

**SOME PEDAGOGICAL ASPECTS OF FORMATION OF MUSICAL
SENSITIVENESS IN STUDYING THE VOCAL AND CHORAL
WORKS OF F. CHOPIN**

UNELE ASPECTE FORMATIV-PEDAGOGICE DE DEZVOLTARE A SENSIBILITĂȚII
MUZICALE ÎN STUDIUL LUCRĂRILOR VOCALE ȘI CORALE ALE LUI F. CHOPIN

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Spre deosebire de mulți dintre predecesorii și contemporanii săi, Frédéric Chopin este cunoscut în primul rând ca autor al unor lucrări de referință pentru pian. Totuși, F.Chopin nu a ocolit în creația sa genurile vocale, care erau foarte răspândite în perioada romantică. El este autorul a circa douăzeci de cântece lirice pentru voce și pian, pe cuvintele unor poeți polonezi, pe care le-a scris, practic, pe parcursul întregii sale vieți.

În articol este prezentată o analiză succintă a lucrărilor sale (cântece și transpuneri pentru cor), din punctul de vedere al interpretării acestora dar și valențele formativ-pedagogice de dezvoltare a sensibilității muzicale la studenți.

Being concerned with the combination of “the Beauty” with “the Good” (kalokagthon) from the time of Homer and the ancient Greeks, through Renaissance, the neo-humanism of the 18th century till the contemporary epoch, humanity is permanently looking for ways and means of achieving an efficient aesthetic education. Together with the other sides of education (intellectual, moral, physical, professional) (according to Rene Hubert) this aims at the harmonious development of a personality, with not a “closed” but an open general and specialized culture, able to reorganize in concordance with the transformations and changes which take place in our modern society, a personality able to develop

its own cognitive, emotional and psychomotor capacities. This desideratum can be achieved only through an adequate symbiosis of all the components of education. We cannot consider intellectual education as the only and the most important part of the instructive-educational process, because this is characterized by an organic proportioning, whose modification brings prejudice to the natural development of a personality. Also because neither the moral nor the physical education, as well as the professional one, can be understood as a decisive component of education. Only the combination of all the components lead to the multilateral development of the personality.

In contemporary life the necessity of an adequate aesthetic and artistic education increases considerably. Aesthetic education helps individuals to learn; to perceive, to “taste” and to appreciate the authentic values of art and society. The appearance of new genres and forms of art is accompanied by the risk of radical modification of the criteria of aesthetic appreciation. But, in parallel, these changes lead to the intellectualization of art, to the conscious understanding of artistic values and it needs the formation of a new public, that will be able to distinguish the authentic from, the false, the beauty from the ugly, the moral from the immoral. In this way it is very important how we study and perform the musical (valuable) pieces. In our case, we researched the modalities of interpretation of vocal and choral works of F. Chopin.

Unlike many predecessors and contemporaries, Frederic Chopin is known, first of all, as the author of works for piano. At the same time the vocal genre which was greatly developed in romanticism makes a part of F. Chopin's works. Chopin is the author of nearly 20 lyrical songs for piano and voice written on the lyrics of the Polish poets during the composer's creative activity (from 1829 to 1847): *The song of grief* (by V. Paul), *My beloved* and *Away from my eyes* (by A. Mitskevitch), *Melancholy* (by B. Zaleskiy), *The Lithuanian song* (by S. Vitvitskiy), *The melody* (the author is unknown), rural songs: *Spring*, *Desire*, *The sorrowful river*, *A party*, *What does a girl like?*, *A messenger*, *A warrior*, *A groom*, *A nice guy*, *A ringlet* (by S. Vitvitskiy), the meditation *Two deaths* (by B. Zaleskiy). After the composer's death in 1859 the songs were collected and published in one collection by Chopin's friend I. Fontana.

Some of his works which are mazurkas, etudes and preludes have been arranged for chorus. The Russian composer, pianist, conductor and public man M. A. Balakirev is one of the authors of popular arrangements for the mixed chorus a cappella of two Chopin's mazurkas which have been joined in one chorus (of *Mazurka* es-moll, opus 6, № 4 *Presto, ma non troppo* and *Mazurka* As-Dur, opus 41, № 4 *Allegretto*). Balakirev enriched the colour of the original using choral means. It is little-known that it was Balakirev who was the editor of the first-ever Collected works of Chopin which was published in Russia in 1861-1864 (and later the editor of other Chopin's works) and also the author of the reinstrumentation of Chopin's *First piano concerto* (1909) and an orchestral *Suite* (1910). Also are well-known the arrangements of *Etude* E-Dur, opus 10, №3 *Lento ma non troppo* done by Lilian Durocher for mixed chorus with piano accompaniment on religious lyrics (published in 1956) and the *Prelude* Fis-Dur, opus 28, №13 *Lento* for solo, chorus, violin, violoncello and organ written on the lyrics of the Polish poet Kornel Whayskiy and by the pianist Karl Mikuly (1821-1857), Chopin's student and follower, etc.

When studying these musical pieces of F. Chopin, we have to develop some interesting aesthetic entities. For example: when we analyze the vocal and choral music of Chopin for a good interpretation, we have to develop the musical sensitiveness and all its components. What are these components? According to researches, musical sensitiveness as an aesthetical term has the following components:

- melodic hearing, harmonic hearing and the sense of rhythm form the basis of musical perceiving, forming the first side of musical sensitiveness. Melodic hearing is the capacity to receive, recognize and reproduce a monophonic melody. The perception of a melody supposes its understanding not as a succession of sounds, but as an expression of a certain integral content. Each melodic line represents an “up” and “down” movement; the sounds also form a great number of intervals. The formation of melodic hearing as a psychological basis of musical sensitiveness consists in: a) “learning” the recognition and

reproduction of the movement's direction, i.e. (that is) the melody's movement "up" and "down"; b) "learning" the recognition and reproduction of the qualitative relation between sounds, that is – intervals.

The first level (melodic hearing) is easier to be achieved, because the "melodic curb" can be detected by any individual. The second level (harmonious hearing) is more difficult to achieve, because one needs to recognize the quality to be compared. The form of the waves (the timbre) can become an obstacle, which hinder to determine the frequency of the waves (the height). Such kind of hearing can be achieved with the help of observation. An excellent melodic hearing is characterized by a quick, easy and rapid grasp of the "qualities" of sounds included in an interval. So, melodic hearing is the capacity to recognize the "horizontal" movement of sounds, and the capacity to distinguish each sound of the melody separately and in close relation with the next or the previous sound. Harmonious hearing is the capacity to grasp the musical sounds presented simultaneously. So, the person who perceives the "vertical" musical line, perceives some musical sounds which form a chord and is able to separate them, has a harmonious hearing.

If melodic hearing permits the merging of all the sounds in a line, and the person has to recognize the line's movement, then harmonious hearing gives the possibility to feel several simultaneous sounds. In the end we obtain "a unique image" of the sonorous complex and individual sensations which correspond to the components of the sounds".

A melody cannot be perceived without the sense of rhythm, which makes the melody be perceived as a system of sounds, each having intensity, length and colour. The rhythm characterizes the mode of unfolding the musical phenomenon in time. The sense of rhythm is the capacity to understand the succession; the successive setting of the length of the sounds. This capacity is closely connected with the mechanism of the motive reproduction. We achieve the sense of rhythm with the help of conscious and unconscious exercise (in different musical-rhythmic activities) and in the process of perceiving a concrete musical content. It is important to mention that musical hearing is developed through different independent musical activities and in the process of musical education. It means, while studying the vocal and choral pieces of F. Chopin, we develop the first side of musical sensitiveness.

- Each musical work shows a certain group of ideas and feelings; "that is why its perception cannot be reduced to passive neutral recording of sonoric complexes, but it obligatorily supposes catching (overhearing) the ideatic and emotional-affective significance which it has" [1, 78]. So, the sum of ideas, emotions, feelings included into a musical work form the second component (side) – the affective one of musical sensitiveness. And, for sure, when studying the vocal and choral music of F. Chopin we develop the second side of the musical sensitiveness.

Chopin considered musical interpretation, in particular and music in general as the "art of expressing the thoughts by means of sounds" ("L'art d'exprimer ses pensées par les sons"), as the art of sounds operating ("L'art de manier les sons"), as the manifestation of our feelings in sounds ("La manifestation de notre sentiment par les sons") [2, 15]. The composer was deeply convinced that the human voice is "the perfect interpreter, the transmitter of human feeling, that is the most delicate instrument of interpretation and while he was healthy he did not miss any chance to listen to good singers" [2, 35]. Even to his students-pianists he recommended to learn the art of singing. In Chopin's opinion, "the plasticity of tempo, the naturalness of expression are inseparably connected with the art of playing the piano" [2, 31].

The third side (component) through which we achieve the passage to the rational side of cognition – aesthetic taste – is the capacity to react spontaneously through a feeling of satisfaction or dissatisfaction gives the aesthetic objects and process; the capacity which is supported by the intuitive and certain understanding, judgment, appreciation of aesthetic values. According to researches, taste is permanently present when studying the vocal and choral music of F. Chopin.

While performing Chopin's compositions it is necessary to take into consideration those

requirements which the composer asked from performers: he tried to develop his students' exclusive cantilena of playing, plasticity, prominence, for him it was important to make his students discover the expressive basis, the conception of the work.

Many sources give information that while playing his compositions Chopin along with discovering the depth and the essence of the content always paid attention to their genre peculiarities. His contemporaries mentioned that "in his playing, in melody phrasing, in his ability to underline a theme, in creating the melodic line he was unsurpassed" [3, 291]. "Under his fingers the musical phrase was singing and with such clearness that every note became a word, every phrase became a thought. It was a speech deprived of pomposity, simple and at the same time elevated" – K. Mikuly was telling R. Katchalskiy [2, 31].

Performers should take into consideration Chopin's performing style, which is distinguished by the most delicate ornamentation of details and is simultaneously combined with the poetic inspiration of the whole composition, with refined flexibility, delicate melodism and rhythmic determination, and also those special requirements to the interpretation which romanticism requires as a whole.

Performers also should consider various stylistic orientations of Chopin's works which can be conditionally divided into 2 groups: the Polish and the European ones. In most of his etudes, preludes, scherzos, nocturnes, ballads, impromptus, rondos and waltzes the influence of the European music is noticeable while his mazurkas and polonaises are deeply national.

In Chopin's songs is reflected the beauty of both the Polish folk songs and modern romance city music. Distinctive folk-national elements characterize his mazurkas: a combination of song and dance features, the use of the popular modus (Frigic, Lidic, variable, the use of polymodus, etc.), structures imitating the popular band, syncopes, accents, dotted rhythmic on different beats, polymetry, etc.

Mazurkas es-moll, op.6, №4 *Presto, ma non troppo* and As-Dur, op.41, №4 *Allegretto* – even without having obvious technical difficulties require from the singers certain skills in the reproduction of the original rhythmic and character of their motion. These animated dances of triple time format are characterized by the rhythmic crushing of a strong beat, unsteady accents (very often they are placed on weak beats of bar), prevalence of jumps in melody. The dancing melodies of the mazurkas which arise from rhythms and intonations of popular music reproduce a lyrical poem (As-Dur, op.41, №4) and a minor scene of rural life (es-moll, op.6, №4).

All Chopin's creative work and mazurkas in particular are pierced by melancholy for his native land which became for the composer a romantic ideal. For Chopin, mazurka is the symbol of Poland (he had to move to Paris). The composer poeticized and dramatized his mazurkas which are beyond a dancing genre¹.

Etude E-Dur, op. 10, №3 *Lento ma non troppo* is characterized by special simplicity and romanticism of melody. In the genre of etude Chopin did not limit himself to technical complexity which is an indispensable condition of this genre, but he tends to the expressiveness (here its basis is the melody) and to the artistic character of miniature. As to etudes, whose images are beyond the given genre, Chopin fills them with poetic features and creates examples of artistic (concerto) etude.

The width and continuous development in slow tempo of the smooth, melodious tune of *Etude* E-Dur (with prevailing stops at the dominant) require from chorists to give special attention to breathing. The pathetic melody is distinguished by a wide extent: it sounds within 21 steps forming 2 musical sentences not interrupted by pauses. The main expressive means here are crescendo and diminuendo and also a special *rubato* of Chopin, expressing a complex changing of spirit.

¹ Starting with Michał Kleofas Ogiński, we can observe at Polish composers (who were the direct predecessors of F. Chopin) the tendency of poetic feature in the genre of mazurka: G. Veneavskiy, I. Alsner, K. Kurpinskiy, F. Ostrovskiy, M. Schimanovskaya and many other Polish composers composed mazurkas.

7 *ten.* *rit. mf* *p a tempo*
 8 *rit. mf* *p a tempo*
 9 *p a tempo*

Soprano
 oth - er ----- we of - fer this prayer: "Fath - er of Love -----

Alto
 oth - er ----- we of - fer this prayer: "Fath - er of Love -----

Tenor
 oth - er ----- we of - fer this prayer: "Fath - er of Love -----

Bass
 oth - er ----- we of - fer this prayer: "Fath - er of Love -----

Piano

The fourth side of sensitiveness – the RATIONAL one, consists of the following elements:
 - aesthetic judgment, that act of consultation and hierarchization of aesthetic objects into an axial field, based on some criteria. There are two forms:

a) the primary form – judgment of taste – the expression of spontaneous appreciation, through the prism (angle) of personal taste of aesthetic objects. Although the judgment of taste is the expression of an aesthetic attitude, socially determined, it is intensely coloured by the subjectivity of the person it is emitted by;

b) the superior form – judgment of values – is the expression of consultative appreciation through the (prism/angle) of taste, and that of the aesthetic ideal on the aesthetic object as well. It expresses a theoretical point of view, which requires logical and axial validity;

AESTHETIC PERSUASION is characterized by the presence of a stable belief. Persuasion represents the ideas about beauty, which becoming an internal motive, orientate and lead the preoccupation of a human being in the complicated process of assimilation of “beauty” in his/her way of life, in his/her relations with the world and other people;

AESTHETIC IDEAL – is the perfect reflexion of what exists, but mainly of what it should be; the level of consummation of what can be achieved in a certain sphere.

There are relations of interdependence between the ideal and taste. The aesthetic ideal orientates the tastes into a certain direction, and the tastes assure a content proper for the ideal. The aesthetic ideal orientates and influences the whole aesthetic experience.

The components of the rational level form the aesthetic attitude as well, i.e. that-group of spiritual reactions of a human being given aesthetic values. F. Chopin in a new way interpreted many genres having revived the genre of prelude on a romantic basis. His preludes with all their laconicism became independent and artistically completed works. Each of his 24 preludes is composed in its tonality (a major + a parallel minor), according to the tonality they are placed on the quarto and quinto circle.

The preludes are contrastive and various in expressive means, each of them corresponds to its unique image and psychological state (from intimate – lyrical mood to strongly pronounced dramatism).

Prelude Fis-Dur, op. 28, 13 *Lento* is characterized by the state of a certain contemplation and agitated prayer: a constant return to Ais which recitatively and persistently addresses upwards) from which the composition has begun. There the sound is long and, at the same time, here there is some kind of optionality and romantic innuendo. *Prelude* Fis-Dur requires from chorists an unusually wide and long breathing.

“Chopin is the purest and most profound romantic but in his romanticism there is nothing superficial, ostensible and theatrical... Plasticity, a sense of proportion, congenital grace, “spiritual aristocratism”, noble and sincere romanticism is, in our opinion, that complex of characteristic traits necessary for performing of Chopin’s works. It is Chopin, this purest and most perfect romantic that most of all requires reconsideration, new ways of interpretation and a deep study of his Personality – immersion into his style... For the performers of Chopin’s works this it is not less precious and important than for musicologists” [4, 187].

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