

THE PORTRAIT OF BOYAR MOȚOC IN THE WORK OF COMPOSER GHEORGHE MUSTEA

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SUMMARY. The present survey aims at emphasizing Gheorghe Mustea's ability to create a musical portrait of Boyar Moțoc, in his opera, "Alexandru Lăpușneanu". The overall portrait the author creates for this historical figure includes his psychological profile, suggestively presented in three different states, outlined on the relationship between two pillars (cause and effect and premise - consequence).

Keywords: Gheorghe Mustea, Alexandru Lăpușneanu, bessarabian opera, Boyar Moțoc, psychological profile.

Introduction

In their opera, "*Alexandru Lăpușneanu*", the composer Gheorghe Mustea and librettist Gheorghe Dimitriu have attained a profound psychologization of the musical-dramatic action. Both the libretto and the music closely follow the development of the action from Negruzzi's short story. In essence, the music of the opera is psychological, with a theatrical plasticity and power of suggestion, determining the pulse and dynamics of the feelings.

Constantin Negruzzi has written a short story in which he objectively depicts the events described in chronicles, repressing his own artistic imagination and ego in favour of a realistic representation, remaining faithful to the objective spirit. This is also noticed by Tudor Vianu: "The author of this short story has fully accomplished the rule of impersonality, from the first moment in which he wanted to write a short story and not a recollection. It is not relevant for us to know whether, in order to reach this goal, Negruzzi has used some literary models. The models could only have worked successfully if greeted by the author's predisposition, by his aesthetic and moral character.

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Therefore, whoever wants to understand how “Alexandru Lăpușneanu” took birth, should see that it was the author’s genuine nature that mattered here, his gift in observing people and events straightforwardly and his virtue in controlling his affects, which can be witnessed throughout his entire opera.²

In his analysis, Eugen Lovinescu talks about the democratic of this short story. George Călinescu also comes to say that: “The name of Constantin Negruzzi is usually connected to the historical short story “Alexandru Lăpușneanu”, which would have become a famous work, just as “Hamlet”, should the Romanian literature have been aided by the prestige of a universal language. One cannot imagine a more perfect synthesis of deep gestures, full of pathos, of memorable words, of acute psychological and sociological observation, of romantic attitudes and realistic intuition. The characters have amazing portrayals. Negruzzi understood the spirit of the Romanian chronicle and he set the bases for a positive romanticism, spared of naive idealisation. In the chronicle, the rulers and boyars are constantly at war and the entire duration of a reign is an amassment of suspicion, plots, betrayals and murders.”³

Throughout the opera, the composer fully depicts the characters’ psychological structure and the dramatism of the situations, based on the intonations of folk melodies. The music tends to plastically render the characters’ psychological portrait.

Moțoc

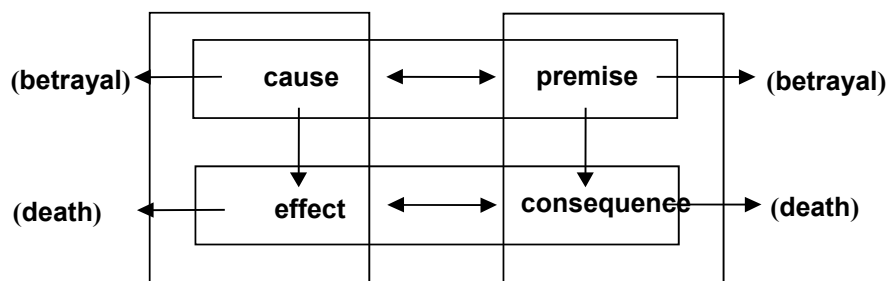
The versatile Moțoc is presented in three different states:

- Head of the boyars’ delegation;
- A sly diplomat, who betrays his own kind and “*leaks the hand that beats him*”;
- An actor’s theatrical act: Moțoc plays his own “drama of cowardice”.

The entire portraying process, which is made up of these three states, is based on the relation between two pillars:

² Vianu T., *Studii de stilistică (Studies of stylistics)*, vol. V, Minerva Publishing House, Bucharest, 1975.

³ Călinescu G., *Istoria literaturii române (The History of Romanian Literature)*, Bucharest, 1941, page 205.



They are the intrinsic pillars of Moțoc's portraying process. The tensest one, in terms of expression, is Moțoc's portrayal in his third attitude: "*the drama of cowardice* ", which succinctly shows his position related to the precipitating events, which are now completely out of his control, as the plots take an unexpected turn.

The entire scene is alert, with short lines from both the character and the choir. The melodic trajectory is always disturbed by alternating, ascending or descending chromaticism, which describe an uneasy, troubled progression, as a premonition of an unexpected ending. Moțoc's melodic line is tense, as the composer resorts to a syllabic, upward *parlando*. Hence, Moțoc's expressive outbursts are made in a "speaking voice", throughout the melodic discourse.

The composer creates the suitable atmosphere for displaying Moțoc's face. Here, Mustea uses genuine explosions of astonishment, wonder, indignation, bewilderment, stupefaction, consternation and mutiny. This fragment has a special expressive force, combining – in a finely achromatized presentation – the will for destruction and triumph, cruelty and greatness.

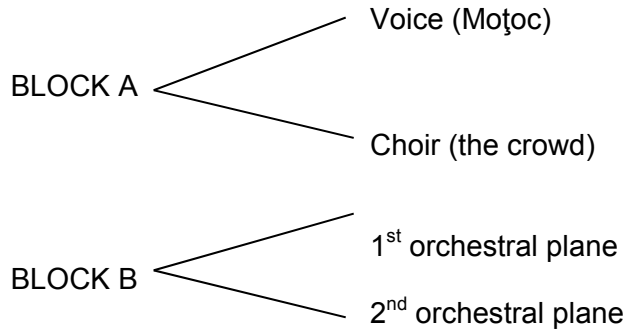
Through the achromatization of the melodic flow, the composer obtains spoken sounds, yells, thus nuancing the expression and directing it from the purely dramatic area towards the tragic one. The peak of this particular intervention of Moțoc emerges on the syntagmatic: « They are fools, fools, fools! » (an upper-register yell, which gives the moment a dramatic, theatrical drive). Just as the melodic language, the harmonic language is dominated by chromaticism.

Moțoc and The Crowd "it is an admirable scene, with various levels that reveal the psychology of the two characters (*Moțoc and The Crowd*), as well as the direct conflicts between them. The composer describes the scene through a variety of means (from the classical sound-related ones to *speaking, shouting and exhalation*), thus creating - out of a series of moods and feelings - a specific atmosphere, on several levels.

Starting from reference point no. 72 (the intervention of the soloist – *Moțoc*), two sound blocks appear:

- **block A** – *solo + orchestra*;
- **block B** – *choir + orchestra*.

The graphic representation shall be as follows:



The orchestral construction of this fragment generates two planes, by synthesizing two types of musical writing (it is a fragment with a two-plane development section):

- *chromatic movement* – (**plane I**) – it doubles the solo choral part in unison;
- *harmonic “pace“* (**plane II**) – it sustains the choral voice part, consisting of a two-fourth chord.

It is about a cleavage in which one can notice the two musical expositions mentioned above”.⁴

The author expresses everything directly, through an evolving contrasting continuity of the tragic collisions: on one hand, the massacre of the 47 boyars and, on the other – *Moțoc*’s punishment. After that, the author returns to the **syntagmatic** axis of the action – tragedy in tragedy. In order to attain *Moțoc*’s musical portrayal, the composer uses the most adequate techniques (which help delineate the hero’s personality and character).

4 Guțanu, Luminița, *The choral outline in the opera “Alexandru Lăpușneanu” by Gheorghe Mustea*, in: *Studia UBB Musica*, Cluj University Press, LVII, 2, 2012, pp. 257-270.

Hence, he resorts to:

- speaking voice;
- yelling;
- repeated imperative commands, in a desperate manner;
- chromatic progression (the intense achromatization of the melodic line);
- minimal intervallic leaps (intervals of second), as well as dissonant and consonant intervallic leaps.

May we also outline an entire panoply of moods that the character goes through:

blarney → **slyness** → **confusion** → **mutiny** → **hatred** → **fear** → **desperation**.

Musically, it is all carried out as follows:

blarney and slyness – through minimal intervallic leaps;

E.g. 1

Poco rubato

te vom a - še - za pe sca - u - nul dom-nesc

(Translation: *We will enthrone you!*)

hatred – through an ascending-descending chromatic exposition;

E.g. 2

Allegro

spu-ne să de - ie cu tu - nu - ri - le - n - tr - înșii

(Translation: *Tell them to put the cannons on them!*)

fear and desperation – through yelling;

E.g. 3

Allegro

să moa-ră toți eu sunt bo - ier ma-re ei sunt niș - te

Proști Proști Proști Proști

(Translation: *May they all die! I'm a great boyar! They are just fools! Fools! Fools!*)

In this opera, Iancu Moțoc, the ruler's „man of trust“, is characterized musically, through harmonic patterns on the minor natural pentachord, with the fourth scale degree ascended.

Conclusion

Moțoc's portrayal is thus attained through the integrating connection of the techniques used by the composer, through their synthesis. It all certifies the composer's professional probity.

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