summer of 1936 - the spring of 1937. As in the Liturgy in E minor, Dragoi does not use liturgical quotations in this either, but uses exclusively his own melodic creations. The overall concept emphasizes the larger parts of the liturgy such as the *Heruvicul, Ca pe Împăratul, Pe Tatăl, Cu vrednicie, Sfânt e Domnul, Pe Tine Te laudăm, Văzut-am lumina, Să se umple gurile noastre*, to which the composer gives a broader development, as the liturgy is called solemn. This liturgy lacks the "priceasna" (a hymn).

In April 1937, on Palm Sunday, it was sung for the first time with the "Crai Nou" choir trained and conducted by the composer himself.

6.1.4 The Romanian requiem

Sabin Dragoi composed this Romanian Requiem or the memorial service in 1943, being marked by the death of his wife. The work was designed for a large choral ensemble consisting of mixed choir, children's choir, women's choir and men's choir, as well as moments with soloists. This results in an extensive suite of 45 pieces from simple responsories to well-defined strophic shapes. During the service, we meet five variants of funeral litany and some moments included in the verses from the funeral service. The author adds to the addenda another 23 variants of various funeral responsories.

6.2. Musical thinking in vocal-symphonic and symphonic religious creation

6.2.1. Stylistic peculiarities in instrumental creation

Being largely influenced by the innovative ideas of Bela Bartok and George Enescu, Sabin Dragoi carries on this initiative of the great advanced composers of the second half of the 19th century. His vast creation is between the genre of miniature works and symphonic and opera works. Most of the works, however, belong to the *a cappella* choral genre, which is based on the folk song collected by the author himself from different areas of the country.

Dragoi's entire creation is characterized by this preference to harmoniously dress as simply and expressively as possible the Romanian folk song, both by procedures specific to Western classicism and neoclassicism, and by approaching an interesting concept of modal origin. The use of rudimentary polyphony elements combined with archaic heterophony elements is another compositional element used by the composer.

Sabin Dragoi, with a special attention on the Romanian folk song, will expand his field of research on its dominant factor, the song.

6.2.2 Harmonic-polyphonic structures in *Sacred Entertainment*

Sacred Entertainment was conceived by the author as a correspondent of *Rustic Entertainment*. In this work, Sabin Dragoi capitalizes in a superior form his knowledge of cult music in a very original conception. The composer deals, in a pre-classical form, with a stylistic interpretation of five pew songs from Good Friday. Like the rustic one, *Sacred Entertainment* is designed for a chamber orchestral ensemble with string quintet, three wood blowers and harpsichord. Initially, the composer entrusted the harpsichord with a ciphered bass, which he would have followed for the instrumentalist, at the same time a conductor according to the baroque tradition, to perform during the concert.

Being composed in 1933, *Sacred Entertainment* was performed in the first audition by the philharmonic orchestra under the baton of Ionel Perlea at the Athenaeum in Bucharest in 1935.

This work represents an original contribution of Sabin Dragoi to the diversification of the artistic landscape of Romanian music between the two wars. The stylistic experience encountered in the work can be discussed from different points of view. However, the sure intuition of the composer is required, who suggestively highlighted a resonance between the

two artistic worlds, the eastern and the western. The artist's friend, Radu Urlățianu, called this work “a plowing requiem, a Banat requiem”, thus giving it a local imprint.

6.2.3. *Constantin Brâncoveanu* - a victory of our orthodoxy

Constantin Brâncoveanu is one of the dramatic works of Sabin Dragoi, which differs from the others. The author deals here with a new and different issue from the usual opera performance, thinking of the dramatic vision in several stages. The theme of the work was suggested by the poet Adrian Maniu in the autumn of 1928 in Bucharest, proposing to musically dress the poem *Acatistul preacuviosului părintelui nostru Sfântul Dimitrie cel Nou, boarul din Basarabov* of the writer Sandu Tudor. Dragoi composes music and orchestration, conceiving in a first form a “religious work in one act”. He later wrote an orchestral introduction, “Procesiunea”. At the indirect suggestion of Victor Eftimiu, he changed his title to *Constantin Brâncoveanu*, remaining an akathist (sacred musical drama) in two parts with a procession, the music and the text remaining unchanged.

The premiere takes place at the opera in Bucharest on October 25, 1935. As one would think from the title, *Constantin Brâncoveanu* is not a historical work, not even a work per se, but it adopts a special drama, having no stage action, characters but only soloists. However, the work is not an ordinary oratory, with multiple explicit dramatic elements, but is in fact a dramatized divine service, *a stylized memorial service and transposed on the stage of the lyrical theater*, as Lucian Surlășiu calls it, *a spiritualized service*.

6.2.4. Elements of musical language in *Acestea zice Domnul*, for voice, cello and piano

The Antiphon of the Passions, sung at Denia on Holy Thursday, *Acestea zice Domnul*, was composed by Sabin Dragoi in 1926 based on the song of voice 8 - the verse version after the Banat version sung in the area of Arad and Timisoara. The work was designed by the composer for a middle voice, baritone or viola, doubled by cello to piano accompaniment.

Based on this work for a soloist and cello with piano accompaniment, some composers have adapted it for different vocal ensembles. We note in this sense the harmonization for mixed choir of Ioan D. Chirescu and for men's choir of Nicu Moldoveanu. Both variants are faithful to the reference used by Sabin Dragoi, dressing it in a harmonious form suitable for dedicated formations.

6.2.5. *The poem of the nation* - an offering to the Romanian virtues

“Poemul neamului” is one of the most extensive works for orchestra by the composer Sabin Dragoi, written in the summer of 1936 at the request of the Bucharest Romanian

Athenaeum committee on the occasion of the unveiling of the great fresco by the painter Constantin Petrescu. Dragoi was asked for a work that would make a musical correspondent of the historical moments painted in fresco.

With an extraordinary power of work and through his clear spirit, after more than four months, with the emotion with which he approached the work, he gives it as a supreme offering brought to the Romanian virtues.

It is impossible to reproduce all historical events in a musical form. The only method suitable for the possibilities of musical expression remains the highlighting of the main epochs and rendering of the essence clothed in the known musical forms.

Eager to include in the opera as much and more precisely as possible, the composer amplified it to unusually large proportions for a symphonic poem and divided it into ten main parts.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Through his entire artistic activity, for more than half a century, Sabin Dragoi remains one of the creators with a major contribution to laying the foundation stone and to increasing the prestige of the Romanian school of composition. Continuing the tradition of Romanian musicians from the second half of the last century, stimulated by the example of George Enescu, creatively assimilating the experience of artists from other national schools and relying on deep knowledge of folklore as well as the classical heritage of universal music, Dragoi had a role in the development of Romanian musical culture for almost four decades. Through its valuable general features, his work, expressed in its own artistic and original language, moulded in the stylistic matrix of our ethnographic culture, is given a place of honour in modern Romanian music.

Unlike other composers, with Western musical education, who are based on Western cultured music in which they absorbed popular elements, Dragoi goes in the opposite direction, from popular to cult music, from folk substance to professional formulas. Grigore Popa, non-musician, has a suggestive formulation of this process: “*The musical ontology for Dragoi is the Romanian musical folklore.*” In this way, Sabin Dragoi's path differs from that of most of his contemporaries.