

***Cuatro coplas*, by Luis de los Cobos Almaraz**

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Abstract: *The way in which the lied is received by the public is usually determined by many factors, the most important of which are those in connection with the means of interpretation. Being a combination of structures (music, text, gesture) the lied becomes one of the complexes and simultaneously, the provocative artistic events. The aim of this analysis, which is intended to be part of a wider study, is to provide a system for evaluation and verification of performance in the vocal art by examining the factors that determine the real success of an interpretation, modeled on the "Canciones" Lieder cycle, op. 27, composed by Luis de los Cobos Almaraz in 1985.*

Key-words: *lied; music-interpretive analysis; vocal-interpretive skills*

1. Introduction

The creation of lieder was born due to the attraction of composers for poetic text, and through music the literary text is enriched, the musical language being an extension and an addition to the poetic language, the music-word fusion representing a superior vision of human thought.

Although its origins are lost "in the art of minesängers",² the lied as a genre of cult music appeared at the end of the XVIIIth century in the creations of the Viennese classics, renowned poets of the period, stimulating through their creations the creative fantasy of the composers. Although it appears in Classicism, it crystallizes and develops in Romanticism, at the beginning of the XIXth century, being considered the genre that most strongly characterizes romantic thinking and sensitivity.³ Now musical art is heading toward poetry and literature, while noting the tendency and the ability to render landscapes or stories through musical images, capable of superior plastic suggesting power, what will reach a high level of understanding and appreciating the expressive resources of the text.

The genre of lied has known in its history an evolutionary process, with the composers enriching with new and new artistic values the repertoire of the lied, some of the authors entering the gallery of the immortals.⁴

It is to be noted that three are the elements that confirm, or not, the synthetic power and dramatic sense of the composer: the melodic line, entrusted to the voice, the support that the piano gives to it, and the size and structure of the lied.

Like other areas, the musical one is the consequence of complementary interaction between practice and theory. The style of musical interpretation has multiple formative values,

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² Anca-Daniela Mihaș. 2006. *Contribuții la istoria liedului românesc*. Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință, p. 123.

³ „Il est évident que le lied avec piano tel qu'il s'est développé à partir de la fin du XVIIIe siècle, aconnu son apogée au XIXe.” Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau. *Les sons parlent et les mots chantent*. Paris: Buchet-Chastel, p. 110.

⁴ „Les oeuvres pour voix et piano réussissant encore à convaincre tirent cette qualité de leur caractère intemporel. En effet, ni la mode ni l'affectation ne sauraient se glisser entre l'interprète et l'auditeur.” Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau. *op.cit.*, p. 109.

targeting all the springs of the scene, both musical and theatrical attitude. In order to stylistically interpret a lied, for we will focus on this genre in the following, we need to consider two textuality standards, the musical and the literary ones. Relevant in terms of significance are the elements of cohesion, interdependencies, interaction, coherence, compatibility, between its components.

In 1999, as a student at the "Gheorghe Dima" Music Academy in Cluj-Napoca, I had the opportunity to record in studio four cycles of lieder (op. 1, 6, 27 and 30) of composer Luis de los Cobos Almaraz. Then, I had the possibility of learning from the composer himself, present in Cluj, a lot of information about the structures and degrees of expressive manifestation of the works I was about to perform.

2. Methodology

Analysis of the two languages involved, the musical and the literary one and a presentation of them as a result of the homogenization and valorisation of all elements and details of the expression, by interpretive unit.

3. Objectives

Training and development of skills of students and master students from the Musical-Canto Interpretation specialization, in the stylistic-interpretative research. The design, organization, conduct and valorisation of theoretical research in artistic creation, both through the development and use of theoretical-formative and practical-actionable instruments, and through the implementation of a training model for a future lieder concert, is essential.

4. *Luis de los Cobos Almaraz*, short biography

The composer, the conductor, the violinist, the professor and not least the Spanish lawyer Luis de los Cobos Almaraz, was born on 20th of April 1927 in Valladolid, Spain. He studied violin, composition and law in his hometown, before continuing his studies in Madrid, Paris, Vienna and finally in Geneva, where he studied to become a conductor with Bernardo Molinari in Rome, Eugène Bigot in Paris and Igor Markevitch. In 1944, he was imprisoned for a short time because he took part in the protests against the Franco government. This event is also due to the fact that after the completion of the studies in 1949, he could not engage anywhere in Spain. He decides to exile himself and establishes in Switzerland, at Geneva in 1952 by obtaining citizenship. Having a PhD in law, he taught disciplines in this field at the University of Geneva, while acting as a free-professional musician. He wrote cycles of lieder (*Canciones en el stilo popular* - op.1, composed in 1950; *Homenaje a Miguel Hernández* - op.6, 1953; *La voz a tñdebida* - op.?, 1985; *Canciones para mezzo y guitarra*- op.30b, 1985; *Cuatro piezas blancas para soprano y dos clarinetes*-op 30, 1986), Opera, Ballet, Orchestral (Symphony orchestra, String orchestra, Chamber Orchestra), Concertante (Cello, Piano, Guitar, Violin), Chamber music (Duos, Trios, Quartets), Solo (Guitar, Violin, Cello), Choral (with orchestra, a cappella), Vocal (with orchestra, with chamber ensemble, with piano, with other solo instrument), Electronic music.⁵ Although we notice that he was a prolific author, many of his compositions will remain in his office drawer in Geneva for several decades, only in his last

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luis_de_los_Cobos. Accessed in 16.04.2021, at 11.03. These data were compared, as far as the lieder are concerned, with the parts they hold.

years of life the public, including the one in Romania, will have the opportunity to hear them. He died on 16th of November 2012 in Geneva, Switzerland.

5. The stylistic-interpretive characteristics of the *Cuatro coplas* lied

With a very diverse creative activity characterized by stylistic pluralism, expressiveness and inventiveness, Luis de los Cobos Almaraz can be seen as refined synthesis between different languages, extracting certain rhythm-melodic models from the music of Iberian origin, which he metamorphoses in new constructions, undergoing continuous transformation.

Also in the creation of lied he follows the same path, characterized by stylistic diversity, by the concern to find, through his own creation, the tension between tradition and innovation. In this article we intend to analyze the score of the lied no. 8, *Cuatro coplas*,⁶ from the cycle "Canciones", op. 27, composed by Luis de los Cobos Almaraz in 1985, which is actually a chain of four lieder on anonymous lyrics.

Buena copla

„Buena copla es la que deja al que la canta, carta o escucha en el corazón consuelo y en los labios amargura”⁷

Starting from the popular lyrics, the composer, through the structure and musical means, adequately manages to highlight the endeavour and depth of words.

The lieder starts in *forte*, a strong manner, by exposing in an *allegro assai* tempo, on a seven measures of two fourths musical line, intended for pianistic accompaniment, in d minor tone, in combinations specific to Spanish traditional music (dactyl+four sixths+eighths with three sixths in triolet+eighths with dot with sixteenth dot) underlined by accents and monerities, preparing the thrill of the soprano sung word. The melody of the soprano begins also in *forte*, with a downward movement that suggests going down into the depths of the heart, that there should be found the most appropriate words. That repetition of the verse renders the search, hard to find, for deeper meaning. It can also be seen from the melodic line, focused on the same note, B flat, with a melodic drawing not exceeding a large third, precisely for an even more intense emphasis on this expression formula.

The following text, "to the man who sings, writes or listens it, in the heart," is wrapped in a melodic writing that is coloured in an interval of a septima, F#1-E2, and a passenger tone to the major B flat. Interesting to note how on the word *escucha* the note values lengthen, eighths with dot, two connected fourths, in order to emphasize the tension of the hearing to perceive the voice of the heart, described in measures 17-20, the tone A major, confirmed by the piano's severe melody, not harmonic, being rather a passenger tone to c minor. The sixteenth triolet, followed by the eighth and the fourth, often encountered in Spanish writing, and the Quintolet, which draws an ascending melodic line to the D major, picardian tone of the soloist, emphasizes the words "and on the lips, the bitterness."

⁶ The Spanish term "copla" may be translated as stanza, but in flamenco or Spanish folk music it gets a somewhat narrower meaning. Copla is a poetic form that serves as text for popular songs. It appeared in Spain, where it is still widespread today and has spread to Latin America as well. Its name comes from the Latin word copula (link, union). It is generally composed of four lyrics arranged in the form of a catrene. Due to its metric structure of characteristic formulas, copla is very close to Romanticism, the poetic type popular by excellence in Spanish literature. Highly successful authors approached this poetic form with great respect, taking a theme from a song or a romantic story heard in a tavern, but the people most of the time have taken a copla, without knowing that it already had an author. The language of the copla is colloquial and direct, although the figurative meaning is often used to obtain comical, lascivious and trivial effects.

⁷ „A good copla is the one which gives to the man who sings, writes or listens it, comfort of the heart and on his lips bitterness.”

The last musical phrase, which prepares the tone a minor, highlights the bitterness, this palpable sign of a profound spiritual pain. It was played by a leap of an octave c1-c2, walking toward the dominant g 2, in forte, which marks the desire for his sorrow to be heard by all. The lied ends with the verse "Buena copla" in a comfortable musical writing, using a range of quartart, g 1-c 1 and melodic formulas in which the triolets suggest reflection, meditation of what was said before, or a possible wandering of thoughts.

In conclusion, an interesting musical writing, which mainly preserves the d minor tone, in which the vocal writing is prepared very well by that of the piano, with numerous indications of nuances and accents, with values of notes up to two and rich rhythmic formulas, all of them making the sound of what the words articulate.

The melodic line of the soprano, held in a range of duodecime (c1-g2), the most serious one meeting at the 27th measure, on the *a-mar* syllables (amargura) and the most acute note, in the same word, the syllable-*ra*. The soloist must be technically well prepared and this octave, continued by an ascending quintt, is difficult to achieve.

Tu calle

„Tu calle / Ya no es tu calle / Que es una calle cualquiera / Camino de cualquier parte / Tu calle / Ya no es tu calle / Ya no!”⁸

The lied debuts in the tone of a minor, the measure of 2/4, the indication of *lento doloroso*, with two syncopated measures, in the *mf* and with a short *apoggiatura* on the last note of the eighth from the measure, structure that suggests the pain provoked by the separation from the beloved one, this separation being compared with losing the *way*. This feeling is continued in measures 3 and 4, materialized by the writing in F clef of the entire accompaniment. In measures 5 and 6, we notice a descending chromatography on the text "Tu calle", which suggests the wandering, in contrast to the agreements on the upper octave of the right hand, which prepares the octave leap, a1-a2, called out of the desperate decision: this is no longer your way!, continuing in a descending way to d#, rendered sinusoidally and then clarified by the verse "es una calle cualquiera". The next sentence, supported by a *legato* and a *crescendo* in measures 15-17, modulates chromatically and upward to B major, then suddenly toward E major, in forte and, through an upward chromatic shift using values of eighth, reaches the culminating sound, d#2.

From measure 19, after a crown, the tone is returned to a minor, by a diatonic descending turn, which suggests the regret, the most serious note, d#1, and at the end of the phrase to reach the most acute note of the soloist, the e2 and this by a coloured walk, initiated in piano, with a row of two sextolets, with the indication from the didascaly *ad libitum*, for a most suggestive rendering of the feeling of pain, allowing his voice to achieve those sound inflexions, which are specific to the bitter crying. This lied is concluded shortly through a strong dominant chord in forte.

The colour play of the semitone when it rises or falls causes the tone to be changed almost throughout the lied, and the voice is constantly following the sound exploitation of the meaning of the text. The indications of nuances are precisely indicated in the score, closely following the meaning of the words.

The most serious note in the soloist is d1#, on the "ca" (calle and camino) and "no" syllables, and the most acute note is a2 on "no", a cry of pain. The voice of the soloist must show all the meanings of the musical and literary text, respecting all the indications of the score, thus, and only so the lied finds itself as an interesting one, even if, in tone terms, it has a continuous passenger walk through different tones.

⁸ „Your street is no longer your street, cause it is just another street, no matter what road. Your street is no longer your street. Not any more!”

Ya mi caballo no anda!

„Ya mi caballo no anda / Ya mi caballo paró / Todo para en este mundo / Y también pararé / Yo y también pararé yo.”⁹

The lied debuts in the tone of a minor, which modulates the colour throughout the composition, through an overlap of harmonics, often using dominant chords.

Most suggestive, the composer finds, by alternating measures of 3/4 with 2/4, in the tempo *allegretto*, on the text "Ya mi caballo no anda", to make a musical replay of the horseman's feverish desire to advance these last, as if prevented, steps of the horse. The music line starts in eighths and sixteenths values, in piano, in an upward shift, which, starting with the third measure, is already running down.

The succession of indications of p-mf-p nuances is doubled by an upward-chromatic walk of the accompaniment, which modulates towards the tonality of G major, in forte, with the same alternation of measures of 3/4 to 2/4, rendering the horse's stubbornness.

The melodic line of the soloist starts, in tonality at a minor, in forte followed by a *decrescendo*, suggesting the horseman's helplessness and anguish. „Ya mi caballo no anda” noticed the dispersion at the same time, followed by a chromatic drawing, in the second verse, by " Ya mi caballo paro", through a harmonic torment, in measures 14-15 which modulate towards E major, which calms down at the end of the phrase, in a poetic-lyrical pencil made drawing of the feeling of helplessness. „Todo para en este mundo Y tambien parare yo”. There shall be detached a few evaders of the desire for action, of movement, which seem real cries of despair with their upward colour walk, reaching the c# minor passenger tonality, in the fourteenth measure and finishing in the sixteenth measure, in tonality E major, passing again in c# minor, in the twentieth measure, finally ending in a chromatic cadenza in E major tonality.

On the mark of the last verse, "Y tambien parero yo", the melodic text follows a colour drawing ascending to the soloist, on the final tone of E major, which uses the quintolet as the rhythmic formula, by which, before the implacable stop, the horseman hurried to say his last words. It is noticeable the harmonic game, starting from some tonal, complex, overlapping ones, which uses as dominant landmarks the Vth step chords and the alternation of the 3/4 and 2/4 measures.

Yo no se lo che me pasa

Yo no sé lo que me pasa / ni tampoco que quiero / digo y no sé lo que digo / siento y no sé lo que siento / Yo no sé lo que siento / ¡ay!¹⁰

„I don't know what is happening to me", is a lied, the fourth and last to look at, in my opinion most suggestive of this succession of texts and states expressed in the lied, "Cuatro Coplas", composed by Luis de Los Cobos. It debuts in tonality a minor, in a sequence of measures, 3/4 with 1/4, in a vivid tempo.

Although at first sight this use of the 1/4 measure might seem surprising, with the graphic mark *marcato* placed on the first note by the composer when the measure has two eighths, it is used precisely in the desire to underline the words, considered key words by the composer (pasa, quiero, digo, siento), around which he draws the melodic line of the soprano, words that represent as many ways of expressing the spiritual states of which the protagonist is surrounded, of representing emotions.

This anxiety is first played by the writing intended for the accompaniment, by the melodic formula pause of sixteenth, followed by three sixteenths on each time of the 3/4 measure. In the first 12 measures, the soloist has a constant melodic running, at values of eighths, without using

⁹ „My horse won't go any more, my horse has already stopped. Everything stops in this world and so will I.”

¹⁰ „I don't know what is happening to me / What I even want/ I speak and don't know what I speak / I feel and don't know what I feel / I don't know what I feel / Oh!”

a larger than third interval, which suggests the internal torment in an attempt to understand what is happening. The piano's intervention in measures 13-14, which prepare the utterance of the word "siento", is anchored in the tone A major and uses the same rhythmic formula (pause of sixteenth followed by three sixteenths), in crescendo, leading to the nuance of forte of the measure 16, but continued paradoxically, through a descending melodic line and a decrescendo dynamic indication. In fact, the composer wants the soloist to induce to the listener the idea that the first shiver of love brings with it a complex of spiritual states that are difficult to understand, and even more so, acknowledged with all the intensity of the voice. The nineteenth measure resumes the upward colour progress toward a new tone, B major, passenger, changed to the next tone in b minor, indicating the same intention of the composer.

Of notice is the constant values of quarter on the left hand of the accompaniment, supported by a legato of expression, in contrast with the right hand writing, which suggests the passionate search for words that express exactly what he feels.

We see only one indication of the forte nuance, corresponding to the word "siento", throughout the lied the composer using only piano and mezzoforte.

Measure 25 reproduces the text "yo no se lo que me pasa", where the piano supports the soprano melodic line through the sexta range, doubling the solist melodic line as the chromatic movement toward the major C# tone, passenger tone to the f# minor, of measure 30, the tone with which the lied ends.

6. Conclusions

This analysis seeks to lead to a better understanding of the role of the vocalist in interpreting the lied and the acquisition of some basic musical concepts, which is a possible model of training. Lyrical artists need to be aware of their own vocal and dramatic resources, all of which are outlined by musical and interpretative analysis of the compositions proposed for research.

Luis de los Cobos Almaraz follows in his lieder the identity between the accents of the text and those of the music, varied in content and unitary as a musical expression, the composer being part, along with other compatriots, of the generation that consolidated the Spanish lied.

The mission of the singer who interprets Luis de los Cobos's lieder is to decipher all the constituents of the lied and to play it back to the listener, while enhancing the sense of beauty, but to be veridic, she must train the inner force of the spirit, and the ability to display in artistic form and not only to reproduce sound relationships. In voice interpretation, there is an esthetic requirement for each form, and for each requirement there must be a method of applying specific techniques, for the musical instrument to represent artistic creation at the highest level requires full discipline and control of the voice, in the absence of which there is no real interpretation. The composer-public relationship and the feed-back interconnectedness are the essence of the music phenomenon we serve, this chain of four lieder on anonymous lyrics, "Quatro coplas", being extraordinarily suggestive. The lyrics, though little numerous, through repetition and melodic diversity, harmonic and not least rhythmic, manage to surprise the auditor.

In the impropriation of the melodic line, the soloist must have a close mathematical thinking of intervals succession, very well supported by a proper breath, closely following the meaning of the text. The voice diapazon used is not very large, c1-a2, but the difficulty of the interpretation is to track a melodic line that uses a colour walk, a harmonious writing that manages to highlight the quintessence of words, the emotions suggested by them.

Composer Luis de Los Cobos offers through his lieder, the 20th century musical creations that deserve to be fully addressed, works that are emotional and which we have approached with the utmost seriousness in those years of end of training and beginning of career, I must emphasize, after a thorough journey in terms of knowledge of theory and solfegium, but also, of course, the accumulation of knowledge and vocal training.

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