

The reverence of a lyrical singer to the traditional Romanian music

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Abstract: *The personal journey of a lyrical singer on discovering the beauty of the romanian folksongs collected by the romanian composer and folklorist Tiberiu Brediceanu. Stepping with love and wonder into the deep univers of the tradicional music meant to research the roots and complexity of the popular song. All findings revealed the spirituality of romanian people as anonimous author and performer. The emotional variety of this melos and the extended geographical area of Brediceanu's song collection, caused new interpretative challenges for the lyric mezzo soprano. Singing this repertoire requiered a dedicated study in finding the right nuances of vocal tecnique in creating the soul miniature represented by each song harmonized in a classical form as a Lied. The article includes a short description of the particularities of some of the most representative songs such as balada, doina, ardeleana. The author has developed a sense of duty to spread the infinite richness of the romanian popular melos trough performences, recordings and trough her academic career. This is her reverence to the chain of predecessors and their work in this field. Quotes from musical and artistical personalities regarding the value of romanian folklore as well as some samples of folk songs are presented during the presentation*

Key-words: *Tiberiu Brediceanu, tradicional, Romanian, music*

1. Introduction

I am sharing my experience as a lyric singer of popular melody beginning with a special note that my intention is not in any way to diminish or compare my experience with that of the folk singer. I consider the today's folk singer the direct descendent of the ancestral popular creator who, generation after generation, passed down, preserved and enriched, in the oral form, the village songs, living witnesses of the forefathers talent, their feelings, rituals, traditions and life experiences.

The meaning of folklore is people's wisdom gathered mostly orally over centuries of existence. Mirroring the daily life, the traditions, rituals, feelings of a group of people with a common language is revealing the spirituality of that group of people. Other devoted folk music lovers, the collectors, who transcribe the oral

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expression on music stave made it possible that this treasure be better known, understood, interpreted and preserved for future generations.

The tedious work of Ion Caianul - XVII century, Dimitrie Cantemir, Franz Joseph Sulzer - XVIII century, Anton Pann, Teodor T. Burada, Dumitru Georgescu Kiriac - XIX century and Tiberiu Brediceanu, Bela Bartok, Constantin Brăiloiu in the XX century left behind an inestimable treasure for the traditional Romanian music. From this wealth was born the lyrical interpretation of a new repertoire.

The ethnomusicologists introduce the instrumental accompaniment for piano and orchestra. This harmonization made it possible that the folksong gained a larger audience being performed in different musical environment alongside classical music.

2. The traditional Romanian music

The piano accompaniment of the folk song has the valuable task in preparing and introducing the appropriate atmosphere from nostalgic and contemplative in Doina or Balada to dancing in "Ardeleana" or "Hora". An inspiring harmony is created by the vibrant passionate embrace between the piano sound and the voice throughout the length of the song. This magic brings the emotion to a climax dissipating a delicate perfume with the last sound.

A deep chord of my soul vibrated by singing at the first time folksongs composed by Constantin Brăiloiu, Tiberiu Brediceanu and George Dima. Only after I turned 50 years old I realized that my career was intimately molded by two Romanian musical personalities my professor Valentina Crețoiu and Tiberiu Brediceanu. It appears that both of them join hands, in overlooking me from above, inspiring and fueling my sacred fire in singing. To my interpretative and academic experience they help me open a window letting inside the fresh fragrance of the authentic folksongs.

In my musical singing education, a special place is occupied by my Canto professor Valentina Crețoiu, the well known soprano of the lyrical stage of her time. She worked directly with Tiberiu Brediceanu being his choice as Stancuta in his lyrical scene "*La Seceris*", based on Romanian folklore traditions staged by the composer in 1936 at the Romanian Cluj Opera. A short eulogium of Valentina Crețoiu's contribution is found in the following words of Anca Florea, musical critic: „The marvelous Valentina Crețoiu, with her crystal like voice and impressive expressivity is a singer of great culture and intelligence very much appreciated not only by music appreciators but also the musicians of her time" (Florea 2004, 25).

I extend my gratitude to professor Valentina Crețoiu for all my 35 years of successful concert and operatic career, for her constant encouragement and motivation, for her working my voice with respect and awareness, for passing on to me her passion and the belief that a good vocal technique has to be paired with a

profound genuine soul vibration. Valentina Crețoiu was the one who introduced me to the wealth and beauty of the folksongs collected by Tiberiu Brediceanu.

As a direct result of my new interest I gathered my findings in my doctoral research dedicated to Tiberiu Brediceanu as a collector of traditional Romanian songs. I have been discovering the richness of this repertoire finding and creating my ways of lyrical interpretation as close as possible to the source. By a mere stroke of luck or maybe godly love my formation at school of canto stepped from the very start on the same musical path paved by Tiberiu Brediceanu who had left it just few years before.

A multifaceted intellectual, lawyer by education, folklorist, musicologist, composer, musical promoter by passion, Brediceanu is an important personality of the musical nationalism in his country. Born in Lugoj-Banat in 1877 in an intellectual Romanian family with deep regard for the ancestral tradition Brediceanu lived during major historical events that impacted his native country at the end of the XIX century, discovering, in the process, the specific and true spiritual values of his people.

Raised from early childhood in the atmosphere of the rich beautiful Romanian folklore, he develops a profound love for it. Early on, under the guidance of his mentors, among them Iacob Muresianu famous composer and pedagogue, Tiberiu Brediceanu begins to use the authentic folkloric themes into his own musical compositions. From 1891 understanding the inestimable value and beauty of Romanian folksong he involves himself in collecting, adapting and preserving this national treasure. His first song, *Bagă Doamne luna'n nor*, a doina for voice and piano published in *Musa Româna*, a prestigious musical magazine, in 1894 became an instant hit from villages to Bucharest and throughout the country.

In 1896 Brediceanu joins the patriotic Astra society from Lugoj where he works alongside its members such as Alexandru Mocioni and his father Coriolan Brediceanu for the promotion of the longlasting ideal for the unification of the remaining Romanian provinces Banat, Crisana, Maramures and Transylvania with the already united provinces Moldavia and Valahia (1859).

Tiberiu Brediceanu composed and staged in 1905 in Sibiu his first major composition of folk inspiration, *Poemul Muzical Etnografic*, a gathering of lyrical musical scenes from the life of Romanian people. Between 1912 and 1920 he continued to complete his musical poem, offering a much wholesome image of the spirituality of his people, in a new work suggestively named *Ardealul, Banatul, Crisana si Maramuresul în port, joc și cântec*, an ethnographic presentation of folk garment, dance and song of all these geographical areas. The composition was published only two years after the above provinces completed the unification of all the Romanian provinces under the name of Romanian Kingdom.

A complete ethnographical portrayal of the spirituality of the Romanian people is offered by the composer only in 1929 in his third edition of his musical

poems entitled *Romania in port, joc si cântec*. Here he stresses the existence of a common thread in all forms of art throughout the entire country.

Brediceanu's prolific activity as a folklorist is also visible in his extensive collection of more than two thousand folksongs and dance songs, such as ballads, a Romanian doina, folk dance songs (hore, sârbe, ardelene) representative for all geographic areas of his land.

Bartok cites Tiberiu Brediceanu's vision about the origin of traditional Romanian music: "...The Romanian dance and song date from the archaic melos that strength from a sense of isolation marked from the start by nature's voices, birds songs, water and forest murmures. The original melos has passed on to the shepherds flute and later on the sang form...this is the inspiration's element from which the Romanian folk music got its originality" (Bartok 1979, 137).

Another face of Brediceanu musical personality is his inestimable contribution to create important cultural institutions such as the National Opera and Theatre of Cluj, as well as the first Musical and Drama Conservatory and his managerial leadership of some reputable musical establishments in others cultural cities as Brasov, Sibiu and Bucharest. The School of Music in Brasov, founded by Tiberiu Brediceanu under the name of *Astra*, followed by the Cluj "George Dima" Musical Academy were the first cradles that nourished and prepared me for the career of a mezzo soprano ready to perform right from the start at the prestigious Romanian Cluj Opera..

Browsing through Brediceanu's published collections I chose to study from the start *Doina*, one of the melodic forms harmonized in a classical way for voice and piano. To my surprise and anguish singing *doina* proved to be a challenge from a technical and interpretational point of view. The answer was finding a happy meeting between the rigor of piano accompaniment and the flexibility of the vocal line. The deep breathing and the legato sostenuto support fermatas throughout the entire song. This way of delivering an authentic image of my own emotions and feelings that mirror those of the folk creator, thus the accompaniment does not restrict, but stimulates.

Doina, a short melody with a solo, melancholic, intimate character was originally entirely improvised on a shepherd flute. This oldest Romanian musical poetry was for the first time made known in *Descriptio Moldaviae* by Dimitrie Cantemir in 1715. *Doina* cannot be defined as a literally species only as a melodic form expressing an entire range of emotions from sadness and despair to joy, love, loneliness, loss, suffering, yearning and *dor*.

Doina is interlaced with the heart and the soul of Romanian people. The melancholy song has a special expressive content, imposing itself by a wide and generous melody line, by a wide touch, by the warmth of the feeling, by the depth of the thought and the variety of expression means. (Rucsanda 2011, 68.)

The intimate meditation has as a soul witness the natural forms of the interpreter's habitat. The deep forest with its singing birds, the green valley with all

its flowers, the slopes of the hills, the cliffs of the mountains, the wind, the sun, the stars and the moon, are close vibrating alongside of his emotions.

Nature is turned also into a temple where the prayers are heard as the soul regains strength unshakable. “*Codrul frate cu românul*”, an ancient Romanian saying where “codru”(the forest) becomes a symbol of the hole nature it is taken at times for a brother, a confessor, a healer, a wisdom source in finding comfort. In fact, we are in touch with the therapeutic ability of this song.

Balada is an epic folk poem interpreted always with instrumental accompaniment. The best known Romanian ballad is the archaic pastoral *Miorița*, published by Vasile Alecsandri, famous Romanian poet in the XIX century. The narrative of the ballad is very complex and dramatic dealing with envy, betrayal and murder. The main characters three shepherds belonging to three different geographical areas are presented in the middle of idyllic pastoral scenery during their transhumance.

Tiberiu Brediceanu collected five musical versions of *Miorița* between 1921 and 1927 in Banat and Transylvania. All his versions harmonized for voice and piano accompaniment have almost no narrative plot, the words of the ballad are reduced to introduce briefly the characters while the music is charged with the entire dramatic development. The music portrays almost cinematic corners of colorful landscape reflecting the array of emotions of the missing story. For the *Miorița* interpretation it is essential to be well acquainted with folk ballad that presents the full drama and all the feelings that creates.

Ardeleana, a folk dance from Transylvania with a specific rhythm could be played on wind instrument or sung. The interpreter sings the words in a clear energetic manner helped by a short breath and précis attack that brought flexibility in staccato and in wide intervals.

Hora is a dance with a unique character derived from preserving the 6/8 rhythm that allows the singer to dance along with the dancers. The swinging beat down rhythm, that is at times flexible and energetic, is reflected by stressing correctly the words as the voice uses the optimal diction. To approach to sing the folkloric gender is not trifle, as it requires a much different sound from the opera, concert, oratorio or Lied singing. Nevertheless the perseverance opens a wide door for a fresh horizon of vocal interpretation. Once I understood the importance of the diction as a first support for the melody, I arrived by the help of many vocalizations to the optimal sound-pair for the entire or even parts of the word. The sound was changing its quality with the musicality of the text. The Romanian language, a very musical language revealed itself as it was created for being sung. The human voice expresses the mind intentions as being tightly linked to the soul through feelings and emotions, music creating this way a bridge between brain and heart. *Music is an intrinsic part of the Romanian peasant's soul...its company helps him sooth his fears that torment him, helps him share his “dor”, his longings, the unbearable nostalgia. Born from the Romanian people sufferings, his music it is both painful and noble*

even in the most rapid folk dances with jumping rhythms. In its entirety the music represents another treasure among others, part of Romanian national pride. (Comisel 1979, 13).

3. Conclusions

I wonder what made me pick up one day a bunch of flowers from Brediceanu's folksongs collection and presented to a public accustomed with their beloved *fado*, at the European coast of Atlantic?

During my career I embraced various repertoires of folkloric inspiration from different other countries. I got a chance to interpret the Spanish popular songs of Manuel de Falla, Villa Lobos native Brazilians songs, Luciano Berio's compositions, even zulu songs from South Africa and many others, all different but all preserving the authentic moments of the anthropological group in their spiritual context.

I will never forget the joy and the great sense of accomplishment at the sight of the frantic appreciation of the visible moved local public as I was finishing my rendition of their beloved songs. The stage experience could be surprising as in the singing pathos unknown shades appear from nowhere. The audience in Brasil recognized their souls in my delivering of their traditional songs.

The lyrical approach for a traditional song from all over the world is like any act of creation, an infinite, complex, open ending phenomenon. The singer is aware that his voice is part of the ever changing body and mind, a messenger of the soul.

As a Romanian folksong lyric interpreter I realized that my mission was to share with my audience my talent, spreading around from the infinite wisdom and spirituality of my people.

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