

## **Franz Schubert și liedul romantic**

### **Summary**

This paper, entitled Franz Schubert and the Romantic Lied is structured into four big chapters, followed by annexes.

Chapter one, called The Musical Vocal Miniature and Its Stylistic Metamorphoses over the Time starts from The Lied Concept and the Cameral-Vocal Creation in the Music of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, being followed by Musical Romanticism and its Schools of Composition in the Vocal Miniature Field (France, Italy, Russia, Norway) and ends with The Romantic Lied School, in the German Music of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

The lied, as a genre of cult music, takes shape at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, being characteristic of the Romantic thinking and sensitivity. Musical art heads towards poetry and literature, and the tendency of portraying landscapes or telling stories by means of musical image with a high plastic suggestion power becomes visible. This, plus the Romantic artists' concern for poetry and the popular song, form together the factors which generated the crystallization of the lied as a genre of cult music.

The lied has a twofold manifestation: as a form (the structure of certain dances, aria, slow movements in sonatas, concertos, symphonies) and as a genre (polyphonic lied, classical lied, romantic lied, modern lied). Both manifestations will influence each other.

The lied is usually structured by strophes, based on repetition, variation or contrast.

As a form, the lied consists of one to several parts, and as a genre, it corresponds to a certain period of the history of music (polyphonic - the 15<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> century, continuous - the 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> century, classical - the 18<sup>th</sup> – the 19<sup>th</sup> century, romantic - the 19<sup>th</sup> century, modern -the 20<sup>th</sup> century).

There are several stages along this process, which cannot be delimited very clearly. The great merit of Classical and Romantic composers is that of having consolidated the architectonic principles of the lied forms.

The Classical composers left us many pieces for voice, with a piano accompaniment. Such small vocal pieces resemble the concerto arias and the romances of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. An improvement in quality occurs when the lyrics of great poets

(Goethe, Schiller, Heine) emerge, and composers manage to render the feelings and the atmosphere of the poetic text. The improvement of the vocal and instrumental technique also helps the lied in its evolution as a genre.

Lied has no important place in the work of Haydn, Mozart or Beethoven.

In his 90 lieds (English Songs, German Songs) Haydn is very simple and uses an accompaniment written in a harmonic style. The symmetric, clearly structured melody originates in the popular or instrumental creation. At the beginning, Haydn's creation resembles that of Preclassical composers, and at the end, it is contemporary with Schubert's childhood. This period span is supported by Mozart and Beethoven. Between Haydn and Mozart there are both similarities (in terms of style and inspiration) and differences, such as the opera genre that separates them definitely. The Violet, The Little Spinner, Come, Dearest Zither, Come can be seen as the most important of Mozart's lieds. Its songs, organized either by strophes or by canon, show the relation between popular art and cult art.

In Germany, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the lied emerges in several musical centres. The Romantic artist, unhappy with the world he lives in, isolates himself and creates an art inspired from popular creation, national specificities, but also from exoticism and mysticism. Schubert's predecessors are: J.P. Schultz, J. Fr. Reinhart, J.R. Zumsteag and K. Löwe. During the Romantic period, the lied develops thanks to the poetry of the time and to the influence which popular creation had over cult creation.

Ludwig van Beethoven marks the beginning of a new stage in music. Beethoven's accompaniment reminds us that he was excellent at instrumental expression and quite rarely was the word a source of inspiration for him. The meeting with Goethe was to give rise to compositions at the expected level (lieds of op. 75 and op. 83). With *An die ferne Geliebte*, Beethoven imposed the need for unity in a cycle.

E.T.A. Hoffmann, R.M. von Weber are followed by Fr. Schubert. F.W. Bartholdy, R. Schumann, J. Brahms and H. Wolf.

The second chapter covers the cameral creation of Schubert – the Romantic composer, its lied and the stylistic connotations of the genre, as well as the role played by piano in Schubert's lied.

They say that with Schubert, the lied was an immediate consequence and a sonorous result of certain sensations or feelings.

Schubert composed both lieds for voice and piano and lieds for several voices. In chamber music, Schubert mostly used his own lieds. In the Quintet in D he altered versions of *The Death and the Maiden*, in the Quintet in A he varied on *The Trout*, in *Introduction and Variations for Piano and Flute* he varied on *Trockne Blumen*. Schubert had an extreme easiness in composition, so his lieds have unique spontaneity. The melody, although full of unpredicted turns, unfolds in a simple and natural manner. From a harmonic point of view, the major-minor alternation creates a continuous game of lights and shadows. The texts used were taken from poets of unequal values, such as Goethe, Schiller, Heine and W. Müller, whose lyrics were used to write the two cycles that are masterpieces of the genre. Considering that Schubert was 17-18 years old when he already composed *Gretel at the Spinning Wheel* and *The King of the Elves*, we realize that he shows the measure of his talent even from his early years.

In *Gretel at the Spinning Wheel*, Schubert gives to piano a formula that is permanently repeated in order to create the wheel spinning impression. The voice melody is hardly whispered at the beginning and is getting more and more dramatic up to the climax when the music stops. After an impressive moment of silence, the piano resumes its humming and the voice, its sad singing. They say that Schubert “made poetry sing and music speak”.

*The King of the Elves*, another famous lied, has a simple form. The couplet alternates with the chorus, and triolets suggest the horse gallop. There are four characters, three real (the rider and the child in agony) and one fantastic (the king). Piano has the main contribution in terms of the unity of the whole. The octaves repeated in triolets support the entire lied in a rhythmic manner. The ostinato accompaniment denotes the state of despair.

The form of Schubert's lieds is generally simple, organized by strophes, but also tends towards the free form, with interventions of monologues or instrumental moments.

Feelings such as indifference or joy of living alternating with sadness and melancholy are joined together in the *Beautiful Girl at the Mill* cycle. Out of the twenty lieds of the cycle, I analyzed ten which are familiar to me and which I find representative.

The last cycle subject to analysis is Schwanengesang (the Swan Song). It is a cycle put together post mortem, where friends added to the six lieds on lyrics by Heine, other seven lieds on Rellstab's lyrics. There was a symmetry the key word of which is "sehnsucht" ("nostalgia"). The accompaniment becomes more complex here. There is a tendency towards a recitative where the composer wanted to keep the poetry musicality intact.

As regards accompaniment, it is worth noting that sometimes it is apparently very simple.

In Les Lieder de Schubert, André Coeuroy classifies the types of accompaniment in Schubert's lied. According to him, the accompaniment has three forms:

1. voice supporting
2. atmosphere creating
3. scenery creating.

Within the first accompaniment form, the piano is requested to intermingle with the melody, to abide by the melodic line (The Savage Rose, Ave Maria, The Death and The Maiden).

Within the second form, piano is the one which introduces the auditor in the emotional atmosphere from the very first bars. For each lied, Schubert finds a unique, special motif (Serenade, Lime Tree, Organ Grinder, Good Morning).

As regards the third form, Schubert's personality dominates. The text becomes a pretext to escape from the text, from the real world to an enchanting universe. (Gretel at the Spinning Wheel, The King of the Elves).

For Schubert, piano is not what it will be for Schumann, a confident to share subtleties with. The emotional content of the text dictates a certain tonality to the composer. Schubert has a picture of each tonality's ethos. He has favourite tonalities: B, B flat, A, E, E flat. The indicated tempo is also the one that limits excesses, and slow tempos are favoured. In Schubert's lied, piano grows from a purely harmonic or rhythmic accompaniment to an accompaniment having the role of equal dialogue partner of the voice.

Chapter three, called Schubert's Lied and Musicological Perspectives of the Genre is related to the German lied after Fr. Schubert, represented by R. Schumann, F. M. Bartholdy, J. Brahms and H. Wolf.

Schumann is Schubert's follower as regards the lied. Although he is not as direct as Schubert, Schumann's lieds are as valuable as those of its great predecessor by the deepness of musical thinking and the art of rendering poets' lyrics. There is a unity of topic, theme or atmosphere among the lieds forming a cycle. This is how Schubert elaborated cycles such as the Beautiful Girl at the Mill and the Winter Journey. Schumann creates the succession of the lieds forming a cycle by organic bonds, such as the recurrence of a motif or fragment in several lieds. In other cases, although the lieds have no common motifs, they are bound together so that the end of the first lied links with the beginning of the next one. An example of recurrence of one element throughout several lieds can be found in A Woman's Life and Love cycle and an example of continuous intermingling in A Poet's Love.

F. M. Bartholdy transposes the melodicy of the vocal lied in the piano music (Songs without Words), creating a new genre, i.e. instrumental lied. Its cycles (Spring Song, Passage Birds, Venetian Gondola Song, The Shepherd's Song) consist of simple lieds, deprived of any pathos or heroism, but with a specific melodic charm, being inspired from the popular song.

J. Brahms is known as a symphonist and composer of cameral music. His lieds are less famous, although each of them has a well defined individuality and a remarkable character. Brahms' lieds are very close to the purity of Schubert's song. Magelone Romances (op. 33) and Four Serious Songs are the only cycles incorporating lieds created within a cyclic continuity.

Another composer who focused his creative activity on lieds is H. Wolf. The charm of Wolf's melodies reminds us of Schubert. Wolf's melody manifests itself according to the lyrics' meaning and expression.

With Wolf, the detail, although subordinated to the whole, has a special value. R. Rolland called Wolf a Wagner of the Lied. Piano has a special role in his creation, creating a perfect unity between melody and accompaniment. For Wolf, the lied was a

creation that could generate enthusiasm, but where emotion intermingles with extreme tension.

Musical Romanticism and its composition schools in the field of vocal miniature will spread in France, Italy, Russia and Norway.

In France, the lied was called “chanson” and appeared under the influence of the German one. Relying on the lyrics of Verlaine, Baudelaire or Mallarmé, composers such as G. Fauré, C. Franck and Cl. Debussy were the famous representatives of this genre in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In Italy, the lied was cultivated by S. Mercadante and L. Gordigiani. The Italian composers at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century create especially opera.

In the opposite part of Europe, in Russia, the creation of the lied develops concurrently with the expansion of the national Russian school. N. Titov, Al. Dargomijski, Al. Varlamov, Hr. Verstovski, Arnold Alabiev and, of course, M. I. Glinka, the father of Russian romance, are the composers who cultivate this genre. The Russian romance, often interpreted in salons, acquires different expression and meanings. Musorgski raises the lied to an unprecedented height. Musorgski’s lied is based on deeply realistic ideas, reflecting the life and the truths of his time. Inspired from the lyrics of Russian poets or classical and universal poets, Ceaikovski’s romances are small poems originating from the Russian or Ukrainian popular song. A. Rubinstein, S. Rachmaninov and later Shostakovich and Kabalevski continue the best of Musorgski’s tradition.

Ed. Grieg, Norwegian composer, who succeeded in creating a national art, had an extremely important role in the development of the lied as a genre. Being based on texts by Heine, Andersen or Ibsen, Grieg’s lieds with German or English texts are dense, with a wide ambitus, intensely chromaticised and with a complex piano writing.

Chapter four called “Franz Schubert the poet of piano and voice” the shape of Schubert’s creation in the singing knowledge.

The perennial nature of Schubert’s creation can be seen also today, by the fact that the program of recitals includes lieds composed by Schubert. It is true that cycles are not totally interpreted very often, but despite this, the entire Schubert’s creation is symbolized and explained by the lied. Schubert made his voice clear in the cycle of lieds

which enjoy a well-deserved celebrity, due to music and its perfect match with the text. Love, nature and water are the three basic motifs of Schubert's lied.

Schubert's construction is motivated on all its components, from tonal option to the tension growing gradually to the climax, from the melodic line profile to the accompaniment complexity. In Schubert's lied, nothing happens at random, and piano is a voice necessary in sending the expressive message.