

5. SOLUTIONS FOR THE CONDUCTING APPROACH OF MADRIGAL *TARA FRUMOASA* BY DAN BUCIU

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Abstract: *Connected to the evolution of compositional techniques, activated by the coagulation of the local music school and the development of professional choral art, the choral creation reflects all the stages of stylistic configuration of the Romanian academic music. Dedicated promoter of modalism, both in theories related to specific constructions, but also in his compositions, Dan Buciu experimented in the versatile space of the modes in a permanent connection to the compositional directions of modernism and postmodernism, but always aware of his belonging to the Romanian school of composition, through perpetual reporting to folklore and Orthodox psaltic music. The madrigal Tara frumoasa is a sample drawn from the miniature choral creation of Dan Buciu, which offers the conductor the challenge to discover precise, eloquent means of approach, adapted to innovations at the language level, to express the ethos of the modes, to exploit new sounds, to convey profound ideas through a pre-classical genre in a updated sound and timbral vision.*

Key words: *modalism, madrigal, gesture, declamation, conductor, Dan Buciu*

1. Introduction

In the landscape of the stylistic mix that characterizes contemporary music, the evolution of the individuality of the conducting style is constantly changing. This evolution is determined both by the personality traits of the conductor, but especially by his openness to creativity, innovation, deciphering the message of music and its bidirectional communication: to the members of the ensemble and the public. *Several factors influence the performing style of a conductor, among which professional and personal qualities of the musician can be compared to hard and soft skills. Hard skills, in turn, are divided into technical skills (mastery of gesture, mimicry) and intellectual skills (ability to analyse musical works, thoroughly understanding the author's intentions). Soft skills include the ability to manage a collective, persuade the collective through explanations, convictions, and emotionally inspire the collective.*²² The present study offers several options for approaching a choral work from the contemporary repertoire from the conducting perspective, crossing the path from the understanding of the poetic and musical message to the performance solutions.

2. Modern Romanian choral music. Aesthetic directions

Connected to the evolution of compositional techniques and activated by the coagulation of a local music school, but also by the development of choral art through the contribution of amateur and professional ensembles, the Romanian choral creation will assimilate all the stages of stylistic configuration of the

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²² Yuliia Puchko-Kolesnyk, Adriana Skoryk, Lyudmyla Shumska, Iryna Shevchuk, Inna Antipina (2024), Performance Style of a Contemporary Choral Conductor in the Context of the Current Artistic Space: From Rehearsal to Media Presentation, in AD ALTA Journal of Interdisciplinary Research 14(1):185-188, p. 186. (DOI:10.33543/140139185188)

Romanian academic music. From the first plays deeply impregnated by the folk melodic to avant-garde works, the compositions dedicated to vocal ensembles offer a clear reflection of the stylistic configuration and clarity observable across all instrumental genres at every stage of its becoming.

Characterized by a great diversity of language due to the composers' desire to combine original folk melos with the latest conquests of modern composition, the contemporary era traces some creative directions in the choral creation²³ that have as common denominator the modal organization in the most personal options, manifested simultaneously on the horizontal and vertical level, as well as keeping the imprint of native spirituality and feeling:

1. Traditionalist line that processes folk melos in folk spirit, on modal or traditional principles (Nicolae Lungu, Vasile Popovici, Dumitru D. Botez, Achim Stoia, Nicolae Ursu, Gheorghe Danga, Radu Palade).
2. The neoclassical line, whose general feature consists in the synthesis of popular modalism with the polyphonic technique of Renaissance and baroque (Max Eisikovits, Zeno Vancea, Sigismud Toduta, Liviu Rusu).
3. The innovative line, which uses a more scholarly writing (Tiberiu Olah, Stefan Niculescu, Dumitru Capoianu, Miriam Marbe, Liviu Glodeanu, Mihai Moldovan, Aurel Stroe, Valentin Timaru, Irina Odagescu - Tutuianu, Aurel Stroe, Valentin Timaru, Vasile Spatarelu).
4. The trends that capitalize on the Byzantine melos, represented by composers such as Paul Constantinescu, Doru Popovici, Alexandru Pascanu, Sigismud Toduta, Nicolae Lungu, Tudor Jarda.

3. Dan Buciu – modalism and avant-garde innovations

Dedicated promoter of modalism, both in his theories related to specific constructions, but also through the music he created over time, Dan Buciu experimented in this colourful and versatile space of the modes with a permanent awareness of belonging to the Romanian school of composition. His creations, either insinuating Neoclassicism (*Divertisment pentru orchestra mica* from 1970), or experimenting with modern techniques for inserting the digital environment (*Remember Hiroshima* for choir and magnetic tape from 1972), are faithful to Romanian melody and sentimentality by their constant reference to folklore and Orthodox psaltic music.

Although he witnessed the full manifestation of the western avant-garde, of the bold compositional experiments, Dan Buciu reported on innovation with balance and in constant relation to the Romanian spirit, creating his own style. *Well, I think I belong to this Romanian school and that is enough. Especially since, sometimes, I had an orientation, as a composition technique at least, dodecaphonic, but in no case in the area of expressionism, it was an area that never attracted me. From time to time I had and still have neoclassical nostalgia, I still penetrate other paths (especially the neo modal one) but I think this definition would be, after all, not only for me but also for the immense majority of those who belong to this school, that we are part of the Romanian School.*²⁴

²³ Nicolae Gîscă (2004), *Interpretarea muzicii corale*, Iași, Junimea Publishing house, p. 178

²⁴ Adra Fratila (2016), De vorba cu Dan Buciu, in *Revista Muzica*, nr. 5, 2016, p. 4

Alongside the native modal sources, Dan Buciu also resorts to an artificial modalism, but which he extracts from the area of the modes already existing in the non-diatonic musical cultures, to the stairs with moving steps or those specific to Byzantine music. This is where the complementary modes, super modes of the octaves or those imagined by the composer fit in. The composer's aesthetic ideal remains *beautiful music*. So, if I were to take the side of aesthetics, I would say that “the ugliness”, this invented category of aesthetics – although it's not so – art of the XX century, I would say, this “ugliness” must be a “beautiful ugliness”. (..) Ultimately it is about the fact that this music, even when it has to be “ugly”, must remain “beautiful”.²⁵

4. *Tara frumoasa*. A possible conducting approach

V. Zhyvov sees the interpretative approach of a conductor as a holistic phenomenon, encompassing the individuality of the artist, his stylistic orientation, and manner.²⁶ The same author also believes that a conductor's individual performing style depends on the specific psychological and spiritual organization of his personality, his way of thinking, and his emotional composition as an artist. Different understandings and emotions of the performed music, as well as a unique way of conveying it, are derived from these components.²⁷

Moreover, Seighman (2009) advocates the importance of deepening the text accompanying vocal music as a way to bring to light the unsuspected meanings of music²⁸. Following the discovery of all the subtleties of the literary text, the role of the conductor is *simply to hear the piece better....and to arrange its presentation in a way that will stimulate the musical imagination of his audience*.²⁹ Therefore, the interpretative options for the madrigal *Tara frumoasa* will start from two main landmarks, related to the rational /subjective relationship: the structure and the meaning of the lyrics belonging to the poet Marin Sorescu. The form of the work can be schematic, as follows:

A	B	C	D	A
(recitative + m. 1-14)	b (m. 15-26) b ₁ (m. 27) bv (m. 28-37)	c (m. 38-47) cv (m. 48-58)	(m. 59-69)	(recitative + m. 70-81)

Since the beginning of the work, the voices are organized into two groups, *tutti* and the soloist (or solo group), which perform, in different situations, distinct parts with different meanings and expressiveness. The composer thus rethinks the vocality specific to the Renaissance madrigal genre, re-contextualizing it in a modern modal frame.

The play begins with a statement made in an *f* tone by the soloist of the tenor party: *Eminescu did not exist!* After a small expressive pause, like a crown on the

²⁵ Adra Fratila, op. cit., p. 5

²⁶ Tkach, Y.S. (2018), Individual style of a musician-performer, in *Bulletin of the National Academy of Managerial Staff of Culture and Arts*, 2018, (3), 359–366, p. 361

²⁷ Idem, p. 362

²⁸ Gary B. Seighman (2009), *Expanding the choral conductor's horizon: the application of selected literary theories*, Doctoral thesis, University of Maryland, College Park

²⁹ David Lewin (1969), Behind the Beyond: A Response to Edward T. Cone, in *Perspectives of Mew Music* 7, No. 2 (Spring/Summer, 1969), p. 63

measuring bar, the soloist soprano resumes the same idea, but in an interrogative sense, in *mf* tone: *Did Eminescu not exist?* The question is taken by alto soloist, and confirmed, in a circular sense, this time conclusively, by the last soloist part, that of the bass voice. The whole dialogue is followed, after a short expressive pause, by a reaffirmation of the idea by the integral soloist group (in *f*), continued, as a reverberation, by the *tutti*, in a free, whispered deployment, which will be the background of the recitative declaimed later.

ȚARĂ FRUMOASĂ

— madrigal —

Versuri : Marin Sorescu

Muzică : Dan Buciu

Ex. no. 1 Dan Buciu, *Tara frumoasa*, mm. 1-4

The recitative of the soloists is carried out in the form of a free *stretto*, in which the voices are grouped in pairs – soprano /alto, tenor / bass, the lower perfect fifth interval representing one of the elements of correspondence with the madrigal genre to which the play is joined. From an interpretive point of view, it will be

insisted on highlighting consonants and not vowels, which would guide the performance more towards singing throughout this recitative. The tenor and the bass also enter the *stretto*, but in the *f* tone, in a *dolce recited*. As with any recitative, at this point the good declamation of the text will be considered. The performance will speed slightly on the bass eights in m. 6, on the word *waves*, to suggest the image of those movements of the water that *make white knots*.

Starting with m. 8, the voices and soloists come together in the melodic discourse in the *f* tone, thus completing a first stage of the deployment of the general tension through a dynamic growth marked by the *increasing* indication. The subsequent decrease in tone is an effective way to emphasize the beginning of a new segment, in which recitative discourse is combined with the harmonic pedal. The two layers of the discourse must be treated differently at the conducting level. The soloist recitative of the soprano resumes the original motif in a varied stance, successively taken over by the soloist of the alto party at the lower octave. The harmonic background of the recitative will reach its maximum sound and expressive efficiency if each harmonic change is made in perfect synchronization of the voices. Especially in moments of cadence, marked by the crown.

The next section is marked by a change of tempo and dynamics. The element of dynamism of the discourse is represented by the *fugatto* that begins in m. 15, in a soprano / bass /tenor succession. The contrast between the image of the historical figures evoked by the text (Whose names were *Mircea cel Batran, Stefan cel Mare*) and that of simple people (or, more simply, *shepherds and ploughmen*) is made at the composition level, by means of the modification of the writing (harmonic / accompanying melody) and tone (*crescendo* for historical figures and *subito p* for simple people). Starting from the poetic sense, there will be slight rushes and rarities of the tempo, but the changes of harmony from the voices of A, T, and B will be precisely marked by the conductor, to avoid possible gaps.

The end of the section evolves towards a focus on the *G* centre (tending to its major variant), which gives stability and balance to the discourse. On this harmonic background, in m. 27 the soprano and the alto soloist are humming melodic fragments whose intonational structure recalls the *Doina*, as an echo that strengthens the evocative expressiveness of the moment. In this unique atmosphere the performers of the T and A parties expressively declare sound titles from Eminescu's poetry: *Miorita, Luceafarul, Scrisoarea III*.

Ex. no. 2 Dan Buciu, *Tara frumoasa*, ms. 27

The next section starts with a new faster tempo (*più mosso*), in a new syntax, based on the dialogue between the planes. This delimitation of the discourse on two layers is made differentiated, from the affirmation /comment typology (bass vs S, A, T) to pairs of voices in opposite motion, to the sixth interval. The melodic content of individual voices, the parallel deployment and the result of overlapping planes emphasize the modal character of the discourse.

At the interpretative level, the section must be built progressively in terms of the evolution of the tension plane. The general idea to be emphasized by the conductor is based on the meaning of the text, which speaks about the troubled history of the Romanian people, about the battles with the peoples who wanted to annihilate the spirit and existence of the nation. Starting from a *mf* tone, the dynamics gradually increase, with each syntax change, from dialogue to simultaneous performance, in full *f*, on the verse *they left to fight*. The progressive entrance of the voices sequences the battles: *with the Tatars, with the Avars, with the Huns, and with the Polacks*, and finally, in *f*, all the voices express the fierce battles with *the Turks as well*. The correlation of the climax with the verse *and with the Turks* highlights the special significance that the battles with this people have held in the history of the Romanian people.

The second stage of the tension evolution begins (m. 38) with the tenor voice, with the motif from m. 15, imitated at octave by the bass part, in *f*. Starting from the idea of the evocation opened by the previous imitation, the soprano recitative, in a *dolce*, meditative *p*, migrates from the historical universe to the poetic space, to Eminescu's poetry, with the image of deep woods and of *that young man who talked to them asking them what was swinging*. Underlining the idea of the dialogue between the forest and the poet, the alto part continues the question in the same *windless tone*. As regards the technical side of the moment, the harmony changes must be very precise, for a good modal correlation of the main melody with its harmonic complement. Also, the expressiveness of the recitative, which will be obtained by the freedom of its performance, as well as the outline of the painting of the two characters, collectively and individually will be achieved through the homogeneity of male voices and through the contrast between their timbrality and that of sopranos. Although marked by a crown on the measuring bar, the fragment ends harmonically open, on a chord of *B flat VII*, suggesting the continuation of the previous poetic idea.

The motivational and constructive correspondence with the previous fragment emphasizes the continuity of the two sentences. Thus, starting with m. 48, the same imitative dialogue is resumed, this time between the soprano and alto parts. The evocation of Eminescu's poetry continues with the verse, *there were also lindens*, preparing the beginning of the tenor recitative, which describes the image of the two lovers, who *knew how to fill the whole flower in a kiss*. The *dolce* indication accompanying the tenor line involves focusing the attention of the interpretation on the expressiveness of the performance, while the other voices will harmonically support the atmosphere. In m. 58, the bass, as an echo of the recitative, will conclusively strengthen the intense emotional atmosphere with the words *in a kiss*, the completion of the phrase being realized in *diminuendo*, with a cadence suspended on a lowered chord (*A – C - E flat*).

In Section D (m. 59-69), previously encountered syntax motifs and processes are combined, giving the articulation a synthesizing character. The predominant style is homophone, although the beginning combines the harmonic writing with the free imitation soprano – alto – bass. With the accumulation of all voices, the discourse will evolve upward on a tension level, in a progressive *crescendo*, reaching the climax in the *ff* tone, corresponding to the word *Eminescu*, repeated obsessively. Pauses will be tensive and expressive. The last *Eminescu* will be performed by a slight settlement, as a conclusion to the whole tense deployment, placing the poet's image as the semantic centre of the entire work. Thus, the composer finds the identity of the phrase in the title, *a beautiful country*, not in the troubled past, in the fierce battles, but in the spirit represented by the most representative poet of the Romanian people.

The musical score is presented in two systems, each with four staves. The first system covers measures 63-69 and features the lyrics: "Si pen-tru ca toa-te as - tea Tre - bu-iau sa poar-te-un nu - me". The second system covers measures 70-74 and features the lyrics: "Un sin-gur nu-me Li s-a spus E - mi - nes - cu, E - mi - nes - cu". The score includes dynamic markings such as *mf*, *f*, and *ff*, and performance instructions like "sempre cresc.". The time signature is 7/4.

Ex. no. 3 Dan Buciu, *Tara frumoaasa*, mm. 63-69

In the end, section **A** is resumed, this time with the affirmative declamation of the bass voice with the name of *Eminescu*. On this whisper begins the recitative declaimed, now in *F* in soprano, taken over by alto, tenor and bass. A general pause is placed in m. 127, which will be exploited by the conductor in the direction of the completeness at the level of expression of the atmosphere created. The last four measures of the work bring back the original motif, transposed from the C#/F# version, on the C/F combination. The motif is started by the soprano, harmonically complemented by alto, tenor and bass, and taken over by the alto. The end of the discourse, made by the bass part, completes expressively this poetic painting, through the two expressively performed half notes

5. Conclusions

The contemporary scores represent a challenge for the choir conductor from the perspective of a combination of factors: understanding the language used by the composer, deciphering the connection between music and the poetic text from an

objective and subjective perspective, the awareness of the stylistic and aesthetic subtleties of the musical text. Moreover, the appeal to a genre from the Renaissance period in the context of a modern expression, as is the case with the madrigal *Tara frumoasa*, involves connecting two seemingly incongruous stylistic areas and discovering the deep roots of updating the specific polyphony with the contemporary means of expression. One of the most effective mechanisms of contemporary contextualization of the madrigal *Tara frumoasa* by Dan Buciu is the poetic text, which swings between history and poetry, between extroverted living and introverted living, between objectivity and subjectivism.

*The study of the problem of traditions and innovations in modern vocal and choral performance reveals it as a complex multi-vector phenomenon. (...) They include two major blocks of particular importance: theoretical and practical backgrounds; creation of the concept of preservation of classical academic style, its synthesis with the latest discoveries and quality highly professional modernization.*³⁰

This study offers some practical solutions for the interpretative approach of a modern work starting from the idea of the composer to associate tradition and innovation at the level of structure and syntax, placing the interpretation at the intersection between the old and the new, with a focus on the meaning of the text of Marin Sorescu.

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