

A vision applied to the Lyrics -Music Symbiosis

Roxana PEPELEA¹

Abstract: *The issue of the signification transfer from one artistic field to another, has been deliberately put by creators into the service of transmitting and acknowledging some content. This is all the more easier for artistic fields sharing a common environment, for instance the sonorous nature, in the case of poetry and music. In Roxana Pepelea's creation, the music inspired from the lyrics signed by Vasile Burlui, attempts to grasp a particular meditative state, specific to the elegy. The musicality, the special sonority of the lyrics, the emphasis on certain words have been perceived and highlighted on the coordinates of the musical scoring. The consonance of the rhyme finds its correspondent in a 'consonant' revaluation of the musical substance. There is a myriad of moments with punctual reference to the universal composing art; sonorous events pointed out along the line.*

Key-words: *Roxana Pepelea, Vasile Burlui, lied, semantics*

1. Introduction

The issue of the signification transfer from one artistic field to another, has been put by creators, on purpose, into the service of transmitting and recognizing some content. This is all the more easier for artistic fields sharing a common environment, for instance the sonorous nature, in the case of poetry and music. It remains common knowledge that, just like literature, “the art of the sounds –however modern might it be claimed – is a form of acknowledgment and communication designed for major existential senses, and not only an occasion to discuss its inner order” (Chiriac 2014, 10).

The issue of discovering and rediscovering the artistic sense implies not to fall into the temptation of vainly arranging meaningless combinations, but to transcend into the sphere of deeper horizons. How relevant becomes the observation of the composer Octavian Nemescu, when he expresses himself in this way: “to approach significance, in an act, improperly called of creation, means to orient the

¹ *Transilvania* University of Braşov, Department of Music Pedagogy. r_pepelea@unitbv.ro

objects wherewith you operate, towards higher realities, which enlighten you”! (Nemescu 1983, 2).

2. Poetic support

Eight poems within the high-sensitivity poetry of the physician-poet, professor Vasile Burlui, have been the starting point for this unique venture, signed by Roxana Pepelea.

Characterized by Andrei Grigor, as ‘a dignified elegiac’, with the verb of an ‘aristocratic elegance’ (Burlui 2013a: 9, 6), Vasile Burlui launches manifold existential interrogations, in successions of neo-Romantic, neo-Impressionist or Symbolist images, artfully adapted to the traditional and harmonious sonority of the rhyme.

Out of three poetry volumes of this genuine poet from Iași² (*Interogațiile lui Așur* [*Assur’s Interrogations*], *Solilocvii* [*Soliloquies*], *Rendez-vous sidéral* [*Sidereal Tryst*]), perhaps not sufficiently known to the readers, the following poems have given their title to the component lieds of the cycle destined to mezzo-soprano voice: *Polenul sufletelor noastre* [*Pollen of Our Souls*], *Irreparabile tempus, Văratec 2013*, *Mea maxima culpa*, *Îngerul nopților* [*Angel of the Nights*], *Menuet de toamnă* [*Autumn Minuet*], *Concert vespéral* [*Vespers Concerto*], *Chant rompu* [*Broken Song*].

3. Literary essentializations

On the whole, the music inspired from the lyrics signed by Vasile Burlui attempts to grasp a meditative state, specific to the elegy, highlighting the specificity – the unique flavour of each poem, which radiates from both significations and expression. The musicality, the special sonority of the lyrics, the emphasis on certain words have been perceived and highlighted on the coordinates of the musical scoring. The consonance of the rhyme finds its correspondent in a ‘consonant’ revaluation of the musical substance. In the landscape of the constants specific to his creation, this seems a return to origins, to the elements of tradition. There is a

² Vasile BURLUI, professor, MD, PhD, corresponding member of the Academy of the Romanian Scientists, is a leading personality of Romanian medicine. As a result of his remarkable scientific contributions in the field of maxillofacial surgery, he has been awarded such distinctions as: Doctor Honoris Causa of ‘Pro-Deo’ University in Roma, Vatican, 1999; Honorary Distinction and Medal received from Pope Benedict XVI, and many more besides. Poetry is his second nature, proving that he is “an experiment-poet, with an exquisite knowledge of the classical books /.../ of poetry, as well as of an entire history of culture /.../, wherefrom /.../ myths and mythographies transpire, integrated in one’s own existence /.../.” (Andrei Grigor, Preface to *Interogațiile lui Așur – Assur’s Interrogations*).

myriad of moments with punctual reference to several models of the universal composing art – sonorous events pointed out along the line.

In an attempt to express in words, a general ethos of the verse, one can resort to Ioan Holban’s assertion, from the Preface to *Solilocvii [Soliloquies]*: “Vasile Burlui’s poetry is of the *time of loam*, the time which is missing, in a significant way, between past and future: the present, if it is, remains /.../ a product of the loam” (Burlui 2014, 13).

In order to identify the sonorous world of this creation and to locate it in the polychromy of the autochthonous compositional landscape, the musicologist Laura Vasiliu makes the following parallel between the time of verse and the time of music: the musical correspondent of this ‘time of loam’ was one anchored in “the moderate modernism of the 80s /.../ in the modal language crystallized along the chain Vieru-Olah-Spătărelu, with either abstract-austere or iridescent-folkloric sonorous finalities” (Vasiliu 2015, 15).

For enlightenment, here are some considerations from the creation workshop...

4. Sonorous correspondences

Polenul sufletelor noastre [Pollen of Our Souls] – “Romantic-sentimental metaphor, with openness to the abstract – /.../ is seen by Roxana Pepelea, as a dramatized trajectory, by the melody arching, by the obsessive accompaniment of the piano, by the median, traditional contrast of the form” (Vasiliu 2015, 15).

The image shows a musical score for the piece 'Polenul sufletelor noastre' (Pollen of Our Souls), section A, measures 1-6. The score is written for Mezzo-Soprano and Piano. The Mezzo-Soprano part is marked 'Tranquillo' and 'mp/fluente'. The Piano part is marked 'p legato, uguale'. The lyrics are: Po - le - nul ri - si - pit prin - tre pe - ta - le-.

Fig. 1. *Polenul sufletelor noastre [Pollen of Our Souls]*, section A, measures 1-6

The compositional intention was to oppose two sections– A and B, according to the change in the tint of the verses: from darkness to light, from platitude to elevation, from the low register towards an ever acuter sound, from the obscure of an A flat minor, to the clarity of a B minor (with oscillations between Dorian, Phrygian, Aeolian), along a closed quasi-tonal course (with enharmonies, scordaturas). The platitude of section A is rendered by the evenness of the gradual step of fourth of the

voice (mixture by the higher latent line of the bass) and by the staticism of the figured pedal of the accompaniment, with dominant-tonic beats (right hand, low register), as shown in figure 1:

The second section, B, becomes much more melodized, as shown in figure 2:

Mezzo-Soprano
Piano

29 *mf*
... creas - că. Po - le - nul su - fle - te - lor noas - tre E ri - si - pit în zam - be - te si la -

29 *mp*

Fig. 2. *Polenul sufletelor noastre [Pollen of Our Souls]*, section B, measures 29-35

Irreparabile tempus – “poem of eminescian resonance (‘You have taught me how to die, yet again?’) – brings once more a ternary dramaturgy, which opposes asemantic instrumental continuities to tense and directed accumulations” (Vasiliu 2015, 15). It is about a construction based on a modular play of prefabricated elements, which are variedly repeated and recomposed in mixed alternations, in an ever tenser trajectory towards dramatic nuances, expressed by major-minor accords. Structures in opposition: the cursive melodic deployment (see figure 3), versus the repetitive isochronous cell (see figure 4).

Andantino semplice
Mezzo-Soprano
Piano

p legato
Prea mul-te se-co-le s'au scurs gră-bi - te Si prea multi sori ro-tin-du - se s'au stins, Prea mul-te nopti

mp

f

p

mp

f

Fig. 3. *Irreparabile tempus*, measures 1-5

Fig. 4. *Irreparabile tempus*, measures 28-31

Văratec 2013 – “substantially pastelled image for the spiritualization both of one’s own self and of nature, in the vicinity of the monastery – receives /.../ direct suggestions, of bells (on the piano) which frame a melodic line well articulated on the intonation of the verse” (Laura Vasiliu, 2015: 15). In the form with repetition, whose structure is of the type ABAB, we encounter the continuous-discontinuous contrast between the two sections (A and B). The harmonic structures, with elements ajoutées, resonate like bells, overlapping, crossing the interventions of the voice, in section A (see figure 5).

Fig. 5. *Văratec 2013*, measures 1-4

In section B, the musical course softens, the movement becomes more alert, the melody enters its bed. Apparently chromatic, the accordic elements in the accompaniment provide support to the voice, by the confluence in common sonorous points (see figure 6).

Fig. 6. *Văratec 2013*, measures 13-16

Mea maxima culpa – “poetical-philosophical undertaking of the universe, with depressive accents – (wherein the author n.n.) returns much more to the time of music, proposing ‘empty’, cathedral-like harmonies” (Vasiliu 2015, 15). In truth, the incipient motif-sign, consisting in geometrized successions of fifths and fourths, becomes emblematic for the connection between sections.

The highly dramatic nature is the outcome of the special sonorous reverberation of the words chosen by the poet, in order to depict his own suffering, deep and dignified. The poet bears the blame for the wonders of the whole universe ... the dimensions of the poem (six stanzas with a verse extension of 13-15 syllables!) make it the pièce de resistance of the entire cycle, for both composer and performers. The phrase ‘*Mea maxima culpa*’ becomes the chorus of a quasi-form of rondo (see figure 7).

Fig. 7. *Mea maxima culpa*, measures 54-58

Îngerul nopților [Angel of the Nights] – “ode to poetry, becomes /.../ marked rhythmic movement, with neo-Classical-ironic and Romanian-folkloric nuances” (Laura Vasiliu, 2015: 15). The tonality of this lied is much more softened; the brisker rhythm offering a contrast in the economy of the cycle. An ostinato in the accompaniment will be often interrupted by accentual impulses, in a sense of accumulation of the tense elements (see fig. 8).

The musical score for measures 1-8 of 'Îngerul nopților' is presented in a two-staff format. The top staff is for Mezzo-Soprano, and the bottom staff is for Piano. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The tempo is marked 'Vivo' and the dynamic is 'mf aperto'. The lyrics are: 'Cio - căr - ți - a di - mi - ne - ti - lor de va - ră'. The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, with dynamic markings of 'mf' and 'mp'.

Fig. 8. *Îngerul nopților* [*Angel of the Nights*], measures 1-8

An intermezzo in contrast of movement and character, manifest by the deviation of the nature – from rhythmical ostinato into static harmonic pedals – brings an oasis of light, purity and delicacy, in line with the lyrics: ‘A child has brought to me / A white flower of apricot-tree’ (see figure 9).

The musical score for measures 32-40 of 'Îngerul nopților' is presented in a two-staff format. The top staff is for Mezzo-Soprano, and the bottom staff is for Piano. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The tempo is marked 'Lento' and the dynamic is 'p'. The lyrics are: 'Un co - pil mi'a - dus O floa-re al-bă de ca-is.'. The piano accompaniment features a static harmonic pedal with long, sustained notes, and dynamic markings of 'p'.

Fig. 9. *Îngerul nopților* [*Angel of Nights*], measures 32-40

The reprise falls into the track of that ‘boîte à musique’; but ever more nervous reiterations eventually draw it closer to a cry of despair, yet muffled (‘The poem is lived in tears and blood/ in love and suffering’) and fatally ended in *parlato* – ‘...and that’s how it was meant to be!’.

Menuet de toamnă [*Autumn Minuet*] – “melancholic, depressing, bacovian – surprisingly draws closer to each other the compositional solutions (of the two authors n.n.), by evoking the genre-specific dance, with clear reference to J. S. Bach, and also by dramatizing the form, with /.../ theatrical effects of discourse rupture” (Laura Vasiliu, 2015: 15). Bacovian, yet bearing an arghezian motto (‘Our love has died here), the poem has created the grounds for a stylistic game, starting from the semantics of the sentences. In a ‘tempo di minueto’ noted in the measure of 4/4 (!), metrical-rhythmical conflicts arise, stemmed from the overlay, mixture and concatenation of the motifs, which break the typical symmetries of the vintage dance (see figure 10).

Tempo di minuetto

p *sotto voce*

Mezzo-Soprano

Toam - nă, vânt, —

Piano

p *lontano*

Fig. 10. *Menuet de toamnă [Autumn Minuet]*, measures 1-6

By a technique of collages, the dancing clichés come together in long sentences, which end in scordatura-nuanced cadences. Other times, dramatic cadences break the discourse monotony and appear after imitative accumulations, ‘imported’ from the props of traditional polyphony (see figure 11).

Two of the lieds on lyrics by Vasile Burlui, are based on poems in French.

Concert vespéral [Vespers Concerto] “enhances the dramatic potentialities of the poem, by the ostinato-type piano deployments or the soft-dissonant accords (in the French manner), by the vocal declamations in the median section” (Vasiliu 2015, 15).

Written in a ternary form with reprise, the lied offers the listener, a contrast between the ostentatious platitude of the first stanza, harmonically grafted onto the polar relation (see figure 11), and the tendency to daydream, suggested by the Impressionist harmonies of structure, ‘ajoutées’ (interrupted by the interventions, somewhat surprised, of the voice), once with the change in the emotional register of the stanzas (see figure 12).

Grave

mp *mesto*

Mezzo-Soprano

Les pas me font re-ve - nir dans l'a - llée de la soi - rée,

Piano

mp *legato* *poco* *f*

Fig. 11. *Concert vespéral [Vespers Concerto]*, measures 1-6

22 **Poco mosso**

Mezzo-Soprano

Piano

sempre pp (una corda)

simile

p

J'en-tends de nou - veau

Fig. 12. *Concert vespéral [Vespers Concerto]*, measures 22-26

The second lied in French, *Chant rompu [Broken Song]* “chooses a modern, abstract-dissonant discourse, wherein the alternation voice-piano seems to evoke the interrupted song” (Vasiliu 2015, 15). The sonorous suggestions complement again the semantics of the verb. Structurally, the musical piece is based on the varied repetition of two alternating structures: **A**, characterized by the melodized recitative of the voice accompanied, in contrast, by the hollow overlaps of the piano (see figure 13), and **B**, a dancing episode in a mixtured manner, seemingly detached from the Franco-Flemish early Renaissance – an allusion to the genres ‘ballade’, ‘rondeau’, ‘virelai’ etc. (see figure 14).

Moderato

Mezzo-Soprano

Piano

p

mf

L'o-deur des fleurs du til - leul, de ci-re et d'en - cens

S'im-prég-nè-rent en moi

mf

mf

Fig. 13. *Chant rompu [Broken Song]*, measures 1-6

The image shows a musical score for two parts: Mezzo-Soprano and Piano. The Mezzo-Soprano part is written on a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The time signature is 8/8. The tempo is marked 'a tempo'. The dynamics for the Mezzo-Soprano part are *f*, *mp*, *mf*, and *p*. The lyrics are: "Dans mon pe - ti coin, pleu - rent des con - ste - lla - tions fa - ti - guées,". The Piano part is written on two staves (treble and bass clefs) with the same key signature and time signature. The dynamics for the Piano part are *f (tre corde)*, *mp*, *mf*, and *p*. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and slurs.

Fig. 14. *Chant rompu [Broken Song]*, measures 17-23

5. Conclusions

The prevailing stylistic horizon of the creation, in this case, is not directed towards the vanguard, but is closer to tradition, in terms of architectonics or working techniques. The main creative trends are grouped into a few directions, which act with the force specific to the constants. They start from the idea of an ongoing sonorous and conceptual re-creation of the Romanian folklore, by modern techniques, whereof polyphony, modal harmony, heterophony or free variation. Following a certain plasticity of the sonorous image, in illustrating the Romanian spirituality, several models detached from a mythical space-time: the Mioritic model, the myth of the ‘Magic Bird’, in combination with various manners of expressing the ludic or the appeal to the universal tradition, are resorted to.

The cycle of lieds for mezzo-soprano and piano, on lyrics by Vasile Burlui, created by Roxana Pepelea, are the point of confluence between two of the creative constants: the appeal to the universal tradition and the representation of the ludic.

References

- Burlui, V. 2013 a. *Interogațiile lui Așur*. Iași: Editura Apollonia.
 Burlui, V. 2013 b. *Rendez-vous sidéral*. Les Granges-le-Roi: Editions du Brontosaure.
 Burlui, V. 2014. *Solilocvii*. Iași: Editura Apollonia.
 Chiriac, T. 2014. *Semantica muzicii. Principii fundamentale*. Iași: Editura Artes.
 Nemescu, O. 1983. *Capacitățile semantice ale muzicii*. București: Editura Muzicală.
 Vasiliu, Laura. 2015. „Săptămâna Internațională a Muzicii Noi...la Iași. Roxana Pepelea și Leonard Dumitriu: liederuri.” *Cronica veche – o revistă nouă*, anul V, nr. 9 (56): 15.