"I Am the True Vine" by Arvo Pärt.
The stylistic and interpretative analysis.
Conductor's perspective

Dragoș-Mihai COHAL[1]

Abstract: *In Arvo Pärt's creation the piece "I Am the true vine" occupies a special place, being one of the few works after 1976 that belongs only peripherally to the tintinnabuli style. The use of a minimum number of elements is reflected both in melody and harmony and in rhythm, agogics and dynamics. In keeping with the tintinnabuli style, the melodic material is eminently diatonic and the gait of the voices is mostly gradual. Pärt uses a medieval composition technique known as hocket for voice leading, where the text is divided between the upper voices, moving alternately from one voice to another. Some of the stylistic and interpretative aspects are: the homogeneity and clarity of pronunciation, the degree of opening or closing of the vowels and the intonational accuracy - - an essential aspect in tintinnabuli a cappella music.*

Key-words: *Arvo Pärt, I Am the true vine, tintinnabuli, choral, religion*

1. Introduction

The work "*I Am the true vine*", a short hymn for soprano I and II, alto, tenor, baritone and bass, is based on the biblical text from the Gospel of John 15:1-14, in which Jesus tells the apostles the parable about the vine and the branch. The text is extremely rich in meaning, being virtually the last words Jesus spoke to his disciples (immediately after the foot-washing scene at the Last Supper) - indications which, together with their testamentary status, seem to encapsulate the
quintessence of the Saviour's teachings. The language used is (Old) English, and I consider it necessary to reproduce below the full text (John 15: verses 1-14), together with the Romanian translation, because the success of the final musical-artistic act depends on the most accurate understanding of the text, but also on a

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[1]PhD, Transilvania University of Braşov, dragos.cohal@unitbv.ro

deep understanding of the meaning of the words, as faithful as possible to the author's intention[2]:

1. I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.
   Eu sunt viţa cea adevărată şi Tatăl Meu este lucrătorul.
2. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.
   Orice mlădiţă care nu aduce roadă întru Mine, El o taie; şi orice mlădiţă care aduce roadă, El o curăţeşte, ca mai multă roadă să aducă.
3. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.
   Acum voi sunteţi curaţi, pentru cuvântul pe care vi l-am spus.
4. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.
   Rămâneţi în Mine şi Eu în voi. Precum mlădiţa nu poate să aducă roadă de la sine, dacă nu rămâne în viţă, tot aşa nici voi, dacă nu rămâneţi în Mine.
5. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.
   Eu sunt viţa, voi sunteţi mlădiţele. Cel ce rămâne întru Mine şi Eu în el, acela aduce roadă multă, căci fără Mine nu puteţi face nimic.
6. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.
   Dacă cineva nu rămâne în Mine se aruncă afară ca mlădiţa şi se usucă; şi le adună şi le aruncă în foc şi ard.
7. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.
   Dacă rămâneţi întru Mine şi cuvintele Mele rămân în voi, cereţi ceea ce voiţi şi se va da vouă.
8. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.
   Întru aceasta a fost slăvit Tatăl Meu, ca să aduceţi roadă multă şi să vă faceţi ucenici ai Mei.

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[2] The overall character intended by Arvo Pärt in this work is a quiet, meditative one, with a horizontal and vertical interval that takes us back to ancient Gregorian music (perfect intervals of quaver and quatrains). The diatonic language used gives the exposition of this biblical parable a significant dose of detachment and objectivity, the tensional build-up being present only in the middle part of the piece (m. 63-128), caused by the intervention of the double bass and soprano ison.

9. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

   Precum M-a iubit pe Mine Tatăl, aşa v-am iubit şi Eu pe voi; rămâneţi întru iubirea Mea.

10. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

    Dacă păziţi poruncile Mele, veţi rămâne întru iubirea Mea după cum şi Eu am păzit poruncile Tatălui Meu şi rămân întru iubirea Lui.

11. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

    Acestea vi le-am spus, ca bucuria Mea să fie în voi şi ca bucuria voastră să fie deplină.

12. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

    Aceasta este porunca Mea: să vă iubiţi unul pe altul, precum v-am iubit Eu.

13. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

    Mai mare dragoste decât aceasta nimeni nu are, ca sufletul lui să şi-l pună pentru prietenii săi.

14. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

    Voi sunteţi prietenii Mei, dacă faceţi ceea ce vă poruncesc.

It is no coincidence that in the post-1976 partian oeuvre, music with text accounts for about three-quarters of all works, and the texts, almost entirely sacred, are mostly taken from the Bible. Alongside the obvious charge with which the author invests these words, the performer, in turn, is duty-bound to understand and enliven the musical phrases with the emotion appropriate and in keeping with each particular literary idea. This word-sound symbiosis is an essential constant of the *tintinnabuli* style, and we will take into account (throughout this study) all the elements to be followed by the performers (choir and vocal soloists respectively) in order for the interpretative style to produce the appropriate effect in the listener's consciousness.

Written in 1996, the piece was commissioned (Luck 2000, 53) by Norwich Cathedral - UK, on the occasion of its 900th anniversary. It is significant that the work was intended for this cathedral, which is the second highest in England, and this has particular implications for the performance style and choice of tempo in relation to the extremely generous acoustics of the space dedicated to the first public performance. We are forced to consider this aspect, especially as the score does not contain either the initial tempo indication or the approximate duration of the work.

In Pärt's creation the piece occupies a special place, being one of the few works after 1976 that belongs only peripherally to the *tintinnabuli* style. It lacks the actual dialogue between the *Tintinnabuli voice* and the *Melodic voice* - the fundamental emblem of this compositional style. There are, however, elements derived from the style, such as the use of the medieval *hocket* (or *hoquetus*[3]) (Pinkerton II 1996, 17) process, the presence of duration pedals - *ison* type, the frequent use of bar changes or the use of an initial generative archetype-model which will later form the basis of the whole construction of the work.

Another feature that places the work somewhat outside the boundaries of the *tintinnabuli* style is the fact that the piece is among the few written in a major key[4]: **G** major (although the last chord is **E** minor). As for Kimberly's metrical-rhythmic character, Anne Cargile notes that "unlike Pärt's other mixed metrical works, this piece does not appear to be animated by a free rhythm" (Cargile 2011, 71). Although he uses a polyphonic technique throughout (which Dan Voiculescu classifies as attack polyphony[5], or punctualist polyphony[6]) based mainly on the principle of discontinuity (by placing the syllables of a single word in different voices), the overall character of the work is a flowing one, with a measured tempo in which the flow of sound moves fluidly from one voice to another in the context of the succession of ideas present in the text (Voiculescu 2005, 106/119).

The generative-constructive model of the work is as follows (see figure 1): the first two voices enter in succession at a distance of a perfect fifth from each other, while the next two enter simultaneously with gradual movement in parallel thirds. Cargile notes that "this generative pattern is maintained throughout the work, without the entry of the first two voices being limited to the sounds of the tonic chord" (Cargile 2011, 73). Throughout the piece, the presence of this pattern determines the ascending and descending movements in two ways: beginning with the male voices and continuing with the female voices gradually ascending, before immediately continuing the process in the opposite direction, with the entry of the female voices followed by the male voices gradually descending (see figure 1).

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[3] "The hocket" is a compositional technique involving two voices, where one sings and the other stops, so that when the first voice finishes the verse, the second continues, borrowing the intonational cue"

[4] The term tonality indicates the basic gravitational centre of the work, without the connotations of classical functional tonality.

[5] "Reductionist-punctualist procedure" in which the entry of voices is made by "successive attack (...), the addition of entries of voices causing an increase in the expressive tension, and, conversely, the gradual withdrawal of voices - its calming"

[6] The punctualist polyphonic technique is "like a derivation and limit point of an ancient musical procedure - hoquetus - in which the melodic matter was always interrupted by arranging the flow in several voices."

This pattern (in which the first voices enter by building a quintet interval, and the next respond in parallel thirds) is maintained throughout the work, and the undulatory movement "gives the sound wave feel of a bell following the initial attack (Klang)" Georgiana Clare Luck also notes that "the pages are full of allusions to the palindromic pattern[7] , though none of these structures are exact; they simply add to the idea of oscillation, which seems to recall, perhaps, the *tintinnabuli* style" (Luck 2000, 53-54).

Fig. 1. *Generative constructivist model (m.1-7)*

The play has a tri-strophic structure (A, A1, Av), according to the Bible verses (John 15:1-14), as follows: stanza I - m. 1-62 (verses 1-5), stanza II - m. 63-128 (verses 6-9) and stanza III - m.129-190 (verses 10-14).

Harmonically and melodically the stanzas are almost identical, according to a defining feature of the *tintinnabuli* style, which is characterized by a lack of modulation, stillness, or - what I called earlier - *harmonic stasis*. Another aspect of the harmonic design is the presence of a duel for the supremacy of the gravitational centre of the piece, this struggle being eloquent from the very beginning: six bars after the **G** major debut, the relative **E** minor chord is also installed (see figure 1).

We thus see that within the general atmosphere of calm and balance, this tension of the discourse is hidden by the alternation of the two gravitational poles, so that, in the end, the battle is won by the relative, to which the final cadence (**E** minor chord) is ceded.

The conflict between the two tonalities culminates in the second stanza. Even though its beginning (m. 63) is the same as at the beginning of the piece, in **G** major, this key is confused by the presence of an **E** minor pedal in low bass that appears with m. 95 (see figure 2). If **E** minor seems to have gained some ground, the competing key regains its strength, being supported by a second pedal

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[7] Technique using musical phrases or groups of phrases that can be read both left to right and right to left without losing their meaning.

entrusted to the 1st soprano on the note **D** (the fifth of **G** major) from m. 104. The first soprano pedal continues for two more bars, after which the bass ison stops at m. 127, to prepare the transition to the third stanza at m. 129 (see Figure 3.), again in the key of **G**, which "awakens in the listener the hope that **G** major has emerged as the predominant key" (Luck 2000, 56).

Fig. 2. *Ison-type pedals (m. 101-106)*

Fig. 3. ***G*** *major has emerged as the predominant key (m. 126-131)*

In keeping with the *tintinnabuli* style, the melodic material is eminently diatonic (not modal, but non-modal tonal or pandiatonic) and the gait of the voices is mostly gradual, with the leaps generally built on the fourth and third intervals (along with their reversals). Exceptions are the small seventh and octave leaps in the soprano voice. We can therefore see how the melody is constructed taking into account the rigour of the generative model based on the laws of mathematics.

Present in all of *tintinnabuli*'s work, the economy of means (a feature that brings this music closer to the minimalist movement) is also a basic element in this work. The use of a minimum number of elements is reflected both in melody and harmony and in rhythm, agogics and dynamics.

The melody enters the listener's consciousness as an interweaving of different timbres and registers, masterfully embodied by the author in a play of stereophonic waves. But if we were to extract the conducting line[8] from this work, here is what the melodic line intoned by the soprano's voice would look like, with the appropriate transpositions (as seen in the figure below):

Fig. 4. *The conducting line (m. 1-8)*

Vertically, the overlap of all voices is rare and for very short periods of time. This process brings to mind the way stringed and bowed instruments play chords by

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[8] We call the *conducting line* the melodic line that unfolds horizontally the most important sounds in the verticality of a multi-voice work, which must be followed, conducted and highlighted through the conducting gesture.

passing the bow very quickly over all the strings. They give the sensation of harmony, which comes like a breeze - conveying a brief unstable impression, without a clear chord settling in to govern the melodic discourse. In the present work, however, there are also moments of "harmonic freeze" (in which the author brings to the fore the duel between the two gravitational poles: **G** major and **E** minor) where *fermata*-like chords[9] appear: measures 8, 16, 27, 53, 173 (see figure 5).

Fig. 5. *Chords oh the fermata type (m. 8, 16, 27, 53)*

In the second stanza there are brief moments of overlapping of five voices (Soprano I and Bass intoning pedals on **D** and **E** minor respectively, while the other voices continue to draw the generative-constructive pattern - see figure 6), which gives this section the highest degree of tensional build-up, and also the climax of the piece (m. 124 - see figure 6). The exception is the final cadenza, where all the voices sing simultaneously, generating by division a staging of seven sounds.

Rhythm is mostly subordinate to the prosodic accents: stressed syllables are assigned longer note values, while unstressed syllables, or words of secondary importance, are given exclusive use of fourths. The standard unit of the work, which also coincides with the inner pulse of the rhythmic flow, is also the triplet. The movement of the voices is isorhythmic throughout the piece, with minor exceptions, especially evident in the *ison*-like pedal moments present in the second stanza (m. 63-128) and in the work's final four bars. The rhythmic values used are exclusively the following: fourths, fifths, fifths with dot and whole note.

The tempo is not specified at the beginning of the piece and no other agogic indication appears along the way. However, the pitch is only specified at the beginning, without any further changes along the way. The indication of *piano*

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[9] Moments of cadenza in Renaissance music, in which the voices come together on a long value chord, acting as a crown (*fermata* in Italian means stop).

dynamics contributes to the construction of the *tintinnabuli* style, characterised by tranquillity, introspection and mystical meditation. The only way to enhance the tensional development is the harmonic clustering, in the second stanza, and in the final part where with the soprano and alto divided there is an accumulation of 7 sounds (the final **E** minor chord).

Fig. 6. *Generative model and the climax point (m.119-125)*

2. Stylistic and interpretative aspects

Returning to the text underlying *I am the true vine*, special attention must be paid to pronunciation, because, in addition to the standard challenges of a language like English (which uses more closed vowels like Romanian), in this case we are dealing with Old British English[10]. To avoid any confusion, the conductor will pronounce each syllable out loud and the choristers will note the phonetic transcription into Romanian underneath. This step is an important building block in the final interpretative edifice, since the **homogeneity and clarity of pronunciation** and the **degree of opening or closing of the vowels** to be sung, depend on the **focus and expressiveness of the sound** of the parts (and later of the whole), as well as

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[10] http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/pronunciation - online source recomended for the etablishemnt of the british english prononciation

intonational accuracy - an essential aspect in *tintinnabuli* a capella music.

Another fundamental aspect of *tintinnabuli* music is the way the sound is emitted. It is well known that from the earliest recordings of his *tintinnabuli* choral works Arvo Pärt has been actively contributing to shaping the vocal style. The characteristics of the music are very close to the Gregorian style, sometimes going even earlier, towards the medieval period.

There are two basic features of *tintinnabuli* playing. The first of these, in order of importance, relates to the mode of sound emission, namely non vibrato[11]. The second feature of post-1976 Parthian vocalism is related to the colour of the vowels. As David James himself, a noted interpreter of Arvo Pärt's music, says, "all vocals should be coloured as pure as possible". This "purity" of the vocals falls within the *boundaries of the naturalness* of speech, conveying an image of singing in which the listener can easily identify with a familiar sound. This *tintinnabuli* sound has already been established worldwide through recordings by ensembles such as *The Hilliard Ensemble*, *Theatre of Voices* and the *Estonian Chamber Choir*[12].

Since the training of the modern singer is much closer (in terms of the technique of sound emission) to the operatic bel canto or the symphonic vocal style of the 19th and 20th centuries, in order to determine the basic features of *tintinnabuli non vibrato* singing (with a natural and pure coloristics of the vowels) we will always use the comparison of the two interpretative styles.

Vocal colouring in opera after the 18th century is subject to the idea of "ennobling" the sound, in accordance, of course, with the whole process of evolution and elevation of the artistic act (choice of libretto subjects, orchestration, size and diversity of the vocal ensemble, complexity of the scenography, etc.). The expansion of the voice's ambitus of course plays an important (and even necessary) role in the evolution of the modern *bel canto* vocal style. From the fact that the human voice is forced towards the extreme limits of the treble (it is much less often present in the extreme lower register of alto or bass) arises a "covering" of the vowels in the voice's passage area, so that they can be used as a springboard for the treble and beyond - the supra-treble. Another term used to describe this "covering" of the vowels is also "overturning of the sound". All these features of

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[11] The "white" or non vibrato cante, characteristic of medieval Renaissance music, is characterized by a straight, natural sound - without fluctuations of the sound wave. This "vibrato" would not appear in the way vocal music was performed until after the advent of opera, especially in the Italian *belcanto* style of the 18th and 19th centuries.

[12] All three choral groups mentioned above bear in large part the signature of Hillier (either as performer or conductor), one of the most important interpreters of *tintinnabuli* music.

vocal technique present in modern opera[13] practically transform the natural way of sound delivery, on the one hand obviously improving vocal performance, but at the same time moving away from the *natural* through a *manufactured* approach to sound.

In the *belcanto* style of opera there are two main (purely technical) elements that contribute to this feeling of a *built-up voice*[14]: placing the sound further back in the sound projection box (in the area of the soft palate - see figure 7) and closing or rounding off the vocal emission, (rounding off the resonance cavity, which thus becomes domed to *ennoble* the sound).
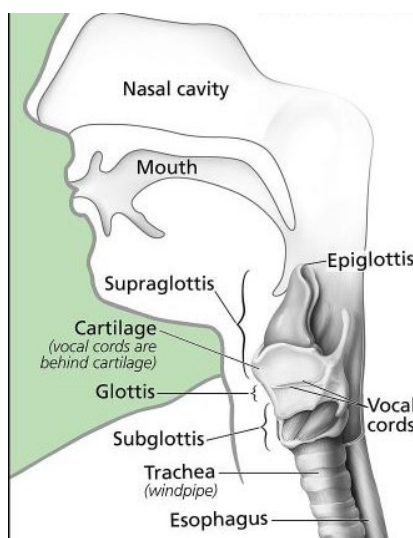

Fig. 7. *The placement of sound in operatic bel canto (the soft palate), respectively in white-non vibrato singing (the hard palate)*

In the following representation (figure 8) we can see how in the case of the vowel "A" the shape (roundness and opening) of the mouth is different in the *white-non vibrato* style than in the *bel canto* operatic style:

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[13] The vocality of the first operas belongs to the *white*, *non vibrato* style - up to almost Mozartian classicism (we are talking about the first opera proper - Claudio Monteverdi's *Orfeo*, but also about the period of G. Fr. Händel or the vocal music of J. S. Bach).

[14] *Built-up voice,* meaning that one can sense that the performer's voice has been intensively practised through specialised and systematic training.

Fig. 8. *Different colouring of the vowel "A"*

It should also be added that the way vowels are coloured is closely related to the register in which the vowel is placed. We also note that within the *tintinnabuli*[15] style there can be small oscillations (natural and natural vibrations) of the sound wave when speaking of the high register of the soprano and tenor (the sounds beyond the passage: between G and B sharp). The extreme registers used in *tintinnabuli* music extend the expressiveness of this style to a sound world where the quietness and balance of Renaissance polyphony is enriched with new colours, with modern tensional-expressive accumulations.

In the work *I Am the true vine* the melody moves throughout the piece from one voice to another, with choir voices frequently interjecting or ending the speech in mid-word. This creates in the listener's consciousness both the sensation of sound waves and a very engaging stereophonic interplay. From a stylistic-interpretative point of view, however, there is the great risk of fragmenting the musical discourse, with the melody being interrupted at moments of seam (the pronunciation of distinct syllables of the same word by two or more different voices) or the unnatural highlighting of certain sounds (especially when the final syllable of the word is entrusted to a voice which only then enters the scene, on the attack of that sound). This creates the undesirable situation where the flow of sound becomes incoherent and 'choppy' (see figure 9).

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[15] We have already established that, unlike the vocality of medieval and Renaissance music, *tintinnabuli* music often goes beyond the "normal" range, often moving towards high-pitched sounds such as A, B flat and even natural, especially in the case of the soprano voice.

Fig. 9. *Elements to look for in the fluidity of musical discourse (m. 15-20)*

The fluidity of the speech is the work's biggest interpretative technical problem. The ways to solve it belong to all performers: both conductor and singers. The conductor has several directions in which to turn his attention. One gestural aspect would be continuity of movement[16] (tact) - even if the work frequently has pauses (part pauses or general pauses). If the movement of the hands ceases on these, in the consciousness of the audience - and especially of the choristers - the flow of sound, in addition to the actual pause noted in the score, is enriched, psychologically speaking, with the idea of *stopping* (an idea that should be avoided as much as possible until the final agreement). A second element to be taken into account by the conductor is the prior preparation of each entry of the vocal parts: their attention must be captured one pulse before the actual attack. This is done primarily by means of a gaze firmly focused on those who are about to sing, but also by a fluid gesture[17] (of the hands) which is intended to link the preceding phrase naturally to what follows (sometimes joining two syllables of the same word).

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[16] Continuity of movement during moments of stillness does not have to be obvious, with large gestures - one can resort to a passive touch (a minimal, non-expressive gesture, indicating only the tempo) possibly using only the wrist, not the whole arm. But the last beat of the passive tapping must be active - it must contain the character of the phrase to follow.

[17] The conducting gesture of "welding" the melody from one voice to another must also contain the appropriate character: if the voice to be sung intones a stressed syllable, the gesture is ample and firm; if the last syllable is sung, or the last word of the phrase, the gesture must show the character of a finale, of conclusion, and therefore of low sonorous intensity.

        The frequent pauses (present in this score, but so characteristic of Arvo Part's whole creation, and, implicitly, of the *tintinnabuli* style) must be **actively** treated, they "must be played", because otherwise, due to the frequency, and not infrequently, the unusually long[18] duration with which they are invested, they can be real moments of "artistic emptiness". At these moments the audience's attention can be irretrievably lost, and the music either interrupts the flow of its discourse or gives the impression of a *false ending* (which in the phenomenological arc of music performance is the responsibility of the performers on stage, who can mistakenly give the audience the impression that the music is *over*, when in fact the musical discourse sometimes continues for many more bars). It is, in other words, a question of the *tension of the musical discourse* and the continuation of the transmission of ideas and emotions even *during breaks,* or rather - it may seem paradoxical - *especially during breaks*. This can be achieved by continuing to "experience" the inner state (emotion) with which the previous musical phrase was invested - during the pause that follows. This, if anticipated and clearly intended in the minds of the performers, will obviously be reflected in the facial expressions of each of them (of course - and on the face of the conductor). Only then will the frequent moments of pause in the *tintinnabuli* style acquire the expressive meaning invested by the author (and will not be mere "stops" of the musical discourse, with the role - so harmful to the artistic act - of interrupting and then restarting the tensional accumulation of the work, thus irretrievably losing the idea of *articulated* artistic construction that should accompany any musical work intended for the public - regardless of the period in which it was written or what means of timbral expression it uses (see figure 10).
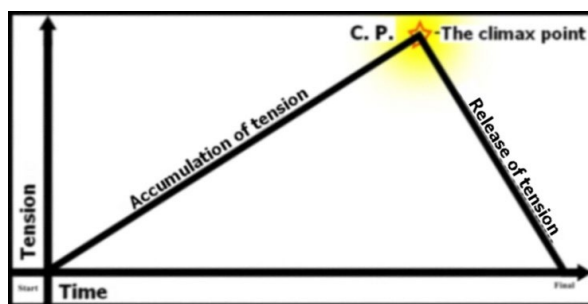

Fig. 10. *Universal arc of coherent musical articulation*
(correctly composed - correctly performed)

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[18] It often happens, in partian works, that pauses extend over several bars, or, even more frequently, the notation G.P. (*general pause*) appears, which traditionally extends the pause beyond the boundaries of the measurable tempo of the respective measure/piece in general.

The treatment of pauses in music, and even more so in *tintinnabuli* music (which makes a cult of pauses) is a rather "delicate" subject for performers. In general, pauses tend to be associated (in the consciousness of singers and especially instrumentalists) with "moments of rest", or at best, with a brief moment of "respite". This situation is to be avoided, as far as possible, for the reasons discussed above. The correct, constructive way (which serves the artistic act) of approaching pauses is the **active** one, in which the performer's attention does not wane, or disappear completely from the evolving flow of the interpretative act - but on the contrary, counteracts this tendency (so present in the customs of musical practice), whereby once the eye notices a pause the performer in question has "left the stage", or in other words, is no longer "in the spotlight". We identify at least three main functions of pauses in *tintinnabuli* vocal music:

- natural breathing function (let's not forget that the need for pauses in vocal music came primarily from the singers' physiological need to inhale);

- the role of separating by silence an idea that has just been exhausted from a successive episode;

- the function (unusual and difficult to achieve) of an expressive pause, in which one actively contemplates the **objective stillness** of the space in which one is singing, but also the **subjective stillness**, the one discovered, and perhaps created in the microcosm of the listener's being. This technique, called in esoteric practices "stop technique" is a basic element of the *tintinnabuli* style, and when correctly "staged" it has a deep spiritual impact on the audience's consciousness (it induces that state of contemplative stillness, of meditation - which is often associated with Arvo Pärt's music).

This attitude of relaxation during pauses is so deeply ingrained in musical performance that it must become an essential concern for the conductor and players to keep attention alive[19] throughout the work. All the more so in the present work - *I Am the true Vine* - which, in addition to the frequent general pauses, also presents the challenge of the structural discontinuity of the language of punctualist polyphony[20] (as the melody moves from one voice to another, breaking even the continuity of the word itself, there are - in the case of each individual voice - a very large number of pauses in the unfolding of the music - see figure 11) (Voiculescu 2005, 119/123).

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[19] In other words - keeping the inner tension or intensity of the emotional charge.

[20] A term consecrated by Dan Voiculescu, op. cit. p. 119. The author also notes that with Luigi Nono "punctualism also enters the field of vocal music" by "treating the text in a discontinuous way, by placing the syllables of a single word in different voices (…)", *op. cit.* p. 123.

In this context, it is imperative that the voices that have pauses actively follow the singing of the other voices, up to the moment of their own entry, and take over all the interpretative elements from them: tempo, intensity, character, inner state, articulation, vocal coloristics. A further suggestion (which would greatly increase the chances of a smooth flow of sound) would be for the parts that pause to "intonate" in the mind (based on inner hearing) the melodic line sung by the other voices.

Fig. 11. *The silence and the performers attention (m. 15-20)*

Once we have implemented the correct attitude of the performer towards the pause in the score and after achieving the homogeneity of the vocal colouring in all parts of the choir - we can proceed to the next steps in the construction of the final sound edifice. In addition to the challenge presented by the discontinuity of the discourse that sails in waves from one voice to another, we also have the problem of the natural differences in timbral colours between the high (soprano and tenor) and low (alto and bass) voice parts, which can be resolved with the help of the composer's own statement regarding his own compositional endeavours: "I am in search of a common denominator" (Restagno 2012, 7). The same common denominator will be sought in the difference in timbral colour between tenors and basses, or sopranos and altos.

The first stage precedes the artistic execution and aims to choose the voices of the performers according to this criterion. We will be looking for violists and basses with a voice colour as close as possible to high voices. We prefer violists who have the low range of the work, but who also have the brilliance and agility of high sopranos. The same arguments will be used when choosing baritones and basses.

The ensemble will consist of a minimum of three vocalists, namely: three sopranos I, three sopranos II, three or four violists, three or four tenors, three baritones and three basses. The same situation in the choice of voices is maintained, however, within the soprano part. Traditionally, in the soprano I part, the most agile voices are selected, with a light and bright treble, while the voices making up the soprano II part have more of a middle register strength. In the case of this work (and in general in all *tintinnabuli* music) this distinction no longer has its place. On the contrary, the soprano II part must possess the same lightness on the treble and the same colour of voice in the middle register as the soprano I. We can see this concretely in the second stanza of the piece, where the soprano I has to intonate in the middle register a pedal on **D**, while the soprano II takes on the role of soloist, entrusting himself with the very climax of the piece (by reattaching for the first time on the values of the dots separated by the **G** sharp pause - see figure 6).

Another challenge related to the division of voices (which is reflected in the homogeneity of the interpretation and the correct articulation of the piece's tense development) is the following: the author does not clearly specify how the voices are distributed until the first actual moment of division. As far as the division of the sopranos is concerned, one variant would be that up to this point all the sopranos sing the part assigned to the part, and the division takes place (according to the score) at bar 92 and continues thereafter from bar 101 to bar 129. The only caveat to this choice is that when singing in unison all six sopranos will have to use a lower pitch, so that there will be no difference in intensity and colour when they sing the divided part. The same arguments apply to the bass-baritone division, although their separate division starts much earlier, in bar 31. Baritones will need to use a voice colour as close as possible to that of the tenor, especially in the division section (m. 95-127).

Even if by carefully choosing voices of equal colour we have increased the chances of fluency, this is not enough. The conductor will have to firmly instruct the lower voices (alto and baritone-bass) to give up as much as possible of their characteristic colour (I am referring here to that way of asserting one's own timbral identity, an attitude found particularly in men with lower voices, whereby they deliberately "darken" their own voice, artificially covering and thickening their own timbral colour). Altis and bass-baritones will do exactly the opposite of this somewhat natural tendency - they will copy as much as possible the soprano's or tenor's characteristic tone and colour. Only then will the musical discourse of the work come closer to the author's declared intention of seeking a *common denominator* in all the elements of expression, through timbral uniformity and coherence in interpretation (homogeneity of emission, dynamic balance, stability of tempo).

Another technical element that contributes to the integrity of the final artistic construction is related to articulation. I will review the essential moments to watch for in terms of pronunciation, related to the simultaneity of attacks and endings, by part and as a whole - especially words ending in a consonant. Punctuated polyphony creates this interweaving of textual and sonorous material between the voices of the choir, so that an idea begun by one voice is continued by another. A basic guideline in achieving fluidity of speech is to respect the duration of the last note values, and to close them only at the moment of attack of the successive voice (especially when the final syllable ends in a consonant - see figure 12).

Fig. 12. *Respecting the duration (m. 48-53)*

Another aspect to watch out for is the closure of words ending in a consonant. When these are followed by a pause, the articulation of the final consonant should be made at the point of attack of the pause (see Ex. 23 m. 134), and when the final consonant is inside a word which will be continued in another voice, it is preferable that the pronunciation of the final consonant be as soft as possible, and simultaneous with the attack of the successive voice (see Fig. 13. - m. 134).

Fig. 13. *Pronunciation and articulation*

A final important element in the fluidity of the speech is the technique of preparing the attack of sounds on the treble (figure 14, - m. 82). Such moments of direct attack on the treble, or even by leaping from a preceding sound, can cause the melodic line to contain peaks of high intensity and strident sonority which we have called above "coltish sound flow". The way to avoid such a situation is to approach these sounds with some preparation, both psychologically and physically (using the right elements of vocal technique).

Fig. 14. *Preparing the attack of sounds (m. 81-82/157-159/179-180)*

The situation when the treble attack is by leaping from a previous sound without a pause is relatively simpler. The preparation of the treble is done by thinking them

in the same place or position as the preceding sounds, which in this case are at the distance of the lower seventh or octave (see Fig. 14. - m. 157). The preceding sound is used as a springboard, as it already contains both the tension and air pressure needed for the treble, and its position in the resonators (slight rising of the cheekbones, as in a small smile). To these is added a larger throat opening (in other words the larger space created in the larynx to ensure the smooth vibration of the high sound) - which will of course also take place on the previous sound or in other words on the *trampoline sound*.

The direct attack of the high-pitched sound is more difficult precisely because we lack a foothold, an initial landmark. That's why in singing technique this is likened to jumping into the air or parachute jumping (both require a lot of practice and a sufficient dose of determination and courage). However, we can also use our imagination to imagine starting from somewhere lower when attacking a high sound, taking the descending octave as a reference. But this is risky both in terms of intonation and the accuracy of the actual attack of the treble. The preparatory steps are practically the same as for the attack when we have the *trampoline sound* at our disposal: activating an exceptional pressure of air from the top of the lungs directed towards the roof of the mouth, preparing the resonance position (raising the cheekbones) and, last but not least, widening the laryngeal cavity. As for the actual attack of the high-pitched, it is preferable that the entry of the cords into vibration is not by glottal blow, but only by air pressure.

One last aspect of the high-pitched attack, which is quite common in this piece, can be found also in the soprano voice line. The repeated attack of the same treble (**G**, in this case), interrupted (or not) by a fourth-note pause (see figure 14 - m. 82). When the **G** sharp is first correctly emitted, it often happens that the repetition of the sound is not as precise, loses its brilliance, or is undertoned. To counteract this it is recommended, especially when the sounds are separated by pause (see figure 14), not to breathe after the first sound, but, moreover - to keep in the same position of the respiratory-phonatory system (air pressure, position of the sound and opening of the laryngeal cavity) for the emission of the next sound.

It should also be added that the challenge of the attack of the high-pitched sound also poses enough problems for the diametrically opposite process that the basses have to perform with the direct attack of the low-pitched sound in measures 8, 31, 41, 60, 95, 161 and 192 (see figure 15 - m. 31). The only difference would be that the emission of this grave sound requires less air pressure than the acute emission. Basses and baritones are also confronted with the approach of a gradually descending phrase that appears in the generative-constructive pattern for the first time starting with the sound **A** and gradually descending to **G** and the second time transposed a third higher, the first sound being **C** (see Figure 16).

Apparently this phrase seems simple, but I recommend the following exercise to ensure clean intonation: as the phrase descends each sound should be thought of as a resonant position even as a higher frequency. This will prevent the intonation of gradually descending sounds - so common in musical practice - from falling out of tune.

Fig. 15. *The direct attack of the low sound (m. 28-34)*

Fig. 16. *the generative-constructive pattern starting with the sound A (m. 5-7/10-12)*

Assuming that the staging of this work will be done with the minimum number of members (announced above), we will face a problem with the bass and soprano I ison pedals present in the middle section of the piece. The way to make these extended pedals work without noticeable discontinuities is to use "individual breathing" (each of the three members of the soprano I and bass parts breathes in individually, preferably at a different time from the other two players). Since the number of members of the party is so small, for safety's sake, depending on the capabilities of each of them, the conductor will ensure that they are able to breathe in turn, and if not, will note for each one the number of bars after which he will take a breath to reattach the pedal sound. A small detail is added here - the reattachment of the sound must be done with extremely low intensity, and intonationally precise, in order to preserve the linearity and homogeneity of the *ison* throughout. A final detail is the removal of the bass from the E pedal, intoning the same sound on the vowel "I" for 30 bars. The conductor should pay particular attention to this moment, warning the basses one bar before they start to articulate. A special gesture may also be used to mark their entrance in bar 125.

If all the aspects reviewed so far have been put into practice, we are ready to approach interpretation from a deeper level of understanding of this artistic act. First of all the performers have in the piece *I Am the true vine* the role of a medium, a vessel for the manifestation of the divine Logos. The exposition of these verses, which were spoken 2000 years ago by the Saviour Jesus, transforms the choristers from simple storytellers into a collective sacred embodiment of the Word of God. The inner attitude of those who speak these words must express on the one hand poise, certainty and determination (sometimes with weary undertones) and on the other the immeasurable love with which Jesus embraces his destiny for the salvation of all humanity.

The final cadence has an imperative character, dictated both by the harmonic build-up and by the message of the last verse*: You are my friends if you do everything I command you.*

3. Conclusion

In Pärt's creation the piece "*I Am the true vine*" occupies a special place, being one of the few works after 1976 that belongs only peripherally to the *tintinnabuli* style. Although he uses a polyphonic technique, the overall character of the work is a flowing one, with a measured tempo in which the flow of sound moves fluidly from one voice to another. The play has a tri-strophic structure (**A, A1, Av**), according to

the Bible verses (John 15:1-14) which inspired the author. Present in all of *Tintinnabuli*'s work, the economy of means (a feature that brings this music closer to the minimalist movement) is also a basic element in this work. The use of a minimum number of elements is reflected both in melody and harmony and in rhythm, agogics and dynamics. In keeping with the *tintinnabuli* style, the melodic material is eminently diatonic and the gait of the voices is mostly gradual. Pärt uses a medieval composition technique known as *hocket* for voice leading, where the text is divided between the upper voices, moving alternately from one voice to another.

Some of the stylistic and interpretative aspects are: the homogeneity and clarity of pronunciation, the degree of opening or closing of the vowels and the intonational accuracy - an essential aspect in *tintinnabuli* a cappella music. One of the features of the play, refers to the sound emission, Pärt offering an example of a non vibrato singing that emphasizes the purity of the sound. In the work *I Am the true vine* the melody moves throughout the piece from one voice to another, with choir voices frequently interjecting or ending the speech in mid-word. This creates in the listener's consciousness both the sensation of sound waves and a very engaging stereophonic interplay.

The play underlines a constructive way of approaching pauses in an active manner, in which the performer's attention does not wane, or disappear completely from the evolving flow of the interpretative act - but on the contrary, counteracts this tendency. In the case of an expressive pause, one actively contemplates the objective stillness of the space in which one is singing, but also the subjective stillness. Another technical element that contributes to the integrity of the final artistic construction is related to articulation. Punctuated polyphony creates the interweaving of textual and sonorous material between the voices of the choir, so that an idea begun by one voice is continued by another.

Performers have in the piece *I Am the true vine* the role of a vessel which have to render the purity of the Logos, of the Word of God and therefore, taking the responsibility to transmit love and purity in the world. All these features contribute to considering Pärt`s creation - a wonderful work of art.

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