

## THE WORLD OF FAIRY TALES IN THE WORK OF COMPOSER ZLATA TKACH

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**Abstract:** *Folk culture has always appealed to both the philosopher and the artist, as a source of ideas or inspiration that could later be used for a major, more complex artistic creation. If only we were to listen to, at least, this musical piece for children, we would easily notice a few of the elements by which the author manages to animate a story greatly popular amongst the little listeners.*

**Key words:** *fairy-tale, composer, lyric, dramatic, work.*

„Customs, stories, music and poetry are peoples’ archives. Based on them, we can always restore the dark past. By studying them, we can shed light on the origins of our language, the naissance of the Romanian nationality, the Romanians’ inborn talents and on the battles led by the Roman colonies against ancient Dacia, which ultimately resulted in the birth of the Romanian people“ [2].

Fairy tales are narrative stories that abound in the miraculous, in which reality is portrayed through the lenses of fantasy, thus becoming unrecognizable. They lead us into a new, fabulous realm, being created on a spiritual substratum that is common to the entire mankind. Dating back to ancient times, they have always managed to arouse the imagination of ordinary men or of children, making them dive into an ideal world, in which they can escape, if only for a moment, from the reality of life.

Tudor Vianu says: “(...) Any man of the people that carves into the pillars of their

house, *tells a fairy tale* or puts on their beautifully adorned costume – touches, through these very actions, the collective being of their people, thus communicating with their absolute identity, in time and space (...)“ [6].

The human destiny, a creator a values, has revealed and distilled itself, always aiming at an ever-higher, utter fulfillment, creating not only a multitude of historical forms, but also multiple means of expressing the spirit.

In stories and fairy tales, we can find the antagonism between the principle of light and dark – the cosmic dualism. It is the special way of each community to feel and to structure their thinking.

„Stories and fairy tales – these fruits of Romanians’ imagination, accounts Vasile Alecsandri, have a degree of originality that places them above the fairy tales of other peoples, as they are endowed with the mythological traditions of our ancestors and vividly colored by the rays of the oriental sun “[2].

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Fairy tales are created on a spiritual substratum that is common to the entire mankind. They are the sincere, profound expression of the soul and specific moral and aesthetical nature of a people. In the folk media, the fairy tale has been one of the main forms of spiritual manifestation, targeting not only children, but also adults - hence the richness of ideas and symbols of the folk masterpieces.

However, the main characteristic of the fairy tale, as a work of art, is the totally distinctive world that it portrays. Apparently connected to reality, this is a universe in which man's will has no limits. It has surreal coordinates and there are no contradictions which cannot be settled. The world of the fairy tale differs from everyday life through its inner atmosphere, through its essence ... it is a landscape of man's wishes, transposed by means of imagination.

Beyond the world imagined by any story, there is a far more subtle, symbolic layer, oscillating between imagination and reality, pertaining to the very essence of the fairy tale. A relevant feature of the fairy tale is still the powerful correspondence with the real world, the relationship between the two universes; without it, the fairy tale would lose its integrity, charm and role in human evolution.

Generally, the Romanian fairy tale depicts the way of living and thinking of the Romanian people, its social statuses at a certain point, the span of its culture, the various outlooks and ideals of their writer or teller; we could say that our fairy tale represents a true reflection of the Romanian village, especially if we refer to the memories and stories of Ion Creangă, which we enjoyed so much during our childhood. They really reminded us of home.

In his work, Ion Creangă was inspired from the millenary culture of his people.

According to Titu Maiorescu, "(...) Creangă's work is the literary outgrowth of a long series of anonymous storytellers." [5] George Călinescu accounts: "(...) there are few things to say about Creangă as an artist and the surveys about him are rambling. A musician can imitate the roar of the waters, a painter can portray a landscape, but these are artistic substitutes, not critical impressions. Creangă is a monumental expression of human nature in its historical hypostasis called the Romanian people, or, to put it more simply, he is the Romanian people itself, caught in a moment of brilliant expansion. In fact, Ion Creangă is anonymous." [1] And O. Bârlea concludes: "Creangă is part of the same family of folk storytellers, yet he sets himself apart from them, by exceeding the expectations: he is their brilliant brother" [3].

A folk storyteller of great talent, he could easily identify with those anonymous storytellers who have created the folk fairy tales. Creangă attains an utter synthesis between the folk spirit and folk art. His work is an intimate mixture of experience and millenary folk philosophy.

Folk culture has been of interest to both the philosopher and the artist, as a source of ideas or inspiration that could later be used for a major, more complex artistic creation.

In Bessarabia's musical work of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the beginnings of musical theatre for children are related to the work of composer Zlata Tkach, "*The Lying Wolf*" (in Romanian – "*Lupul mincinos*"), a fairy-opera for vocal soloists and orchestra. Initially, the opera had been entitled "*The Goat and Her Three Kids*" (in Romanian – "*Capra cu trei iezi*"), in the first two releases – 1967, 1977; it is only on the third release, in 1983, that the author changes its title into "*The Lying Wolf*".

With a significant experience in the field of lyrical and dramatic composition – “*The Goat and Her Three Kids*” (1967) – renamed “*The Lying Wolf*” in 1983, “*Bobocel cu ale lui*” (1974), *Tomciș-Kibalcîș* (1980), “*The Chef and the Boyar*” (“*Bucătarul și boierul*”) (1987), “*The Little Flower with Seven Petals*” (“*Floricica cu șapte petale*”) (1984), “*A Step towards Eternity*” (“*Un pas spre eternitate*”) (1985), “*My Uncle from Paris*” (“*Unchiul meu de la Paris*”) (1987), “*The Lazy Woman*” (*Leneșă*) (1988), *The Little Prince* (“*Micul prinț*”) (1989), *Lamento* (1995), “*The Elephant’s Birthday*” („*Ziua de naștere a elefantului*”) (1997) - Zlata Tkach is one of the Bessarabian composers that prove a genuine mastery in using the means of expression specific to this musical genre. If only we were to listen to, at least, this musical piece for children, we would easily notice a few of the elements by which the author manages to animate a story greatly popular amongst the little listeners.

The opera “*The Lying Wolf*” is a pioneer work on the Bessarabian stage.

The emergence of this new genre of the lyrical stage was owed to the significant changes that occurred within the sonorous language, to the profundity and seriousness in tackling the libretto, as well as to the complete unity emerging between the literary and musical expression. In this regard, a remarkable contribution is added by the variety of means of expression – ranging from the beauty and suggestive character of the melodic lines and the plasticity of the harmonic language, to the acoustic image created by the different timbral combinations.

Ever since this particular opera, the creation of musical theatre for children has further enriched its repertoire with a considerable number of operas. Tkach tackles both pages from the domestic and universal literature, the musical plane being perfectly consistent with the characteristics

of one or the other, sometimes even compensating for the features of the libretto. Given this context, the works that follow the narrative development of a Romanian fairy tale fill a distinctive place, as the specificity of the style reflects itself into the musical construction, in the approach of the sound material.

Why – we may wonder - has the composer chosen the world of children, the world of fairy tales? As Pascal Benteoiu posits, the musician is constantly thriving to get to know her own inner image; the value of her work can be determined and defined depending on how this exhaustive knowledge of the psychic being is transmitted into and through the work of art... “The artist seems to be permanently vigilant about her inner world – an extremely complex world, irreducible to a simple game of intelligence and – in its essence – rigorously contemporary” [4]. Hence, we can notice the artist’s preoccupation with reconciling the opera with her own psychic being, in its entirety.

As expected, the author drew closer to children’s universe through the world of fairy tales – a realm of metaphors and hyperboles...that particular way of transfiguring and ennobling the reality. As H. C. Andersen says, the power to surmount any hardship lies in children’s hearts, therefore we can see why the author’s work is addressed to them - it awakens „the kingdom of dreams and eternal youth “.Through the fortunate fusion of Creangă’s fairy tale with music, Tkach produces an artistic act – the opera “*The Lying Wolf*” (an opera in two acts and six tableaux). Based on Creangă’s fairy tale, she created her own rhythmic and rhymed dramaturgy. If we consider such a syncretic genre as opera, it is impossible to minimize the role of the literary text, its significance, namely – of the libretto. In this case, the librettist is Grigore Vieru; in his approach, the epic

story of the fairy tale is ramified, arborescent and it has new characters and epic events that we do not see in Creangă's fairy tale. Unlike the latter, the opera ends happily, as any children's story, to the delight and entertainment of everyone.

Out of the strict needs of cohesion and coherence of the dramaturgy, the composer has adapted the script according to compositional and stage requirements. Zlata Tkach has set out to create a sonorous universe fit to a children's show of maximum coherence, through the clarity and simplicity of the techniques used.

From a musical standpoint, the opera focuses either on authentic folk melodies or on new themes that comply with the characteristics of children's folklore, in order to make the music accessible, since it is for children. Through the suggestibility of the means of expression, the music has managed to render the specific atmosphere and features of this universe, in an unexpected and genuine way.

The variety of preoccupations generates a high mobility of the languages used, leading, more than once, to an eclecticism of the vocabulary or of the structuring principle. The "alibi" of this eclecticism is the utmost need for renewal, the need to shake the limits of the ordinary and of the comfortable.

By synthesizing, in her own manner, the conquests of universal music, both from classical and contemporary music and by putting to value the experience of the forerunners in national and Russian music, the composer has tried to unveil the force of the Romanian musical folklore, able to generate originality and artistic depth.

It is common knowledge that, in a composer's process of assimilating folklore, one can detect three moments, according to Bella Bartók: the use of the folk melody in its original variant; the creation of folk-style melodies and, lastly, embedding the folkloric substance into the composer's coherent, very own style. The

latter stage requires an assimilation so substantial of the folkloric material that its melodic-rhythmic outlines can be traced only after a thorough style analysis.

In "*The Lying Wolf*" (in Romanian – "*Lupul mincinos*"), we can find all the three methods mentioned above, although the second one prevails, when the author relinquishes the direct use of the folkloric source in favor of her own melody with an autochthonous resonance.

Consequently, with her own vision of the creational process and with a sense for psychological perception, the composer promotes a personal style, in which the data of European, Russian, Soviet traditions and of our Romanian folklore distil into an organic osmosis, testing the ability of autochthonous suggestions to adjust to the various techniques or architectural landmarks.

The opera belongs to a tonal-modal universe troubled by chromatisms, to which both the melodic parameter and the harmonic one are subjected. The musical language reveals those characteristics of the composer's style that pertain to melody, harmony, rhythm and the classification of all parameters. They are all justified through the musical expression, thanks to a deep understanding and interpretation of the literary text.

A fair characterization of Tkach's style starts from the melodic factor. The composer's use of certain structures makes her work unitary and coherent in conception. The author creates folk-style melodies, by borrowing the simple melodics comprising low-range motifs and repeated degrees (chords) with role of melodic center (characteristics often met in children's folklore).

The melody lines are original, they do not necessarily aim at rendering a local musical color; Tkach chooses folk motifs which she uses in an enhanced, renewed and revitalized style.

The melodic stratum is characterized by the following: the tonal and modal melodic element is present; a rectilinear expression; it is based both on the consonance of perfect intervals and on dissonant intervals; alternations of bars; we can find both a flexible and abrupt melody, the configuration is cantabile but the exposition is somewhat more difficult; the melodic structure is based on low-range motifs. All the others musical parameters contribute to the enhancement of the melodic line's expressiveness.

The harmony, for instance, often surpasses the tonal framework through original enchainments resulting from the modal character of the subject and through some asperities. Therefore, the harmonic language is differentiated.

Thanks to its individual character, the work reveals a special personal touch, and yet, the harmony does not stand out as a leading practice.

The author uses: a harmonic language pertaining to the universe of diatonic tonalism, but also chromatic tonalism (meant to exacerbate the tension); appoggiaturas – which bring a modal harmonic coloring specific to folk intonation; chords with altered chords, often augmented (proving an intense chromatization of the harmonic material); chord mixtures; a harmony system based on chords of fourths and fifths.

The music of this opera is diverse in expression and stylistic means. Tkach has highlighted a fascinating world of rhythms, intonations and timbres that define this opera. The rhythmic segment is just as well outlined as the melodic one. The rhythmic inventiveness, robust and vigorous, the presence of polyrhythms and metric alternation originate from our folk dances, a further confirmation of the author's intention to use the rhythmic originality of national inspiration.

The author also uses rhythmic *ostinato*, which enhances the continuity and richness of the melodic movement. The rhythmic element in this opera contributes to the creation and dynamization of the musical image, even though it also appears as driving impulses of some *ostinato* formulas. The agogics Zlata Tkach uses comprise a large range of nuances, from sonic expansions to diminutions. Tkach is a composer with a clear constructive thinking. The presence of heterophony, the beauty of connections, the expressiveness of timbres, all these, and many others, come to confirm it. A constant supporter of the national originality, Tkach did not refrain herself to solely using the melodic-rhythmic characteristics of the folk songs and dances, but, in her work, she sought to render the manner of expression of folk music. Let us mention two absolutely complementary syntagms:

1. the specific melodic structure (the intervals' quality, ornaments, bar alternations, etc.);
2. the emotional character of the relevant musical fragment.

Interested in exploring the contemporary sound universe with "*The Lying Wolf*", the author uses various methods, such as: random practices, polyrhythms, metric alternation, etc.

Zlata Tkach aimed at creating a style derived from folklore, enriched with contemporary trends. Her work is original and brings about a genuine local flavor. Through her work, the author sets the path towards those creations inspired by children's universe, through a language that blends organically the universal and Romanian thinking.

Concerned with finding a language of her own that would organically combine classical tradition with modern-day requirements, Tkach created her own syntax and morphology allowing her to express in an authentic manner, which can be easily perceived in most of her late works.

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