

Music correspondence - text in the work *Letter* for voice and piano On poems by Publius Ovidius Naso

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Abstract: *By using as a starting point the text in verses written by the poet Publius Ovidius Naso, the music of this work attempts to capture, with its specific means, the very special vibration that goes beyond words. This lied, in its simple form, fits into the tendencies of the postmodern current, by turning to established structures and the tendency to recover traditions. The universe of a poem can thus find a correspondence that fulfils and completes the message, with its whole wealth of meanings.*

Keywords: *language, meanings, poetry, music, artistic expression*

Art has to convey, through its artistic expression, profound meanings that the verbal language cannot capture most of the times. Music carries in itself an infinite variety of sound combinations that can awaken an infinity of feelings and emotions. As Lucian Blaga wrote, *"there is always music around us that enchants our thoughts, hearts and enslaves our hearts and compels us to step up in its pace. A music that enchants us and suggests the rhythm of a wild game or of a funeral march, the rhythm of a dream romance or of a warrior's hymn. This music is: the spirit of time"*.²

The *Lied* in contemporary music creation remains a common form of expression. The combination of the two arts - poetry and music - gives birth to a genre loved by most composers. Poetry, as an artistic expression, can awaken in the consciousness of a musician a specific form of expression that aims at complex aesthetic meanings that enrich and embellish the initial message through additions that only the syncretism of the arts is able to offer.

The *Letter* lied is the result of a creative approach of students Popa Ioana, Canto II year in the circle *Introduction to musical composition - vocal music* led by prof. Daniela Cojocaru. The Lied lyrics belong to the poet Ovid, *"the first great European romantic"* as George Călinescu describes him. This poet of remarkable reputation in the ancient world of Rome gained recognition as the most popular poet of the Augustian age. Seneca the philosopher often quotes him as a predecessor to the new style, and during the Middle Ages the popularity of the poet Ovidius would reach its peak.

Letter XIX tells one of Ovid's impressions against the people who harbored his exile. By going through the text, we can distinguish appreciation of the poet to the people that he "honoured" and still honours, one of the greatest poets of the time, truly appreciating the artistic value of this messenger of Latin culture, coming from the *capital of the world* in the city of Pontus Euxin.

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² Blaga Lucian, *my temple stones*, Sibiu, printed Cosînzeana Office 1919, page 67

In his great modesty, being aware of the status of man in exile, the artist is impressed by the honour offered by this "faithful" people who recognize his artistic value by assigning the "sacred crown". Thus, after years spent here, the poet confesses to have loved this place that had become "dear and holy" in time.

Letter XIX

*Even if it had been pitch-dark
How would I offend this faithful people?
You would be kind in grief here when was arrived.
You just gave me the honour that would be due
Only to a man who is not punished;
Although I did not want, the world wanted to see
I placed my sacred crown on my forehead!
How Latos Delos was so dear
so is this Tomis dear and holy to me
Since I left my holy sacred homeland!*

The piece of the lied indicates aspects of language that are consistent with the poetic text, whose dramaturgy is suggested by the technical means used. From the very beginning, there is a distinct atmosphere, but also the resignation, the sadness of the poet who is forced to choose the way of exile. Musically, this translates into choosing *D minor* tonality.

The piece begins with a generating melodic cell (x) that is to be taken up and subsequently processed, then encountered in various positions throughout the lied. One of the characteristic traits of this melodic formula, first presented at the piano (measures 1-3) and then resumed in the voice (5-6), is predominantly descending which underlines and strengthens the depressive character of the musical discourse. Another appropriation of this motif built on a descending arpegge is generated by the beginning of the melodic formula that appears in the second part of time, the break from the beginning shaping up the impression of a sigh.

Ex. 1 lied *Letter* - m.1-3 and m. 5-6

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system shows measures 1-3, with the piano part marked *p* and a melodic cell 'x' highlighted in a box. The second system shows measures 5-6, with the voice part marked *mp* and the piano part marked *mp*. The lyrics are: "Chiar de-aș fi fost" and "Chiar de-aș fi fost ca smoa-la".

A new distinct melodic development appears still determined as melodic cell *y*. It has a significant value in the poetic context, the profile being outlined on perfect octave intervals and perfect quint, the first intervals present in the natural resonance of the sound, thus making an indirect reference to natural, archetypal patterns that capture the archaic time, emphasizing at the same time the intension of placing in the era of the lyrics' author. It is remarkable the keeping of the rhythmic profile showing the same sigh that now, due to the ascending melodic sense, shows the awakening of hope or the reconciliation with oneself. From a harmonic point of view, the overlapping of voices indicates a form of heterophony that brings back the archaic character of the play.

Ex. 2 lied *Letter* - M.4 and m.7

Throughout the lyrics *How would I offend this faithful people?* the melodic soprano line approaches – by repeating the sound (“a”) la - a recitative with great power of suggestion. This singing near to a speech is a new reference to the trend of traditions recovery, in which the archetypal idioms are quoted. Harmony takes note of the recitative it assimilates in the form of a pedal, which accompanies the symmetrical swinging between two sounds that create a passage at the third level. This, as a generating interval, is also reinforced by the overlapping the two planes from which a harmonic writing results. The piano's Izoritmia, superimposed on the quasi-recitative of the voice, reminds us of the proposed heterophony at the beginning of the work.

Ex 3 *Letter* lied - m.9-10

The same return to tradition can be suggested by the repeating range, this time more rhythmically of a melodic cell according to the principle (unity in ?) "Unity in variety"³ which exists in the Romanian folk music, a "*labor of variants* - which Gheorghe Firca according to musicologist – *engulfs and reduces in the microstructural aspect [...] the way of life, in the depth, of the folk variants*". This significant detail emphasizes an element of technique that is part of the traditional Romanian music.

Ex. 4. *Letter* lied - m. 11-14

⑪ *mf*

Du - iosi ati fost in ja - le cand ve - ne: Du -

mf

⑬

iosi ati fost în ja - le

The lyrics *You just gave me the honour that would be due / Only to a man who is not punished* bring forward the relative major tone - *F major*. It is the moment of opening to serenity, a confession of profound gratitude that the poet nourishes to the people of Pontus Euxin that harboured and honoured him.

In the melodic piano profile, one remarks the return of the first cell (x) which is taken on and processed both intermittently and rhythmically, the new configuration constituting an arpeggiated drawing of the harmonic links. (It is also remarkable here) We also notice small recitative vocal incursions which give stylistic unity to the whole lied.

³ Firca, George, *On a specific variation principle of the Romanian contemporary creation*, in: *Studies of musicology*, vol. VI, Bucharest: musical, 1970, p. 9

Ex.5. *Letter* lied m.18-21

The wide deck which starts at measure 23 is structured in its entirety on the second melodic cell (y) which now has rhythmically diminished values and runs on a locked pedal of sound “a” (la). Thus, there is an accumulation of elements in which we find the recitative, the motif y and the idea of wobbling by addressing successive steps adjacent in an ascending and descending manner of the song that may lead us think, beyond the mourning character, of a description of the area from the seashore, by associating this melodic profile with the waves of the sea. The alternative measures are meant to mark a certain asymmetry, suggesting the meditative atmosphere that prepares the last section of the lied.

Ex.6 lied *Letter* m. 23-25

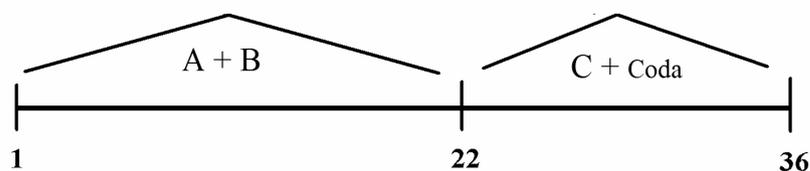
Although I did not want, the world wanted to see/ I placed my sacred crown on my forehead! (constituting the third section) are formed in the third section of the paper. The melodic speech of the soprano is also beginning as a recitative, and gradually diversifies. We note that the piano continues the same rhythmic formula, which emphasizes the descriptive character.

Ex.7. *Letter* I lied. 29-31

The form of the work is free, structured in three articulations where a Coda is added. This brings back the second cell motif (**y**), the one which seems to have the most poignant character in the dramaturgy of this paper:

A	B	C	Coda
M. 1-15	m.16-22	M. 23-35	M. 35-36

By following a correspondence of the proportions between the sections, a segmentation of the paper is outlined, one which shows the value of the gold ratio. The group consisting of the first two sections (A + B) is reported for the whole work but also for the next segment (C + coda) by a value corresponding to the approximation of φ : $22/36 = 0.611$ and $22/14 = 1.57$.



This division is emphasised by reaffirming the cell division **y** from Measure 23 and by the alternation of the metric (2/4, 3/4 and 4/4) pattern that, through there is this imbalance induced, it draws the attention to this moment with rich meanings stylistically and aesthetically, thus marking a reference point in the architecture of the work.

Starting from the lyrics of *Letter XIX* of Ovid the poet, whom we pay homage this year, the lied is trying to suggest the images of the poetic message, the description of place and emotions of the character through sounds that are intertwined naturally by using a neoclassical technique in the construction of a speech in sound inspired by various archetypal influences that reinforce the archaic character of the play.

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