

The interpretative analysis of the „8 lieds for a soprano” series by Radu Paladi, dedicated to the soprano Nicoleta Ardelean

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Abstract: *The lied in the Romanian music historiography is considered to have as primary source the traditional folk song, but in its evolution there are known several steps of transformation and decantation. It starts from collecting the folklore, asserting and processing it, then it assimilates the European models, and reaches the level where the aboriginal element is adapted and incorporated into the European miniature vocal norm.*

The Romanian composers from the second half of the XXth century have enriched the lieds repertoire with new artistic values. Among them we notice Radu Paladi (1928-2013), with a diverse creative activity, characterized by expressiveness and inventiveness. Composer, pianist, conductor, professor, he has approached different musical styles: piano works, concert and vocal-symphonic pieces, film and theatre music, numerous cappella choir works, and not last vocal miniature. This paper desires, through the interpretative analysis of the volume “8 lieds for soprano”, to demonstrate the value, unity and logic of the work, but it is at the same time a modest tribute to the composer who passed away five years ago.

Key-words: *lied; interpretative analysis; vocal music; Romanian poetry;*

1. Introduction

The term lied is a German word defined as a stanza poem, usually romantic, destined for a song or the song written for such a poem. *The Dictionary of musical terms* defines the lied, „the emblematic genre of the musical Romanticism, whose easiness in singing made it an ideal for all the other genres”² as “the vocal musical piece accompanied by an instrument, usually a piano, on a lyrical text or poem, that determines its character, unfolding in a specific formal structure.”³ Ludwig van Beethoven is mentioned as the first author who had written lieds on a series of poems which formed a cycle.⁴ It was widely found throughout Europe, in Romania being used the original word as well as the name *song*.

Although it is considered a minor type in the vocal music repertoire it is extremely profound and important, Gheorghe Dima considering that each lied is in its way an opera.

The Romanian composers who have asserted themselves in the creation of vocal miniature, have been up until our days important names of reference in the Romanian lied creation because „the elements with national characteristics constitute the fund of unity through diversity of the European cultivated music.”⁵

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² Elena Maria Șorban, *Muzica clasică și romantică*, Cluj-Napoca, editura Eikon, 2014, p. 111.

³ Dicționar de termeni muzicali, coord. prof.univ.dr. Gheorghe Firca, București, Editura Enciclopedică, 2010, p. 268.

⁴ *Larousse encyclopédique*, vol. 13, Édition du Club France Loisirs, Paris, 1985, p. 5472; apud. Anca Daniela Mihaș, *Contribuții la istoria liedului românesc*, Cluj-Napoca, Casa Cărții de Știință, 2006, p. 12.

⁵ Delia Roman, *Universul expresiv al liedului românesc reflectat în interpretarea creației lui Sigismund Toduță*, Cluj-Napoca, editura Risoprint, 2008, p. 11.

The composers of the Second World War enriched with new artistic values the repertoire of Romanian songs, reminding us of Radu Paladi.

2. Radu Paladi, Life and activity

„A man whose creative characteristic was his enormous talent, which individualized him among his fellows . There are not many composers with great talent, there are creators with a lot of knowledge , but a tremendous talent like his, not many have they had in the Romanian music.”⁶ Composer, pianist, conductor, Radu Paladi was born on the 16th of January in 1927, in Storojinet North Bucovina, Romania, today part of Ukraine and passed away on the 30th of May 2013, in Bucharest.

After graduating high school, he is accepted at the Musical Conservatoire in Cernauti, the piano class, taking lessons from Titus Tarnavski(1941-1943). He continues his studies at the Royal Musical Academy and Dramatic Art in Bucharest, (1947-1956) where he learns piano with Florica Muzicescu, composition with Leon Klepper, harmony with Paul Constantinescu and orchestration with Theodor Rogalski.

Between 1954-1996 he is assistant, then lecturer, at the Institute of Theatrical and Cinematographic Art in Bucharest.

He becomes member of the Union of Composers and Musicologists from Romania even since the beginning (1949), being awarded many times and once with the Grand Prize of this prestigious institution.

He enjoys a rich artistic life as pianist, performing in many concerts both as soloist and in chamber recitals, in Romania as well as abroad. He also interprets his own creations, together with the Radio National Orchestra, with the Philharmonic Orchestra from Iasi and Botosani, at the latter being for a long time the manager. He runs several choirs in Romania and he is present as member of jury at numerous composition, choir and instrumental interpretation.

Along his life he was awarded many national and international prizes, among them a special place has the Romanian Academy Award in 1980.

But Radu Paladi distinguished himself not only as a pianist and conductor but mostly as a composer, having written cultivated music for theater, film, choir, chamber, symphonic, vocal-symphonic and concerts. Master Radu Paladi's compositions are most valuable and important for any artist's strong career.

3. The interpretative analysis of the lieds

The lieds were conceived between 1988 and 2011, period of full professional maturity of the composer. After a time when he wrote especially choral works, there comes these miniature vocal creations dedicated to the soprano Nicoleta Ardelean.

On the poetry of Mihai Eminescu, Vasile Alecsandri, Lucian Blaga, George Bacovia a.s.o., the lieds are built to highlight the semantification of the verses, the piano accompaniment underlining the brightness of the vocal melodic line which at its turn accentuates the beauty of the literary text, the poetic rhythm being evidenced through adequate musical phrasing and

⁶ *Evocare - Radu Paladi*, interviu cu pianistul prof.univ.dr. Viniciu Moroianu, la emisiunea *Vocile memoriei!* difuzată de Radio România Cultural, în data de 3 iunie 2014.

respiration, at all lieds the composer wrote the indication *rispettando la prosodia*. The melodic line requires from the artist besides an impeccable vocal technique, a special artistic sensibility in the expressive process of interpretative dramatization.

The lied *Morning*, on Vasile Alecsandri's poem

It starts in *g major*, with a modulation in *b major*, where the lied ends. Simple and compound measures of 2/4, 3/4 and 4/4, with the composer's indication that the fourth =84, accompany the musical score, alternatively. The woven, *tessitura*, of the melodic line is built out of simple rhythmic-melodic formulae, with the task to draw a picture to suggest the literary text. The incipit measure of the lied presents a punctuated rhythm on the note *d* from the central octave, in *forte*, which continues in a descendent line which uses simple intervals of small *terce* and large *terce* and ascendantly, with intervals of large *second*, on the line “ Dawn awakes above the cheerful nature.” For the line „foretelling a sweet sun with light and warmth” the composer indicates the nuance *p dolce*, asking the interpreter greater attention when trying to illustrate vocally the words *sun, light, warmth*. It continues in measure 2/4 with *aufakt*, the notes altered with equal values of eighths, accompanied by the indication *animando*, express the gentle image of the sun which rises slowly. We notice the switch of binary measure for ternary measure 3/4, followed by a *ritenuto* the word „sipping”, on note *la*, this having at first eighth value then fourth value, precisely to emphasize the meaning of the verb “to sip”. The vocal-melodic line returns to the initial tempo (*a tempo*) with a descendent line, which uses eighths values, vocally *painting* the numerous drops of dew. The return to the indication *ritenuto*, wonderfully illustrates the „green field”.

Starting with the seventeenth measure, the notes have eighths values, with ascendant chromatic route, in *crescendo*, on the lines „It rises eight feet tall on the glorious sky ladder and kisses with lively beams young spring flowers”. It is remarkable the interval of small *quint*, *b-f#*, on the lyric with beams”, in *forte*, illustrating the sun rays' warmth and light. Enumerating the flowers offers the composer the chance to play in a *scherzando-accelerando-rallentando*, which bring colour and joy to the musical phrase. The notes with equal values return in *tempo*, on the line „The workers on their porches mend the working tools”, suggest the polishing of the tools for their work. On the lyrics „in gardens, in fields, on hills, in clearings and vineyards, heaps of weeds are burning with grey smoke”, the note *a* repeats itself for 7 measures, having fourth value only on the word *vineyard*. The elements of *agogique* represented by *ritenuto*, *descrescendo* and the nuance *p* offer help to the interpreter in execution. The line's ending, in *piano*, is in contrast with the new line, in *forte* „the horses are playing in the skies, the flock is crying on the pastures.” In the first part of the word „play” we notice a crown with a point which represents the horses' large, joyful movement. The rhythmic-melodic profile appears again, now on the lyrics „the lively lambs on hills are running quickly flocking.” To be noticed the sharpest note, *g#*, on the 26th measure, on the word *deditel* (small pasque flower) and on the 54th measure, on the word *lambs*. The lied ends in *B major* tonality, with the image of a girl „And a little girl spinning wool on the tow, Shepherds golden ducklings near clear spring”, in major *piano* sounds.

The lied *Lillies of the valley*, on the Vasile Alecsandri's poem

In *G Major* tonality, unlike the others, it is written in the 2/4 measure, without any change on the way. Its particularity is represented by the rhythmic-melodic structure, which can be

considered simple at first sight, but after a closer look it is considered hard to interpret, because the lied, although it has only two pages where the soprano's line is formed only by notes with eighths values, we find 22 crowns, always on the last note of the measure or on the one before last. The composer chooses these eighths values to describe the Lillies of the valley, these „tears of angel”. The writing of the piano accompaniment sustains the voice beautifully, in a *legato* throughout the entire score.

The voice, together with the piano accompaniment, begins in the *piano* nuance, on the note *b* from the central octave, solving itself in the second measure on note *c* from the first octave. The first part of the second line „Many flowers” returns on note *b*, the crown being on the word *flowers*, especially to underline the word. In the ninth measure the composer resumes the melodic line of the first stanza, wishing to describe the purity and innocence of the lillies of the valley: „You are tears of angels dropped from the sky, When swung by stars, Their pure souls, Fly with tender sobs.” The *mp* nuance, dictated by the composer for the vocal-melodic line, on the lyrics „You are young and white, Like the love of my life” blends harmoniously with the one indicated to the piano accompaniment, *p dolce*, the two instruments rendering the emotion of the verse, which must be expressed with sensibility by the interpreter. The play of the small second interval (g g-f#f#) which we can find along four measures, followed in the end by *ritenuto* and crown on the final note, accentuate this emotion. The last stanza of the poem rendered in the score in nuance *f* and *poco agitato*, resumes identically the melodic profile of the previous stanza. It is remarkable the lowest note in the lied register, *f#*, from the central octave, which corresponds to the words: *fresh, white, love, my, mercy, mawns*. The directives chosen by the composer, *a tempo* and *mp*, on the lines „thus fate brutally takes, All that smiles to us in the world, Flowers fade, Life subsides,” and the option for the intervals of second and large terse, have as purpose the creation through musical means of the usual course of life transposed on the image of nature.

The lied *Fairy tale Princess*, on Mihai Eminescu's poem

The *d minor* tonality, in which the lied starts, marks the poetic picture later enriched by passing to the *D major*, *G major* and *E major* tonalities. The binary and ternary measures of 2/4, 3/4 și 4/4, have the task to respect the rhythm of the lyrics, alternating along the lied. In a tempo *Largo*, the lines „White bright mists Bear the silver moon, She pulls them over the water and spreads them on the field”, develop over the duration of 8 measures, in *p*, the vocal-melodic line, with a descendent route, which uses simple intervals, of small and large second, suggesting thus the image of the moon, empress who covers the world. The composer's indications, *accelerando*, *crescendo*, alerts the interpreter concerning the vocal illustration of the dynamic images rendered by the verbs “gather”, “break”, “hang”. In measures 15 and 16, on the line „Big beans of precious stone”, the repetition of the note *c* on the first octave, with eighths and fourths values, describes the nature. The personification of the clouds „they have woven a thin shadow” rendered in *subito p*, creates the starting point of the vocal line towards the note *b* of the central octave, this being noted enharmonically for three and a half measures. The accumulated tension bursts in the nuance *forte* on the word „light” from the verse „Broken by waves as if balls of light”, on the note *d* accomplishing this way the modulation of the tonality in *G major*. There are to be noticed the arpeggio sounds of the accompaniment left hand, in measures 22 and 24, which suggest the movement of the waves. In order to describe the lines „Pushing the reed aside, There stands the girl slowly bended, Tossing red

roses, „Onto the charmed water”, the composer chooses the note *b* from the central octave, which repeats itself over 9 measures, in eighths and fourths values. *Forte, fortissimo, piano, accelerando*, in dissonant sounds, ascending and descending alterations, simple and double, with small or large intervals, describe the magic of nature. The rhythmic-melodic formula in the end of the lied, where the interval of perfect fourth dominates, describes the girl’s beauty. The indications *crescendo, fortissimo, accelerando, rallentando*, which correspond to the last two lines of the poem, render the two levels of the poem, terrestrial and cosmic, Sky and Earth wedded like in the ancient myths.

The lied *Sorrow*, on George Bacovia’s poem

In *a minor*, in measures of $2/4$, $3/4$ and $4/4$, alternatively along the score, uses a serpent like route, alterations in flat and the small second interval to mirror the picture of Bacovia’s poetry. The line „And long snap and yell”, corresponding to measures 12 and 13, uses eighth and eighth with dot, followed by a sixteenth, which illustrates musically speaking the meaning of word „long”. We also notice the ascending interval of large seventh, followed by a large terce which describe, in the silence of the day, the loud yell of the children. In measures 15-18, we meet ascending alterations, in *p, poco scherzando*, the notes with values of eighths, staccato, representing the children playing, ignoring the cold outside. The next six measures use descending alterations, until the end of the lied, on the last note the composer indicating *long* crown. In conclusion, we mention the weight of the writing of the piano accompaniment, full of alterations that have a well defined purpose in sustaining the vocal line, in order to better render the inner state of the poet, supported by dissonant and consonant sounds.

The lied *Ballet*, on George Bacovia’s poem

Succeeds in touching the souls even from the first measures, through chromatic passages, followed by arpeggio descending leaps, all of them emphasizing the literary text „the white ballerinas were slowly sliding.” This first line of Bacovia’s poem is repeated six times in the lied, at the beginning and at the end of each stanza.

The three stanzas start with the same melodic motif, carving it this way in the listener’s memory, as desired by the composer. After these four measures, the composer decides to alternate the $3/4$ measure with the $2/4$, wishing to highlight the ballerinas’ agitation and movement, followed in an ascending route, to conclude the first stanza, in a nuance of *mp dolce* and an arpeggio melodic line, continued with a descending chromatic route and an alternation of measures $3/4$, $2/4$, $4/4$. One can almost see the ballerinas’ twirls and graceful movements.

The indications *mf, p, mp, dolce*, underline once more this exquisite elegance. The second stanza describes the atmosphere and state of the audience, the composer using eighths in *crescendo* and *accelerando*, on the same note, *c*. The climax of the lied is met at note *a* from octave 1, corresponding to the word „laughing”. The last stanza begins with *mp dolce*, nuance, and in measure 34 we meet the indication *crescendo e accelerando*, which unfolds over 8 measures, in a descending chromatic route, here we can also find the lowest note, *d* from the central octave, which corresponds to the word „satan”, in *forte* nuance. The interpreter must pay attention to intonation accuracy and to achieving the profound symbiosis between music and text.

The lied *Evening*, on Octavian Goga's poem

Written in *e minor* tonality, in *piano*, the lied unfolds in a register of large sixth, the sharp note being *c* from octave 1, on the word „mother”. There is a description of the poetic picture, well realized through playing with semitones, along the entire lied, *in tempo, ma rispettando la prosodia, a tempo, poco accelerando*, as well as through several crowns, all to underline the text. It starts with a chain of eighths, on note *b* from the central octave, on the duration of two measures. The interval of semitone, *b-c*, from the next two measures, underlines the text „grieving mother”. The image of sunset is realized by a descending melodic line, the same interval dominates, in a *tempo poco accelerando*, towards the end of the stanza, on note *g*, having the indication *ralentando*, it starts a descending chromatic movement, down to *e flat*, this being the lowest note in this lied. The last stanza, with the indication *a tempo*, intends to underline the text with a succession of eighths, at a small seconds interval, both ascending and descending, the conclusion falling on the same *e flat* note from the central octave.

The lied *Waiting*, on Octavian Goga's poem

The beginning of the lied in *G major*, draws a picture of the poem which is rethought through modulating the tonality to *a minor* together with the homonym *A major*. The measures 2/4 and 3/4 alternate in a *tempo larghetto*. The vocal- melodic line starts with the note *d* from octave 1, on the half of the first time of the first measure, together with the piano accompaniment in *mf* nuance. A descending route that uses the interval of small terce and large terce, illustrates the image of the three roses in a glass. The purity of the word „clean” is musically underlined through the descending altering of note *b* in *b flat* in measure 5. For the lyrics „They waited for you in vain” and „poor flowers in my dead silence” we notice a descending chromatic route of the notes, in intervals represented by the small second, which assert the long waiting time. The following measures are musically represented by the indications *crescendo* and *decrescendo*. The *poco agitato* nuance together with the values of the notes of eighth and fourth with a dot, express hope, through the interval of small second *g-a flat* and make a beautiful musical-poetic image. Going further, the vocal melodic line, together with the piano accompaniment, receive an ascending direction, which leads to major tonalities *A flat-A*, suggesting the roses fading, in fact it is love that fades with time. The ending of the lied is made in *A major*, in 2/4 measure, in *ralentando* with a crown on note *a* from octave 1, with a vocal-melodic line represented by the large terce interval, found in ascending and descending way, evoking the poet's tears as well as time's irreversible passing.

The lied *Peace*, on Octavian Goga's poem

The composer closes this cycle, in an absolutely intended manner, with the lied *Peace*. It was his desire to be able to compose and be interpreted in a climat of peace. This lied starts in *F major*, in an open sound, in *mp dolce*, but later it passes to *d minor*, returning in the end at the initial tonality, measures of 2/4, 4/4, 3/4, *in tempo ma rispettando la prosodia*. The soprano's melodic line starts with note *c* from octave 1, having a descending chromatic route, over four measures, reaching the lowest note *d flat*, suggesting peace that comes from heaven and sits near Saint Nicholas' icon in the house. It rows the syllable in eighths values, without alternating with punctuated values, which leaves room for the beauty of the word, here there are only three groups of two sixteenths each, that want to underline the words „emerges”, „a carol”, „chubby”. The game *accelerando, ralentando*, long crown, ends the stanzas. All the

seven stanzas are described in a chromatic melodic line, with a row of words on the same note, suggesting the inner peace that dominates the entire house.

4. Conclusions

To conclude, we reaffirm the importance of the interpretative analysis, being a basic support for outstanding artistic results. Synthetically, we shall say about this cycle of lieds that it preserves an organic link between the text and the music, the composer having felt the multiple possibilities of artistic characterization, with little means of expression and that the piano score deepens the expressive valences of the lieds. All these particularities of the sound universe created by the composer Radu Paladi in his lieds, determine us to consider him one of the most important contemporary creator of the Romanian lied. After the experience of preparing a concert, where I have sung these lieds, being accompanied by the composer himself, I must assert the immense pleasure that he used to feel, also noticed by the public and artists together, when he interpreted these lieds. Accompanying the soloist, he would always find new ideas and new states of mind, or he would settle structures about which he cared deeply. He required a just, precise, clear intonation, following in detail the accuracy of the execution.

5. Bibliography

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