THE MUSICAL-POETIC WORLD OF GUSTAV MAHLER'S EARLY CHAMBER-VOCAL CYCLES

ASPECTUL MUZICAL-POETIC AL PRIMELOR CICLURI VOCAL-CAMERALE DE GUSTAV MAHLER

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The relevance of the paper is in the target setting of the early vocal creative work of Gustav Mahler, an outstanding Austrian composer – the Cycle of Songs to Josephine Poisl, Fourteen Songs and Romances from Youth, Songs of a Wayfarer. This study is focused on exploring the early chamber-vocal cycles of G. Mahler in terms of style and musical theme features. The said topic has not yet been an object of a separate study. It was partly covered by such musicologists as I. Barsova, I. Leopa, D. Mitchell, Z. Roman, who studied the genesis and interaction issues of the word and music in the above-mentioned chamber-vocal cycles by G. Mahler. The research methodology is based on biographical, historical-cultural, system-analytical and comparative methods.

Keywords: Gustav Mahler, chamber- vocal cycle, musical style and poetics, Fourteen Songs and Romances from Youth, Songs of a Wayfarer

Relevanța lucrării constă în stabilirea obiectivului de a studia creația vocală timpurie a lui Gustav Mahler, remarcabil compozitor austriac – Ciclul de cântece pentru Josephine Poisl, Paisprezece cântece și romanțe din tinerețe, Cântecele unui călător. Acest studiu se concentrează pe explorarea ciclurilor vocal-camerale timpurii ale lui G. Mahler din punct de vedere al stilului și temelor muzicale. Această tematică nu a făcut încă obiectul unui studiu separat. Ea a fost parțial cercetată de muzicologii I. Barsova, I. Leopa, D. Mitchell, Z. Roman, care au studiat geneza și problemele de interacțiune dintre cuvânt și muzică în ciclurile cameral-vocale ale lui G. Mahler menționate mai sus. Metodologia de cercetare se bazează pe metode biografice, istorico-culturale, sistematico-analitice și comparative.

Cuvinte-cheie: Gustav Mahler, ciclu vocal-cameral, stilistică și poetică muzicală, paisprezece cântece și romanțe din tinerețe, cântecele unui ucenic călător

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Problem statement

The vocal creative work of Gustav Mahler (1860-1911), a talented representative of the Austrian musical culture of the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, is inscribed with golden letters in the vocal and instrumental culture of the European modernism era in the last decades of the 19th and early 20th centuries. His song cycles and individual vocal works are an adornment of any chamber singer's repertoire. The main feature of the composer's song creativity is the close connection with the symphony genre, which determined the specific features of his symphonic style as a song-like, the development of the early Schubert romantic song tradition. Mahler, during his short creative life, composed five vocal cycles; two vocal-symphonic works for choir, orchestra and soloists, and nine symphonies (the tenth one is unfinished). The early period of the composer's creative work falls on 1880-1888, with the emergence of the First Symphony, the cantata *Son of Lamentation* (*Das Klagende Lied*) and two vocal cycles – *Fourteen Songs and Romances from Youth* (*Vierzehn Lieder und Gesänge aus dem Jugendzeit*) and *Songs of a Wayfarer* (*Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*). In his early songwhriting, the composer was also under the influence of the vocal works by R. Schumann, R. Wagner, J. Brahms.

The first tests of the pen

G. Mahler started composing his first vocal works at the age of six at the request of his father [1 p. 280]. Already in adulthood, he recalled his first song to the words of Friedrich Lessing as follows: "God knows how I came to this and what I thought about it then", I may have chosen this poem only because it is short. It seemed very poetic to me then: "Living for the Sake of Love!" [2p. 8].

In his younger days, G. Mahler was fond of Richard Wagner's music and his concept of Opera and Drama (Oper und Drama). He took interest in the ideas of the dramatic poetry nature, poetry role in the idealized the musical drama of the great playwright [3 p. 345]. Several fragments of songs have survived to this day, composed even before joining the Vienna Conservatory (1875). Their simplicity and naivety testify to the style of young Mahler. These include the song *In the Glgow of Warm* May Days (Im wunderschönen Monat Mai) to the words of H. Heine, known to us from the vocal cycle The Love of a Poet by R. Schumann, as well as a sketch of the song "Hoarfrost Fell on a Spring Night". (Esfiel ein Reif in der Frühlungsnacht) to the text of the folk poem "Pathetic Fate" by A. V. F. Zuccalmallo (to date, 18 initial measures have been preserved – S.V.) [1 p. 280]. One can discover in the musical style of these songs the influence of Wagnerian chromatic harmonies, spectacular tonal modulations that enhance the expression of the text .The influence of R. Schumann's musical style is clearly noticeable in the first song *In the Glow of Warm May Days* (vocal range – c-b¹) – fresh harmonic turns, meter variability, wide melodic leaps and chromatic lamento of the lyrical hero contribute to the embodiment of a despair state. Young Mahler uses a Wagnerian Tristan chord in this song. The composer destroyed the next works created in a similar manner motivating his decision by the inadequacy of creative imagination, lack of knowledge and artistry when translating a largescale content into a concise form [1 p. 55]. However, there are several early, fully completed vocal works written after graduating from the conservatory (1877) – Three Songs for Tenor (Drei Lieder für ein Tenortimme). Mahler created this cycle in Vienna at the beginning of 1880, following his 1779 summer vacation in his native Iglava (Moravia), and dedicated it to Josephine Poisle, the daughter of the local postmaster [2 p. 95]. During his work vacation, Mahler held singing and piano classes for Josephine. These classes with his student resulted in his falling passionately (but hopelessly) in love with a view to mutual feeling. Unfortunately, the long distance relationship failed: after Mahler left for Vienna, Josephine's letters started intimating of friendship cooling: she fell in love with other man [10 p. 937-943].

Mahler responded with several songs dedicated to her, written for a tenor with a fairly wide (c-a¹) range. At first, the cycle consisted of five songs, but only three of them survived. Among the early works, this is the most structurally complete cycle composed to the original text of the composer. With

his own text, the composer tried to touch the strings of his beloved's heart. According to Mahler, these songs exhaustively treated his "life…, fate and suffering written with own blood" [3 p. 30-31].

In the first song – *In Spring (Im Lenz)* (rangees-a¹) – G. Mahler addresses Josephine, as if reproaching her for her rejection: *Sagʻan du Träumr am lichten Tag Was willst du heut' mit den Bangen? Du von Blind heit befangen*¹. This song is a rehash of the same-name work by R. Schumann from the cycle "The Love of a Poet" to the words of H. Heine. The main mode of the song is *d-moll*, but the first and third verses are set out in parallel *F-dur*, reflecting sudden mood swings of the lyrical character: from a power overflowing with joy with vital energy to complete despondency. The expectation of love is displayed in the fourth and fifth verses, where the nature of the song becomes slightly brighter (*F-dur*). However, in the last lines – *Ah*, *she is the only one I would pay attention to*/, *She has been living for a long time...* – the musical texture modulates from the main key to *Des-dur*. In this song, Mahler embodies with particular expression the extreme mood swings inherent in most of his works. [1 p. 284].

The second number of the cycle – *The Winter Song (Winter lied)* (range – *es-b¹*) – was written under the influence of the lyrical characters of F. Mendelssohn and R. Schumann. His thematic invention will soon be reflected in the composer's vocal cycles "Songs of a Wayfarer", "The Boy's Magic Horn"), as well as in the thematic material of his First, Second and Tenth symphonies [5 p. 156]. The piano introduction and the first stanza song fit are quite calm, pastoral in nature. Later on, a monotonous chord figuration appears in the piano part, which is associated with the onomatopoeic texture of the "*The Spinner*" song from "*The Fair Maid of the Mill*", *a* cycle by F. Schubert and correlated by the composer with the indifferent to him Josephine character [1 p. 285]. In the harmonic language, G. Mahler uses semitone modulation technique (*c-moll –Des-dur*), inherent in Schubert style. The main technique used by the composer is the alternation of the voice part presentation and subsequent instrumental comparison [6 p. 285].

The most famous one is the third song of the cycle – May Dance on the Green (Maitanzim Grünen) (range – B- b^I). G. Mahler first published it under the title $Hans \ and \ Greta \ (Hans \ und \ Greta)$. This is a cheerful three-part landler in nature (a rustic variety of waltz). This song is written in a folk manner and imitates the sound of a Tyrolean yodel. The lovers Gustav and Josephine are hiding behind fairy-tale characters. According to the plot-driven story, Hans is looking for, but cannot find a partner for dance. Greta is waiting for Hans, who finds soon the beloved one he was looking for (Juch-he! Juch-he! – the high notes of these exclamations should be sung in falsetto, imitating singing in a manner). Subsequently, the composer used the motifs of this song in his First Symphony (second movement, main part, bars 1-59 and 235-310), and the intonational plot in the songs from "The Boy's Magic Horn".

Gustav Mahler composed his first vocal cycle for a high voice (in this case, a tenor), since his songs have a fairly high tessitura. The subsequent vocal cycles were written for medium voice.

First published songs

During the period 1880-1883, young G. Mahler served as chief conductor of the Laibach (present-day Ljubljana, Slovenia) and Olmouc (present-day Olomouc, Czech Moravia) opera houses. At that time, he became interested in Richard Leander's and Tirso de Molina's (*Don Giovanni* play) poetry. Impressed by the poems of these authors, the composer created five songs published in 1885 by the Schott publisher. The edition autograph note stated, *5 Gedichte komponiert von Gustav Mahler*, as a property of Alfred Rose [7 p. 119]. The first performance of these songs took place in April, 1885, in the program of a salon concert in Prague. The songs were performed by the soloist of the Prague Royal German Theatre (today the Slovenian Theatre in Prague), soprano Betty Frank, accompanied by the author [7 p. 119].

The general edition of "The Five Songs to the Verses by R. Leander and T. de Molina" appeared in 1892, at the Schott publisher. The composer first named the collection of his songs as *Lieder und*

¹ Tell me, dreamer in broad daylight, why would one worry today? You wander through the forest so silently, as if blindness hinders you. I'm not blind yet and I don't see, for me it's neither dark nor light, I could smile and cry, but I couldn't tell anyone about it (translated by –S. Vynnyk).

Gesänge, supplement ausdem Jugendzeit (from youth) appeared after Mahler's death. The collection Fourteen Songs and Romances from Youth was published in three volumes (five songs each). The first volume consisted of songs to texts by R. Leander and T. de Molina, the second and third volumes consisted of songs to verses from The Boy's Magic Horn. When writing the cycle, the composer was guided by the vocal works style of his predecessors – F. Schubert, R. Schumann and J. Brahms [8 p. 57]. This cycle also demonstrate the influence of the Austrian musical and folklore traditions.

The first song of the cycle *Spring Morning* to the words of R. Leander (*Frühlingsmorgen* – c-f¹) depicts a lethargic, half-asleep lover of sensual sleep, who reluctantly wakes up on a sunny spring day. The piano part was written in R. Schumann's style; it reflects the gentle breath of a fresh breeze, the singing of a lark and the buzzing of bees and beetles. At the same time, the singer in smooth phrases displays a dense lullaby (meter 6/8), his phrases are interrupted by the image in the texture of a gentle tree branch tapping at the windows [1 p. 286-288]. The vocal refrain *Wake up* (*Steht auf!*) is a typical Mahler's tool that introduces a variety of techniques and performs a unifying function. The song is written in a couplet form, consisting of two fits. Mahler emphasizes the dreamy call to spring awakening with slow harmonic movement, frequent use of the pedal, a lulling 6/8 meter and almost continuous soft dynamics. The second fit uses a VI stage drop characteristic of Schubert's songs, which emphasizes a gentle banter over the cheerful sleeper.

In the song *Remembrance (Erinnerung, c-g¹)*, the composer reveals the source of his creative quest. Only eternal love is able to spiritualize the creative impulse of the artist. Brahms's vocal style had a clear influence on the musical poetics of this song. This song is a slow lament (*Lento und Sehnsuchtig, g-moll*), in which the melody is described in short mournful phrases in the volume of a quart. It sounds against the background of accompaniment triplets sustained on the tonic. Almost the entire melody of the song is based on a variable major-minor, built into the general downward movement of the lamentose melody, *My Love Constantly Gives Birth to Songs* [1 p. 288]. This song should be performed with special excitement, thoroughly phrasing and reproducing all the subtleties of the dynamic palette.

The third song – Serenade (Serenade aus «Don Juan» – d-f^t) was written according to the plot of the play The Barber of Seville, or the Stone Guest by Tirso de Molina. According to the storyline, one of Don Juan's servants sings a serenade in the play, telling about his master's love affairs. The song is about Don Juan's attempts to seduce another flame, but his wasteful flexible approaches are unsuccessful [1 p. 288]. This song should be performed in a seductive subtle manner.

The next song – Fantasia (Fantasia aus,, Don Juan" – B-f¹) is also composed according to the plot of Tirso de Molina's play, where Thisbey, a fisherwoman, sits on a seashore casting her nets. Deceived by Don Juan, the girl is depressed, her condition is conveyed by the following words of the song, Die Winde streifen so kühlumher, Erzählen leis'eine alte Mär! Die See erglühet im Abendrot, Die Fischerin fühlt nicht Liebesnot Im Herzen! ImHerzen!¹.

Denoting this passage with the author's note *Dreamy* the composer tried to emphasize the nature of performance. Ironically, Thisbey actually feels the bitter deceit and throws herself into the sea by the end of the song. G. Mahler composed this song in a manner of a folk ballad. The slow piano introduction depicts the endless sadness of the "old fairy-tale" that overwhelmed Thisbey. Although the piece as a primary source does not indicate the nature of song accompaniment, the composer imitates in the piano part the sound of a harp with arpeggiated chords [1 p. 289].

In 1887, G. Mahler began working as a conductor at the Leipzig Opera. At this time, the composer met Baron von Weber, the grandson of the great German composer Carl Maria von Weber. Mahler and the baron's family worked jointly on the completion of the unfinished opera by K. M. von Weber – *Three Pintos* (*Die Drei Pintos*). It was Baron von Weber who introduced the composer to "The Boy's Magic Horn" (*Des Knaben Wunderhorn*) is a collection of German

¹ The winds blow so fast, they tell softly an old tale, the sea glows under the red sunset. The fisherwoman does not feel the pain of love in her heart, in her heart! (translated by – S. Vynnyk).

folk song lyrics (more than 700) compiled by Ludwig Achim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano in 1806 [8 p. 57]. The composer was very interested in folk texts, and he decided to set them to music. G. Mahler composed these songs for Baron von Weber's children.

The cycles of songs to the texts from *The Boy's Magic Horn* constitute a separate page in G. Mahler's creative work. It is commonly believed that the composer composed two collections of songs based on folk motives. The first one, created in 1887-1890, was written for voice and piano and was included, as part of a cycle, into the general edition of Fourteen Songs and Romances from Youth. The second collection of songs to the above texts was written already in the mature period of the composer's creative work (from 1892 to 1901) and arranged for voice and orchestra [2 p. 60]. This collection included 12 songs based on folk texts. The first collection consisted of nine songs to the texts from *The Boy's Magic* Horn. G. Mahler's idea to compose songs to folk texts was inspired by the publication of R. Wagner's article Art and Revolution (die Kunst und die Revolution) [2 p. 292]. R. Wagner's new doctrine provided for the revival of "true art" inherent in ancient folk legends and myths, as well as the establishment of a new worldview -an artistic and poetic one [1 p. 293]. The Arnim and Brentano collection delighted the composer with its simplicity, the opposition of humour, love and piety to the forces of evil and cruelty. As Mahler himself stated, these verses are absolutely different from other types of poetry, one could call them "the nature of life and art" [10 p. 322]. The composer significantly revised the literary source. He brought a lot of new things to the songs. He often threw out individual lines or entire fits from the text, sometimes he added his own text with a different name, and sometimes even combined the texts that were not similar to each other. Mahler turned the songs based on folk texts into unique masterpieces. Of the nine songs included in the new cycle, most are written in the genres of landler, march and folk dance. According to the plot, the songs are devoted to the description of nature, the image of fairy-tale characters, folk life.

One of the earliest songs to the texts from The Boy's Magic Horn is the song Summer Change (Ablösung im Sommer- e-fis¹). The form of the song is two-part. The cuckoo, as the first bird-herald of spring arrival, did not fly in for unknown reasons. After the summer solstice, its cuckooing is not heard in the forest. The song explains it by the fact that it fell dead on the lawn. Who will replace it now? Fortunately, the nightingale arrives when other birds are silent. This song is characterized by the repetition of the refrain The cuckoo has fallen dead! On the lawn! It fell dead!". The piano part illustrates the rustle of trees and cuckoo voice. The first part of the song, connected with the illustration of the cuckoo, is depicted in a-moll mode; the cheerful chirping of the nightingale is illustrated in *D-dur*. In the second part, the composer used a number of obsessive repeated words – *kleine*, *feine*, süße (small, gentle, sweet – S. V.), which personify the appearance of the nightingale. The main dynamic tone throughout the song is a muted piano, piano postlude sounds on forte. The song embodies the struggle in nature for survival. However, there is another meaning. Since ancient times, the cuckoo has been considered not only a harbinger of spring, a predictor of life expectancy. Since Antiquity, it has also been a symbol of adultery. G. Mahler later used the theme of this song in the Scherzo of his Third Symphony (3 movement, 27 measure) and called it: What Do the Animals Tell me? According to the musical structure, most of the songs are written in the old bar form AA¹B)².

The first early songs of the cycle combined the traditional folk song with its modern interpretation. G. Mahler, in his own way, raised and addressed the issue of the unity of the past and the present before his generation.

Songs of a Wayfarer

The next cycle of the early period of his creative work – *Songs of a Wayfarer* (with also the alternative name *Songs of a Travelling Journey Man*) (*Lieders eines fahrende Gesellen*) appeared during 1883 –

¹ Kukuk hat sich zu Tode gefallen/ an einer grüner Weiden!/ Ku-kuk ist Tod!

² G. Mahler's predecessors – F. Schubert, R. Schumann and J. Brahms also composed their songs in this form.

1885, in Leipzig¹. The impetus for its creation was the composer's failed love relationship with the singer Johanna Richter, whom the cycle is dedicated to². Ardent mutual love did not result in the desired wedding. Johanna fell in love with another man. Ironically, the composer fell seriously ill. He experienced hallucinogenic delirium, which was reflected in the cycle [5 p.88]. The cycle title also has a deep subtext. As a young guild apprentice learning from a senior master, Mahler remained faithful to the musical craft, learning its secrets. *Wayfarer* indicates a fickle lifestyle, moving to different cities in search of a conductor's position as a means of subsistence and material support for the younger relatives.

The dramaturgy of this cycle makes it related to Schubert's cycles *The Lovely Miller Maiden* and *Winter Journey*. These also feature an apprentice who falls in love with a miller's daughter. According to the composer's idea, the cycle was supposed to consist of six songs, but only four survived the final edition. The first performance of the cycle piano version took place in 1885. The songs were performed by Betty Frank with piano accompaniment by G. Mahler [7p. 120]. The first orchestral performance of the cycle took place on March 16, 1896, in Berlin. The songs were performed by the Dutch baritone Anton Sistermans, accompanied by the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra and conducted by the author [10 p. 170].

The cycle Songs of a Wayfarer is more holistic in its storyline than Songs and Romances from Youth. It is here that one can notice the greatest influence of F. Schubert's vocal creative work with his characteristic theme of dreamy travels. Four songs of the cycle reflect the character's thoughts, bifurcation of his feelings – sadness and pity for the irretrievably lost past, joy and faith in a happy future. The first song, When My Sweetheart is Married³ (Wenn mein Schatz Hochzeit macht – H-g¹) – has a thoughtful, sad nature, as the character suffers from lost love. This is the only song where the composer used the same text-name from The Boy's Magic Horn. The song is written in a simple three-part form (ABA¹), where the first and third parts (in the form of periods) reflect the character's suffering (d-moll), and the middle one sounds in Es-dur.

A striking contrast is the second song *I Went This Morning over the Field (Ging heut' Morgen übers Feld – A-gis^1)*, filled with a cheerful joyful mood. The character communicates with a cheerful finch, rejoices in the sun and the beautiful world; however, the lost love haunts him. By means of piano texture, the composer imitates the noise of the forest, the singing of birds; the vocal part imitates the chirping of a finch. This song is written in the (AA^1B) bar form.

The next two songs reproduce a combination of different states: longing for the lost past and optimistic hopes for a brighter future. The third song, *I Have a Gleaming Knife (Ich hab' ein glühet Messer – B-g¹)*, reflects the drama of the character's feelings, an emotional storm with sharp jumps, dynamic drops. In the middle part, the character is depicted, whose consciousness is clouded by hallucinations and delusions about his beloved one. The vocal part culminates at the words *I would like to be six feet under (Ich wollt', ich lägʻ auf der schwarzen Bahr*), in a high-pitched *ges¹* sound, which is emphasized in the piano part by a long E-flat major chord on *ff*. After that, the singing drops sharply to the lower limit of the vocal range.

Following the emotional climax, the beginning of the fourth, the final song of the cycle – $Two\ Blue\ Eyes\ (Die\ zwei\ blauen\ Augen)$ (range $A-g^I$) sounds like a funeral march. The character still experiences memories of previous love. He realizes that it is necessary to live on, and releases his pain with the word $Ade\ (Farewell)$. The song is written in the (AA IB) bar form, starts with e- $moll\ and\ ends\ with\ F$ -dur, reflecting the inner state of the character in dark and light modes – a state of despair and peace.

¹ Second edition of the cycle, the author created for a soloist and orchestra, was written in 1892-1893. The concerto premiere took place on 16 March, 1893, in Berlin directed by G. Mahler.

² The singer may not have known about the vocal cycle was dedicated to her. Mahler wrote about it in a letter to his Viennese friend [5 p. 110].

³ This song was created under the stylistic influence of the song *Leiermann* (*The Lyrist*) from the cycle *The Lovely Miller's Maiden* (*Die Schöne Müllerin*) by F. Schubert.

The palette of the musical and expressive means – melodic, harmonic, textural and dynamic – reveals parallels between the *Songs of a Wayfarer* and *The Lovely Miller Maiden* by F. Schubert. Their relationship lies in the common theme (Schubert's character is also a wayfarer), the musical thematic invention (piano introduction), and elements of sound representation. The cycle *Songs of a Wayfarer* cycle is filled with musical symbols that embody the eternal themes in the art of music, such as *life*, *death*, *love*, *artist* and *nature*. These themes are closely intertwined and contrasted here.

Conclusions

G. Mahler's early vocal creative work fits organically into musical art development trends of the *fin de ciecle* era. The composer embodied skilfully the trends of his era in his song cycles. G. Mahler, while using fairly common at first glance romantic means of musical expression, enriched his own musical style in an original way. It was formed under the influence of his predecessors and older contemporaries – Austrian and German Romantic composers, primarily F. Schubert, R. Schumann, F. Mendelssohn, R. Wagner, and J. Brahms.

The style of the early vocal creative work of the artist was significantly influenced by the Austrian song and dance folklore. Most of the songs were written to the texts of folk poems from the L. J. Arnim and C. Brentano collection "The Boy's Magic Horn". As a result of their deep processing by Mahler, these songs became the embodiment of the Austrian folk spirit in the vocal culture of Austria in the last twenty-year periods of the 19th century.

In his early vocal creative work, the composer composed songs both to his own texts and to the texts by other authors – H. Heine, F. Zuccalmallo, R. Leander, T. de Molina. Following the Austro-German vocal tradition of the second half of the 19th century, the composer orchestrated his own song cycles. A significant part of the thematic invention of the songs from the early creative work period, primarily from "The Boy's Magic Horn" and "Songs of a Wayfarer" cycles became the basis for the thematic invention of the composer's first five symphonies. In particular, the theme of the main part, the first movement, of the First Symphony (1888) was the theme of the second song from the *Songs of a Wayfarer* cycle – *I Went This Morning over the Field (Ging heut' Morgen übers Feld)*. In the second part, the thematic material of the main part included elements of the early song *Hansel and Gretel*. The material of the last song *Die zwei blauen Augen* from the *Songs of the Wayfarer* cycle is used in the thematic invention of the First Symphony, third part. The songs from *The Boy's Magic Horn* served as melodic prototypes of the individual themes in Symphonies Nos. 2-5.

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