



MCDSARE: 2019

International Multidisciplinary Scientific Conference on the Dialogue between Sciences & Arts, Religion & Education

MUSICAL-PERFORMING ELEMENTS IN THE SONG CREATION OF COMPOSER NICOLAE BRETAN

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Abstract

The cult lied appeared at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century in the musical environment of Viennese Classicism, in the creation of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) and Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827), then continued at a high level of understanding of the expressive possibilities of the genre, by Franz Schubert (1797-1828), followed by Robert Schumann (1810-1856), Johannes Brahms (1833-1897), or Hugo Wolf (1860-1903). The Romanian lied reaches its heights of perfection in the twentieth century, and the specific feature of our soul that is reflected in its structure is the nostalgic sense of longing. This feeling represents the synthesis of the Romanian ethos. The composer Nicolae Bretan (1887-1968) occupies a special place in the history of European music. In his operas and his numerous songs, Bretan sought the essential nature of the song and the expressive potential of the human voice. His plurivalent artistic personality impresses the researchers of his life and creation and makes them want to enter more into the secrets of his work, because, besides his work as a composer, Nicolae Bretan was a conductor, director and opera soloist. The creation of lied belonging to the composer Nicolae Bretan is large, comprising over 200 works on various lyrics by Romanian, Austrian, Hungarian and German poets, but also on his own lyrics.

Keywords: Lied; Bretan; Romanticism; Eminescu; performing;

1. INTRODUCTION

The history of music confirms that in order to become an autonomous genre, the lied needed a long period of accumulation and lasted for centuries until the composers realized its significant strength. The lied, this miniature voice genre, has its origin in the popular song, the song that forms the basis on which the song was crystallized during the centuries. True, lied is a miniature genre, but expresses in quintessence an extremely rich spiritual universe. The songs deepen the meanings of the poetic text and manage to express the most diverse and nuanced thoughts and feelings. The cult lied appeared at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century in the musical environment of Viennese classics, in the creation of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) and Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827), then continued at Franz Schubert (1797-1828), followed by Robert Schumann (1810-1856), Johannes Brahms (1833-1897), or Hugo Wolf (1860-1903).



2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The Romanian lied reaches its heights of perfection in the twentieth century, and the specific feature of our soul that is reflected in its structure is the nostalgic sense of longing. This feeling represents the synthesis of the Romanian ethos. The whole art of the Romanian composers of the 20th century focused on discovering the modalities of expressing the ideas expressively through the musical language. The expressive dimension of the recitative has made the Romanian musicians attach special importance to it, becoming an original solution, a particular feature of the Romanian vocal creation. Since the contribution of vocality is to a large extent influenced by a certain organization of the musical text, the importance of this vocalism in this organization - as a factor and source of expressiveness - differs according to the genre of music, current, style, composer. The vocal configuration appears in different contrasting forms and in the Romanian song. One of the methods used is to expose the vocal writing in a declarative manner, in a cantable form, giving rise to a reciting cantando, or profoundly influenced by parlato style, generating that type of recitativo secco and parlando-rubato. The vocal broadcasting required for the interpretation of these types of recitative will therefore be different from that used in lyrical songs, lyrical in which the melodic configuration requires another type of phrasing and impostation. Among the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century composers in the lied creation we find: Alexandru Flechtenmacher, Gheorghe Dima, Eduard Caudella, George Stephanescu, Tiberiu Brediceanu, Nicolae Bretan, Mihail Jora, Martian Negrea, Theodor Rogalski, Sigismund Toduță or Paul Constantinescu.

3. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The composer Nicolae Bretan (1887-1968) occupies a special place in the history of European music. In his opera work and his numerous lied, Bretan sought the essential nature of the song and the expressive potential of the human voice. His plurivalent artistic personality impresses the researchers of his life and creation and makes them want to enter more into the secrets of his work, for besides his work as a composer, Nicolae Bretan was a conductor, director and soloist Opera House. Bretan's creations send a humanitarian message, either by painting the abysses of the human soul, and here we mention the works: *The Evening star* (1921), *Golem* (1924), *Arald* (1982), which notes the Creator's science of exposing music to the misery and greatness of human nature, or through a humanity in which love of peers defeats all hatred and injustice: *The Heroes of Rovine* (1935) and *Horia* (1937).

Bretan's works go beyond the Italian opera tradition, and the arias and duets are similarly constructed, bypassing the brave, because singing becomes a form of expression of the human soul, approaching the origins of the song.

4. RESEARCH METHODS

The creation of lied belonging to the composer Nicolae Bretan is vast, comprising 200 songs on various verses by Romanian, Austrian, Hungarian and German poets, but also on his own lyrics. It is the author's science, singing in turn, to make vocal songs and to portray various worlds and feelings, which reveals the composer's appeal to this miniature genre. Bretan engages all the musical parameters in the service of the surprising music of the inexpressible. He uses varied possibilities of musical expression without losing formal unity. The piano accompaniment highlights the expressive moments in the poems used, sometimes sharpening certain plans, more intense than the voice or text itself would do. Bretan also often avoids the high piano register, but also the lowest, in order the instrument does not exceed the voice in volume. It is noticed that the piano does not have concert moments or virtuosity passages, the composer preferring the accompaniment to be very dynamic on the dynamic plane, which helps him to express the essence in his purest form.

5. FINDINGS

Bretan's vocal creation is full of spontaneity and simple language. Unlike composers as Richard Wagner, Gustav Mahler, or Richard Strauss, who created orchestral lied, pushing this chamber genre to the opera, Bretan restored the simple form of lied, rejecting the symphony of the late Romantics, and giving the miniature genre the intimacy that is own.

Nicolae Bretan's creation on Eminescu's lyrics is rich, the composer making 25 songs for various voices. The composer imagined a sometimes spirited musical world, sometimes melancholic, managing to gently revive the atmosphere and feelings that crossed the texts chosen from the poet Mihai Eminescu's lyrical creation.

Sleeping Birds (1912)

This lied is written in E Major, the binary measure composed of 4/4, in the *Andante con moto* tempo, the metronomic pulse 69, with the bipartite double bipartite ABAB'. Voice speech is superimposed on a piano accompaniment in left-handed artifacts linked to various intervals, such as large 6th, perfect 5th or large 3th, suggesting a one-of-a-kind atmosphere. Modular inflections occur at C # minor and C major, B major and A minor, then the original tone returns. Bretan uses unexpectedly the harmonies on certain phrases and words, such as the phrase *sleeping in peace*, where the first word of *peace* uses a chord from A # minor with seventh diminished, harmony that repeats itself to the next degree, intended only for the piano, which also picks up the vocal melody, as an echo to those previously asserted. Besides, the major-minor alternation is permanently used in the lied creation of the composer. The same harmonic journey is also present in the second part of the lied, with the mention that the last two verses are repeated.

A rhythmic figure constantly present at the voice along this lied is the eighth note followed by a sixteenth, while the piano has a group of fourteen sixteenth arpeggiatus arranged as a harp accompaniment:

Voice intervals are simple, small and large seconds, small and large thirds, perfect 4th and 5th. The piano uses intervals that fall within the limits of a perfect octave, melodic or harmonic. The first part of the strof has an arpeggiatic accompaniment, when the vocal melody has an ascendant meaning, and when the vocal melody has a downward sense, starting from the sound at 2, the piano accompanies with chords and rhythmic-melodic figurations in the minor-major in the right hand, which suggests the magnificence of the night scene. Also, the voice and the piano have a fermata on the first sound, creating a time-suspension effect, this method being used in the last phrase of the song, where the composer ends with a melodic third position:

The phrase from the voice is then taken identically by the right hand to the piano, in imitation, suggesting the echo of the forest. The same procedure is found in the second sentence, only that the imitation appears on this left hand, because the right hand has *tremolo* on large thirds. Another aspect is the appearance of the fermata in the first sentence for the first time, and in the second sentence, it appears in the fourth degree, for the first time. Bretan changes the binary meter to the ternary on the last verse - *with the branches to the ground* - where he uses the minor melodic variant with the fourth step altered and an exceptional rhythm division, the triplet of quavers. The end of the question is marked by a new fermata, on a double octave piano, at which point the measure changes again. Everything that follows is the answer of the forest, which begins with a formula consisting of the four-point four-fold formula followed by a half-note, and the accompaniment of the piano is arpeggiated with quavers:

The image shows a musical score for a vocal and piano piece. The top staff is the vocal line, with lyrics in German and English. The bottom two staves are the piano accompaniment. The music is in a minor key and 3/4 time. The piano accompaniment features arpeggiated quavers in the right hand. Dynamics include piano (p) and piano fortissimo (pff).

The repetitive rhythmic formulas continue in the following two measures. On the following verse, *and my foliage crumbles*, Bretan introduces an asymmetric measure of 5/4, with a reduced agreement over four and a sixteen septolet, which provides an important momentum of movement that has an attack effect on the minor it follows. Bretan creates a very powerful effect on those who listen to this lied by the tempting rupture: after only six measures of *agitato* on the lyrics *Blow the wind in the one way / The singers leave me, / The wind blows from one side, / Winter is here, the summer is away*, Bretan suddenly stops the turbulent movement in the accompaniment of the piano, changing the groups of fourteen sixteen arpeggiated with doomstellar accords, and the voice descends with an octave below, thus pointing ingeniously from musical point of view the resignation of the forest - *And why not to go, / If the birds pass ?*. Bretan returns the rhythmic structure from the beginning of the forest response into the following measures, again suggesting the continuous movement of creeping, then returns the *agitato* side with the same rhythmic structure as the first *agitato*, the climax of the lied, whose phrases have a descending course towards a fermata on the last syllable of the word *wings*, in the fortissimo:

The image shows a musical score for a vocal and piano piece. The top staff is the vocal line, with lyrics in German and English. The bottom two staves are the piano accompaniment. The music is in a minor key and 3/4 time. The piano accompaniment features arpeggiated quavers in the right hand. Dynamics include piano fortissimo (pff) and fortissimo (ff).

At this point, Bretan suddenly changes the atmosphere by introducing a slow ending part in *pianissimo* with a *cantabile* indication and *dolce*. Here, the melancholy of the voice is superimposed over the sixteen arpeggiates in the high right hand register and the narrow ranges from the left hand to the piano. The lyrics *and leaves me desolated, withered and numb / And with my own loneliness, only with it !*, repeats, and after the fermata of the second syllable of the word *only*, the lied ends with an arpeggio in

the Major tonality, starting from the small octave to the sound of G 4 in the right hand, with the fermata both in the voice and piano:

De mă " qiu nu mai cu roll
trăs - te in in mei ner et. 1"
On - ly men " ry and pain. "

Bretan Cluj, 1920

This miniature masterpiece by Nicolae Bretan reveals an abyss of contrasts, longings and accomplishments. The force of this work lies in the ability to continuously transform the rhythmic structures. The dynamics present in this work is rather rich, being deduced from the composer's instructions, but also from the ascending or descending lines of the song's course. There are also terms and notes related to the execution technique, such as *dolce* or *legato* of expression and phrasing, but also agogic indications: *Andante*, *a tempo*, *agitato*, *cantabile*, *ritardando*, *rallentando*.

The vocal tessitura is typical of a lyrical soprano, with an extended voice range. Considering the predominantly dramatic nature of music, and that this lied is built on rhythmic and agogic contrasts, the voice must express tensions and relaxations in music through a clear, penetrating emission with a round, sometimes metallic, sometimes velvety voice and full of melancholy.

7. CONCLUSION

The timelessness of the music composed by Nicolae Bretan is due to the character of his songs, which are deeply rooted in the Romanian folkloric treasure, as well as to the composer's science of worshipping the songs and of raising them to musical masterpieces, thus enrolling in the line of Romanian composers representative for the beginning of the 20th century. His vast creation of songs includes a very wide range of themes and musical motifs, and his compositional genius knew to use all the musical parameters for the rendering the feelings that cross the verses of the various poets, and also to maximize the expressiveness of the human voice. In the 25 songs created on the verses of Mihai Eminescu, Nicolae Bretan expresses the ideas of poetic genius by melodies of apparent simplicity, which in fact denotes an attitude of humility towards the creation of the national poet and the beauty and fascination of the thematic universe that can be identified in Eminescu's poems.

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