

SONOROUS HYPOSTASES FOR A TANKA POEM

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Abstract: *The vocal miniatures pertaining to the composers Theodor Grigoriu and Dan Dediu, on which we make a series of analytical considerations, prove the richness of the musical means through whose intermediary there may be associated the word and the music. The lyrics offer an original interpenetration between Zen and Christianity; there will be insisted on the diversity of the two aphoristic sonorous hypostases, one based on sonorous metaphors, the other one based on metastylism.*

Key words: *haiku, Romanian lieder, analytical landmark.*

“To write vocal music means, after all, to create relations between a multitude of words and a multitude of musical sounds” [5, p. 51]; the manner in which these relations are built pertains to every composer’s style. The lied, the supreme sign for the musical refinement of a culture, is a complex genre, with certain features of structure and attitude, in which the sounds express themselves, beside the words, even more than poetry can do by itself, as the sonorous completeness is being built in connection to the meanings of the text with whom it inseparably merges for ever.

In an exposé dedicated to the Romanian lied, the composer Carmen Petra Basacopol stated that “the basic element of lied is poetry” [4], also quoting the opinion of the essayist Nicolae Steinhardt: “poetry is not a simple genre. It is a *state* of mind, of the psycho-somatic complex, of the temperamental disposition. It is in the most obvious manner a *state of grace* (...) it is a manner of knowledge analogous to intuition or revelation, therefore

unutterably deeper, more precious, more fragile” [4].

The lieder we submit for analysis belong to Theodor Grigoriu (b.1926) and Dan Dediu (b. 1968), two reference names of the Romanian school of composition. The text was written by the poet Şerban Codrin (b. 1945), who, through his lyrical creation of Japanese type, inscribes in the “austere sign, Zen, of the high altitude poetry” [1, p. 71]. It is about the third stanza in *Agnus Dei* from *Missa Requiem* in which the poet, adapting the Oriental fixed forms to the spirit and letters of the Romanian language, manages an interpenetration of maximum originality, beyond the doctrines, between Zen and Christianity, leaving free way to interpretation, in a waltz of spirit through symbols. „*Missa requiem* unifies gunsaku and sequences on the tissue of ideas in the Christian hymn of the Middle Ages. The suggestions of the verses in Latin melt in a few dozens of tanka and haiku, where Buddha seems forgotten, there being accepted *God’s kingdom* instead of the path towards nirvana, or inversely, which is the very

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same thing” [2, p. 235]. The poems *haiku* and *tanka* by Şerban Codrin have also “lured” other Romanian composers (Eduard Térenyi, Vasile Spătărelu, Cornelia Tăutu), but those who opted for the lyrics “Thorns and wild roses / grow red around / a wood triptych - / bleeding once more / the crucified body” are (according to the information we hold for the time being) only Theodor Grigoriu and Dan Dediu.

The lied composed by Theodor Grigoriu is part of the cycle of 9 haikus for voice and piano *Dincolo de tăcere, Iisus [Beyond Silence, Jesus]*. Its lyrics are chosen after an anthological criterion and follow a central idea. Dan Dediu’s lied belongs to the cycle *Wolfiana op.59*, unified especially through the metastylistic manner of musical treatment. Although it is an important element, we will not discuss as follows every cycle of lieder integrally and the elements of musical dramaturgy it contains, but we will try – through revealing formal aspects as well as aspects of musical language – to decode the “interpretation” that each composer gave to the same poem, and the different manner in which each master translated through music the signification of the words.

Both lieder, created on a poem of only three lines are likewise of small dimensions – 17 measures at Theodor Grigoriu and 10 measures at Dan Dediu – having as possible model Weber’s aphoristic creations; the composers did not feel the need to bring an instrumental “supplement”, of music without text, except an intervention for the piano (measures 4-6) in Dan Dediu’s musical piece. Both creations unfold in a unique measure of 4/4 and in a unique tempo which suggests for the interpreters rather an atmosphere, a state, then a developing speed (*Quasi lento* at Grigoriu’s lied, and *Malincolico* at Dediu’s lied). There is to be mentioned that in the first case there do not

appear terms of expression, beside the numerous *rallentandos* (measures 4-5; measures 8-9; measures 12-13; measures 16-17) followed by the return to the initial tempo, while in the second case there are *doloroso, sostenuto, dolce*, but there are no *rallentandos* or *ritenutos*, the composer seemingly leaving at the interpreters’ will the eventual – and minimal – fluctuations of the unfolding speed that he proposes (the crotchet ~ 80). Dediu’s lied, globally seen, is seemingly more alert than the one of Theodor Grigoriu, especially due to the values of the notes which are being used (subject on which we will return) and to the “fugitive vision” on Jesus on the cross, made iridescent by the transparent sonorities used in small and very small nuances by the younger composer whose creative approach is marked by the speed typical of the century.

As formal structure, the square shaped construction created by Theodor Grigoriu brings a little form with reprise, based on the varied resumption of the segment (phrase) **b** and a small evolution (the segment/phrase **c**). The segmentation of the musical articulation is generally modelled by the poetical text, the composer enhancing the text and creating a certain expression through intuition and imagination, through delving into substance, and not through technical means.

Dan Dediu’s lied proposes the formal structure **a av**. In phrase **a** (measures 1-4), it is like an homage in metastylistic manner brought to the “Cantor from Leipzig”, the symbol BACH is well incrustated in the piano accompaniment. The series of seven descending perfect fifths (measure 4), articulated in groups of two, which lead to a movement of crotchets in the grave register of the piano, with a melodic motion from phrase **a** are to be noted. With small modifications, phrase **a v** (measures 7-10) is the shift upwards of

the first two measures of phrase **a**; the accompaniment undergoes an inferior chromatic translation which produces on the expressive plan a more accentuated darkening of the atmosphere generated by the view of the Crucified body. In the last two measures, the piano brings the symbol BACH once more to the right hand;

afterwards, the left hand closes the lied with two ascending fifths in the acute register of the piano. (END).

Unlike Dan Dediu, who successively brings (at the piano) the sounds of the interval of fifths, both during the musical piece (ex.1) and in its end (ex.2).

Ex. 1 is a musical score for piano accompaniment. It features a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a 4/4 time signature. The music begins with a dynamic marking of *pp dolce*. The right hand plays a melodic line with a chromatic descent in the first two measures, followed by a sixteenth-note triplet in the third measure, and a triplet of eighth notes in the fourth measure. The left hand provides a steady accompaniment with a tremollo effect, indicated by a bracket and the word *tremollo* below the staff. The piece concludes with two ascending fifths in the acute register of the piano, marked with *8^{va}* and a dashed line above the notes.

Ex. 1

Ex. 2 is a musical score for piano accompaniment. It features a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a 4/4 time signature. The music begins with a dynamic marking of *ppp*. The right hand plays a melodic line with a chromatic descent in the first two measures, followed by a sixteenth-note triplet in the third measure, and a triplet of eighth notes in the fourth measure. The left hand provides a steady accompaniment with a tremollo effect, indicated by a bracket and the word *trem.* below the staff. The piece concludes with two ascending fifths in the acute register of the piano, marked with *8^{va}* and a dashed line above the notes.

Ex. 2

Theodor Grigoriu exploits the sonorous effect created by simultaneously bringing out the acoustic potential of the interval

sounds, both in some moments during the lied (ex.3), and in its end (ex.4), bathed by the sonority of the same interval.



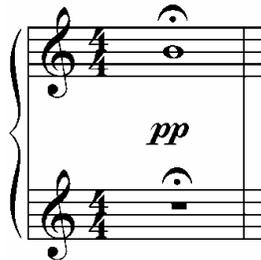
Ex. 3



Ex. 4

Both lieder undergoing the analysis are deprived of dimensioned piano introductions, the instrument is the one

which “advances” the sonority: through a single sound at Grigoriu (ex.5), through accord structures at Dediu (ex.6).



Ex. 5



Ex. 6

As regards the type of writing, Theodor Grigoriu resorts to a unique solution, which is the harmonized (choral) carol. The main melody, entrusted to the voice, has a Byzantine „scent”, seemingly invoking Jesus’ sacrifice for every mortal. The vocal melodic line, unfolded in a relatively restrained range ($re^1 - re^2$), „sounds” in a *si minor* with mobile steps (II, VI, VII), but it is practically neutralized by stereotyped accords of the piano, which „glide” on parallel sextaccords in a likewise restrained range, between $re - la^2$, all notes being distributed, according to the writing, to be executed with a single hand. This is one moment in which the pianist is required maximum expressivity and a differentiation of the manners of attack, control and safety on the fingers, to render

with a single hand the three voices of the accompaniment.

Likewise, the pedalling – extremely diversified and adapted both to the instrument one disposes of during the execution and to the expected (desired) sonority – is an element which will give the measure of the instrument’s qualities.

Dan Dediu creates a page of music with orchestral valences through a generous musical range ($Do_1 - la^4$), resorting to elements of suggestion and symbol, without doing this however directly, preferring to submit a modal atmosphere strongly diluted by bringing the chromatic completeness ever since the very beginning. The profile of his melodic lines, completely different from the linearity of those of Theodor Grigoriu, sends our thought to the dodecaphonic manner of treatment: almost in zigzag, in which

prevail the increased and diminished intervals, beside the frequent exchange of instrumental registers. The voice unfolds in a comfortable range $re^1 - mi^2$, but the interpreter is required greater self-assurance and ability because of the intonation difficulty of the intervals and of the frequent exchange of the sonorous registers in the general sonority brought by the piano.

As regards the set of intervals resorted to, it seems interesting to mention that Theodor Grigoriu pre-eminently uses (in the melody of the voice) the intervals of *seconds* (13 Big *seconds* 9 small *seconds*, especially in a descending sense, although from the expressive standpoint there is an „equilibrium” masterly created through compensating the descending intervals with an almost equal number of ascending intervals or of perfect primes, situations in which there is resorted to the „effect” given by intervals used a single time along the musical piece (3*m*, 3*M*, 4*p*, 6*M*). Rhythm, the fundamental parameter of the musical discourse is approached in a different manner by the two composers. The vocal line created by Grigoriu is pre-eminently constructed with values of crotchets, minims or minims with point, in close correlation with the text; the segmentation of the musical articulation is generally modelled by the poetical text, the composer enhancing the word and creating

a certain expression through intuition and imagination, through delving into substance. The piano especially has minims, complete notes and crotchets, which creates conditions for the sonorities to „live”, to develop themselves. The distribution at a single hand of the piano accompaniment does not constitute an impediment for enhancing the pluriphonic syntax but, on the contrary, stands for an interpretative challenge in aphoristic manner launched by the composer. The two plans, the voice and piano accompaniment, do not seem to merge, giving the impression of a permanent „discordance”, although, separately, each may justify itself through the prism of the consonance concept.

Dan Dediu resorts to a higher diversity of intervals, both in the vocal and instrumental part using, for instance, in the melody of the vocal part 2*m*, 3*m*, 4-, 2*M*, 3*M*, 1*p*, 6*M*, and also increased and decreased intervals, in a pre-eminently descending evolution starting in the high points of the vocal range.

To exemplify this view, the two important elements in the poetic text, the „wood triptych” (ex. 7 and ex. 8) and the „crucified body” (ex. 9 and ex. 10) are dealt with in a different manner by the two composers, concerning the melody of the vocal part (intervals, sense of development, rhythm).

Th. Grigoriu



Dediu



Th.Grigoriu



Dan Dediu



And about the piano part, in both cases there exists a complementariness of the senses.

For both musical pages, the relation music-poetical text may seem surprising at a first research. The composer Dan Dediu puts aside sonorities obtained through a metastylistic language to a poem of the oriental type, tributary as aesthetics to elements taken over from Zen thinking.

The composer Theodor Grigoriu considers that Japanese poetry is capable of being associated to the reduction of the range of expression means up to a minimum level, which offers however an infinity of interpretative solutions. The master provokes the interpreters to search perpetually for something „else” in the art of interpreting the lied and to recompose not only the musical signs of the score, but also their spirit, their inferred meaning, the „unsaid”, decoding the signification contained in the „richness of nuances and

indications with respect to expression, which model the sonorous discourse, (...) with a finely dosed charge of the sentiment expressed through music” [3, p. 247].

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