

The Symbiosis Between Sound and Word in Composer Sabin Păutza's Cycle of Songs *Un strop de lumină... [A Drop of Light...]*

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ABSTRACT – This article aims to highlight the expressive devices through which composer Sabin Păutza brings to light the deep and savoury poems crafted by soprano Adina Covaci, in a cycle of songs of great worth in the repertoire of the genre. The cantabile quality of the themes, the emphasis on certain lyrics given through the contour of the melodic arch, the piano accompaniment supporting the solo voice and the metric or rhythmic diversity are elements that reveal the creative act of a composer whose versatility is reflected in the contents of his music.

Keywords: Sabin Păutza, Adina Covaci, song cycle, *A Drop of Light...*

1. Introduction

Complex, diverse and full of creative brilliance, the artistic personality of composer Sabin Păutza has constantly evolved, starting from the identity of the child born in the mountainous region of Banat, fascinated by music since the early years of his life. The composer's stylistic hallmark has always contained, in a more or less veiled manner, reverberations of the archaic character of Romanian music. His academic study of the Baroque compositional techniques up to the modernism of the 1965s has encompassed an extensive journey through modal, tonal and atonal music, reflecting a multifarious stylistic diversity. His oeuvre has been dedicated to choral, chamber, symphonic, vocal-symphonic and entertainment music, and, once on American soil, it has evolved to also include the musical genres of blues and jazz. Composer Sabin Păutza has also acquired a vast experience in the song genre, composing 312 songs to poems by Romanian or foreign poets.¹

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¹ Telescu, "Maestrul Sabin Păutza...".

The cycle of songs *Un strop de lumină... Cântece de Sabin Păuța, pe versuri de Adina Covaci* [*A Drop of Light... Songs by Sabin Păuța, to Lyrics by Adina Covaci*], is the composer's latest work, consisting of 15 pieces for soprano voice and piano accompaniment. The thematic material of these songs includes both ancient and modern human thoughts and feelings, meant to reflect the essence of life. Structured in the form of a triad, the thematic material revolves around the subject of love and is harmoniously complemented by two other aspects of life: the faith in God and the cogitations of man.

The symbiosis of the two arts is crafted by a composer whose internal music comes to light upon reading a poem.

The moment I read a poem, I don't care who wrote it, what group it belongs to, what language it's in, whether it's a woman or a man. Poetry comes with music, it has music in it, and the moment I read the poem, music is instantly born. If I like music I write it, if I don't, I leave it. I say with my hand on my heart that it is often so simple, so fast and so extraordinary to find music there, among the words, that I often said it was not my music, I found it and brought it to light. The music was born by itself, because the verse comes with a pulse of its own, as I say, with a rhythm of its own, with a cadence, with a number of syllables, with accents and a musicality that is born of rhythm. Rhythm is the backbone of music.²

2. Analytical perspective on the cycle of songs

A Drop of Light... Songs by Sabin Păuța, to Lyrics by Adina Covaci

Un strop de lumină... [*A Drop of Light...*] is the song whose title represents the generic name of this cycle. It describes the magic of music and its role in providing an inner balance in human life (elation, serenity, melancholy, meditation). Written in the key of E minor and a calm tempo, the song has a double *AB – AB* binary form. The first section (*A*) consists of two symmetrically square phrases, built in turn on two motifs based on the same rhythmic structure, which in its second appearance is varied through the false syncopation at the end of the consequent phrase of section *A*.

The song begins with the piano accompaniment, through a 4-bar introduction anticipating the rhythmic motif that permeates the entire piece, albeit on a melodic line structured in contrary direction to that of the soprano voice in the first section. The

² "În momentul în care citesc o poezie, nu mă interesează cine a scris-o, din ce grup face parte sau în ce limbă a scris-o, dacă e femeie sau bărbat. Poezia vine cu muzica, ea are muzica în ea, iar în momentul în care citesc poezia, instantaneu se naște muzica. Dacă-mi place muzica o scriu, dacă nu, o las. Spun cu mâna pe suflet că, de multe ori, atât de simplu, atât de repede și atât de extraordinar e să găsec muzica acolo, printre cuvinte, încât de multe ori am zis că nu-i muzica mea, eu am găsit-o și am scos-o la lumină. Muzica s-a născut de la sine, pentru că versul vine cu un puls al lui, cum zic eu, cu un ritm al lui, cu o cadență, cu un număr de silabe, cu accente și cu o muzicalitate, care se naște din ritm. Ritmul e coloana vertebrală a muzicii." Telescu, "Maestrul Sabin Păuța...".

introduction coincides entirely with the interlude preceding the repetition of the *A B* sections.

The 6/8 compound triple meter gives the music a waltz-like character, in isorhythmic form, interspersed at “key” moments with a dotted, well-marked rhythm and false syncopations placed at the end of the even-numbered lines. The entire piece has a propulsive dynamic flow, emphasized by the numerous verbs occurring in each stanza: I – 5 verbs, II – 6 verbs, III – 7 verbs.

The melodic line of the soprano has the same undulating contour throughout the piece, except that the melodic contour of section *A* is ascending, while that of section *B* is descending. The main climactic points occur in measures 13 (ex. 1) and 39, respectively, whereas the secondary ones occur at the end of section *A*, being marked by descending intervallic leaps of a minor sixth, on the words *grele* [heavy] and *divină* [divine] (measures 12 and 38).

Ex. 1. S. Păuța, *Un strop de lumină...*, mm. 13-16.

The left-hand accompaniment induces the idea of a figured bass characteristic of the Baroque period, whereas the right hand provides constant support to the solo voice, playing some of its main melodic elements. Compared to the first section (*A*), section *B* presents a formal asymmetry given by the two phrases consisting of 4 + 6 measures. This asymmetry is due to the repetition of the consequent phrase, which reveals the importance given by the composer to this concluding line: *Poartă comoara ce timpul-nghețã și dă mai departe un strop de lumină*. [Carry the treasure frozen in time and pass along a drop of light.] The left-hand piano accompaniment often juggles the functions of the tonic and dominant (I – V). The state of tranquillity sets in only at the end of the second section, on the undulating, descending melody, ending on the tonic of the key of E minor, performed

by the solo voice when uttering the words *strop de lumină* [drop of light] – a metaphor of serenity, goodness, positive energy and hope.

In Adina Covaci's view, the poem *A Drop of Light...* reflects her relationship with the music.³

The song *Cugetări de viață nouă...* [Thoughts of a New Life...] stands out among the songs of this cycle for the descriptive character of its music, in consonance with the literary text. The poem was dedicated to the author's first son, on his 18th birthday, and is a compendium of ideas and tips for achieving a fulfilled life.⁴ The composer illustrates the poetic text in the key of E minor, in the form of a double *AB – AB* binary song, consisting of 7-measure phrases, except for the last one, which is augmented. The use of metrical contrast by alternating simple 2/4 and 3/4 meters containing metric accents placed at different time intervals creates a musical dynamic that is crowned by the soprano's fluid melodic line, which keeps the audience's attention alive.

The introduction and the end, along with the interlude between the two statements of the *AB* sections, are entrusted entirely to the piano. The left-hand piano accompaniment consists of chordal structures from which the root and the fifth often emerge, which at times are precisely the tonic and the dominant of the key of E minor. The right-hand melodic line accompanies the soloist's melody, without taking on many of its elements.

63 *f* Refren

Soprano

vă! Doar gla - sul bu - nu - lui Păs - tor de'i a - u - zi cum

P-no. *mf*

Ex. 2. S. Păuța, *Cugetări de viață nouă...*, mm. 63-66.

The sound material of the soprano voice has an undulating contour, based on intervals of seconds and thirds. Section *B* starts with a leap of an ascending perfect fourth (B^1-E^2), on the words *doar glasul* [only the voice] (*Doar glasul bunului Păstor de-i auzi* [Should you hear only the Good Shepherd's voice], see Ex. 2), with a declarative role, propelling

³ Conversation with Adina Covaci from February 9, 2024.

⁴ Conversation with Adina Covaci from February 9, 2024.

the soloist's melodic line into the high register. This leap of a fourth reflects the spiritual ascent, the believer's goal to connect with the divine. This moment represents the climax of the musical piece.

The entire work is strongly dynamized by arches of gradually oscillating intensities, tempo changes and rarely and strategically placed expressive accents that enhance their value, on words like **dar** (*Când glasuri țipă, dar nimic nu spun* [When voices scream, but nothing say]) and **s-asculte** [should listen] (*Iar inima s-asculte-ndemnul sfânt* [And the heart should listen to the holy exhortation]). In this sonic context, the rhythmic variations are reflected only by the dotted rhythm inserted in certain places.

Here again, the theme of *light* shows up, which the composer highlights by repeating the last two lines from both presentations of section *B* (**Lumina scumpă vei vedea și vei găsi** [You will see and find the precious light]). In the author's view, the second stanza of the poem – text belonging to section *B* – represents the “key” to a fulfilled and balanced life, passed on to the next generation in a troubled world.⁵

Full of expressiveness and characterized by a unique lyricism of the musical themes, the song **Ruga** [*The Prayer*] is one of the most moving pieces of the cycle, both due to the lyrics underlying the musical structure and to the composer's overflowing reservoir of inspiration.

In terms of form, the song **Ruga** is cast in double *A B B* binary form (counter-Bar form), preceded by an 8-measure introduction by the piano, which returns unchanged before the repetition of the counter-Bar form. The first section (*A*) is in the key of G minor. Section *B* modulates abruptly to the parallel key of G major. These ways of treating the sound material suggest the serenity given by the connection with a divine, supernatural force. The moment is anticipated in measures 22 and 77 by the use of the melodic variant of the G minor key.

The melodic line of section *B* begins in the high register, with an upbeat, representing the first climactic point of the piece (measure 25). Due to the construction of the musical phrases, this moment will occur again in measures 41, 80 and 96, and the theme will require an additional effort from the soloist's voice to sustain the airflow on the notes of the second octave: *Tu ești Cel care-ai dat cu prisosință* [You are The One who gave abundantly], and *Mai spală-mă odată-n sfântul sânge* [Wash me once more in the holy blood], respectively.

The rhythm is easy, with rare symmetrical syncopations on the beat. The end of the line is extended through a long note, which emphasizes the cross rhyme. Another way to highlight the semantically important words is by inserting intervallic leaps of an ascending perfect fifth on the words: *păcat, eliberat, minunat* [sin, liberated, wondrous]; a descending perfect fifth – *ființă* [being]. *De brațul Tău să fiu mereu legat* [May I always be linked to Your arm] represents another sonic description of the celestial space, with

⁵ Conversation with Adina Covaci from February 9, 2024.

the solo melodic line being placed in the high register (measures 13-16 and 68-71, respectively).

The music of this song reveals the ecstatic state of someone who is filled with faith in God. The musical way of expressing the relationship between the two entities standing in vertical opposition, man-God, is emphasized by the melodic parameter that includes the ascending leap of an octave (G^1 - G^2) at the beginning of the lines *La Tine-aler, Părinte-al veșniciei* [To Thee I run, Eternal Father] (stanza I), and *Să nu mă lași nicicând, condu-mi Tu pașii* [Never leave me, guide my steps] (stanza II) – which is a rarely used element in this song cycle. Here, the interval of an octave represents a duality of the same image – *coincidentia oppositorum*⁶ –, man opposed to divinity while being himself a fragment of the Great Creator.

Iubirea mea târzie [My Late Love] is cast in a double A A B binary form (bar form), with a 7-measure coda that combines elements of the two sections. The melodic-rhythmic construction is punctuated and syncopated, with inserted triplets, in the key of G minor. Concise in size, it is repeated cyclically with small rhythmic permutations. The structure of the musical phrases is correlated with the poetic text, revealing the descriptive spirit of the music.

Ex. 3. S. Păuța, *Iubirea mea târzie*, mm. 37-39.

The four colours reflect characteristics of love: blue (the immensity of the nocturnal celestial plane, flashed and furrowed by peaks), green (in the diurnal terrestrial plane it represents fresh, tender, bright, fragrant love), yellow (reveals the attributes of love: rich, nourishing, solar, golden) and red (in its underground plane, love is deep, eruptive, hot).⁷

⁶ A philosophical principle, called *coincidentia oppositorum* or *the unity of polarities*, which reflects duality under various forms, such as the micro-macrocosm integrated into a unitary whole. Eliade, *Tratat de istorie a religiilor*, 350.

⁷ Conversation with Adina Covaci from February 9, 2024.

The musical discourse is fluid, based on a frequent sequence of root – fifth of the stated chords in the bass line (Ex. 3), with interposed passing notes. The right-hand chords are often enriched with chromatic melodic lines, increasing the harmonic tension through gradual changes. The cadential moments of the piece include compound authentic cadences (IV-V-I), except for the finale, which ends majestically with a plagal cadence (IV-I), with the soloist's voice suspended in the high register.

The song *Gânduri pentru Sebastian* [Thoughts for Sebastian] reflects a melodicism that falls easily into the aesthetic category of the sublime. The construction of the musical discourse offers a vivid illustration of the composer's artistic mastery. It conveys the feeling of maternal love through the vibration of a carefully crafted music, cast in a double *A B – A B* binary form. The two sections are unequal in size (8 and 12 measures) and are followed by a 9-measure coda.

poco rall.

Sopr. 51
 meu, Și să te'n-crezi me-reu... în Dum-ne - zeu!

P-no.

3'30''

Ex. 4. S. Păuța, *Gânduri pentru Sebastian*, mm. 51-54.

The compound duple meter (4/4) features a dotted and syncopated rhythm. The first section begins in the key of D minor, with a melancholic albeit serene melodic line. The second section modulates to the key of F major, giving the melody a dramatic feeling. The soloist's range is expanded to the A^2 (in the second octave) – which is also the climax of the piece and the highest note in the entire cycle of songs.

The most tense and expressive musical phrases occur in the high register: *Să-ți fie viața soare și-ncântare; Să crești frumos și drept, copilul meu / Și să te-ncrezi mereu în Dumnezeu* [May your life be sunshine and delight; may you grow up beautiful and just, my child, and always trust in God] (Ex. 4 – coda). Of a heartbreaking beauty, the musical discourse reflects all the hopes a mother has for her son's happiness, this being also the author's very first poem.

Menire [Mission] is a song with a double *A A_v B B_v* binary form, based on contrasts created through various compositional means. The first contrast arises from the two

relative keys used in the two sections. Another contrast occurs in the poetic text, which contains 3 odd stanzas of 5 lines each (*A*) and 2 even stanzas of 4 lines each (*B*). The odd poetic stanzas are cast in 2/4 duple meter, whereas the even poetic stanzas are in 3/4 triple meter. This is not the only contradiction. Section *A* is more complex in terms of rhythm – a motivic material consisting of sixteenth notes, dotted rhythm and syncopations, with a slower agogic (Ex. 5), compared to section *B*, which is simply built in terms of rhythm, but compensates with a more alert tempo.

Ex. 5. S. Păuța, *Menire*, mm. 45-48.

The contrasts occurring in the poetic text are: *iubire – ură, izvoare nesecate – pământ arid* [love – hate, ever-flowing springs – arid earth]; the antidote to the passage of time – the truth.⁸ In the final message *Lansează lămpioane* [Sky lanterns are launched], the theme of light returns.

The range of the piece is quite narrow, being suitable for the soprano voice. The coda concludes with a plagal cadence (IV-I) in G major, on the soprano's long note.

Like the lied *A drop of Light...* – which represents a *credo* in music, the lied *Menire* illustrates a creed about life.⁹

The song *Recunoștință* [Gratitude] alternates two themes in parallel keys, different in their melodic character, in a double *AB – AB* binary form, unequal in size (9 and 15 measures, respectively), and followed by a 5-measure coda. The first theme, in G minor, is lyrical, descriptive and full of melancholy, unlike the second theme, in G major, which suggests the character of a religious hymn with Western influences. It is interesting that although they are different in character, the two themes are similar in rhythm and agogics,

⁸ Conversation with Adina Covaci from February 9, 2024.

⁹ Conversation with Adina Covaci from February 9, 2024.

with the metrical structure alternating simple and compound duple meters and thus adding variety to the musical discourse.

The modulation is anticipated by the piano accompaniment which falls into a pattern that occurs constantly throughout this cycle (V-I), while the plagal cadences are used at the end of the section (IV-I). The successive cadences play an evolutionary role in the musical discourse rather than one of segmentation of the phrase (an enlarged cadence occurs in measures 5-6: IV-II⁷-V⁷-I). The modulatory inflections move through the keys of B flat major – G minor in section *A*; C major – G major – A minor – E minor in section *B*.

The song *Telegramme* [Telegrams] is one of the most outstanding pieces of this cycle. It has a double ABB binary form (counter-Bar form), followed by a 7-measure coda. The musical language is based on the structure of the aksak rhythm, which gives it a note of originality. The melodic line is “wavy”, built on intervals of seconds, thirds and rarely fifths, with leaps of sixths and many passing notes placed on weak beats, and sprinkled with numerous accents specific to the aksak rhythm, given by the asymmetrical augmented syncopations, creating an original musical discourse, full of charm. The transmission of the poetic message is enhanced by the compound triple meter: 12/8 in section *A*, which is divided in half in section *B* (6/8), thus giving a sense of continuity to the poetic lines in various ways.

Ex. 6. S. Păuța, *Telegramme*, mm. 3-4.

The piano accompaniment contains a play of accents between the two hands, due to the aksak rhythm. The right hand supports the soloist's theme, while the left hand brings delayed accents in the stanza. In section *B*, the bass maintains the natural pulsation of the triple meter. The accompaniment contains “binding” sounds between the two hands, namely common notes that change their function in the chord when played in the complementary sonic plane.

The telegram used to be the fastest way to communicate at a distance but involved receiving the message with a certain delay. This delay is reflected in the piano accompaniment that sends a message to the left hand and is received with a certain change in the right hand. In this poetic text, the telegram is only a metaphor, because the communication between the two lovers is internalized: *Ți-am trimis gândul. Ai simțit suflarea?* [I sent you my thought. Did you feel the breath?]

The vocal range of the soprano voice is comfortable, with E^2 being the highest note. The climax is reached in section *B* (at measures 34 and 69, respectively). In the soprano voice, the coda presents a line extracted from section *B*, probably considered the most relevant one – *Mirajul minunii se cerne!* [The mirage of the miracle is revealed!] – acting as a conclusive melodic line, in contrast to the text presenting an image in motion. The last note of the soloist's voice is augmented (4 measures), yielding the conclusion of the musical idea to the piano accompaniment, in chords structured on the strong beats, sounding one octave higher than the note sung by the solo voice.

The song *Dedicație pentru Paul* [Dedication to Paul] stands out for its playful, joyful character, typical for children's songs. The lyrics express a mother's love for the youngest child of the family, the son whom the author describes with great fondness and tenderness in the warm colour of the F major key, in a double ABB binary form (counter-Bar form). This was the author's second poem. The piano accompaniment remains consistent throughout the entire cycle, this time being cast in 2/4 simple duple meter. The rhythmic structure is normally divided, with dactylic patterns inserted at times in the soprano voice or in the accompaniment – which are reminiscent of the Romanian carol.

The range of dynamics does not go beyond *mezzo-forte*, denoting the composer's intention to adapt the nuances in which the tender themes are performed to the sensitive hearing of a child. A novelty in terms of dynamics is the *mezzo-piano* nuance indicated for the performance of section *B*, contrary to all the songs in this cycle, whose secondary sections are presented in strong nuances, often in *forte*.

Învăluire [Wreathing] is a song composed in the key of F minor, in a double *A B – A B* binary form, whose melodiousness conveys a state of melancholy. The sound material is in triple meter, reminding of the movement of the sea waves, with symmetrical syncopations placed in each phrase. The lyrics describe a mutual love that tends toward fusion: *Te-aștept să sorbi încet de-acum potirul / Pe care mâna să-l înșface vrea; Te-ascult în gând și văd în ochi cu dor / Tânjirea după vraja absolută.* [I wait for you to slowly drink the chalice/ Which your hand wants to grasp; I listen to you in my mind and longingly see in my eyes/ The yearning for the pure magic.]

The climax (measures 27-28 and 63-64, respectively) occurs in section *B*, which begins with a tense phrase in the high register (F^2) and evolves harmonically through progressions placed on the strong beats: B flat minor – F major with a minor seventh – B flat minor – A flat major – C major with a major seventh – F minor. Each phrase, as well

as the end of the song, concludes on a pedal in the soprano voice, which acts as a support for the piano while it continues its undulating line.

The poem underlying the song *Aniversare* [Anniversary] was dedicated to the author's husband, on their 25th wedding anniversary – an event called “silver wedding”, as suggested in the very first line: *Azi flori de-argint se-aștern pe-a noastre frunți* [Our foreheads today are crowned with silver flowers].

In terms of form, the piece is in double *ABCC – ABCC* ternary form, with an introduction and a small interlude (two measures). Cast in compound duple meter (4/4), the musical discourse exhibits a harmonic peculiarity given by the subdominant chord with mobile thirds (measures 2 and 37 – Ex. 7), as in the songs *Strop de lumină* [A Drop of Light] (measures 6 and 32) or *Cugetări de viață nouă* [Thoughts of a New Life] (measures 9 and 51) – a hallmark of the composer's style that deftly colours the patterns of classical tonal harmony.

40

Ex. 7. S. Păuța, *Aniversare*, mm. 37-39.

The harmonic cadences are similar to those used in the song *Recunoștință* [Gratitude]. The rhythmic structure of the solo voice is marked by inserted formulas such as the dactyl, the dotted eighth note and the triplet, which bring diversity to the sound material. Hidden syncopations come forth occasionally in the left-hand accompaniment or in the melodic line of the *C* section, in the soloist's voice. Endless love is asserted in the closing lines, expressing the idea that death is not the end: *Doar lângă tine viața are sens / Și-aici, și peste râu, în libertate* [Only close to you does life make sense / Here, and across the river, in freedom].

Sclipiri siderale [Sideral Glitter] is a song dedicated to love. Cast in a double *AB – AB* binary form, it consists of section *A*, made up of 2 phrases, and an expanded section *B*, made up of 3 phrases (b_1 , b_2 , b_{2v}). In the b_{2v} phrase there is a 9/8 meter inserted between the 6/8 meters, meant to bring novelty in an already stated sound material (*Ce-n zbor te înalță pe-un nor* [Which lifts you high on a cloud]).

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Symbiosis Between Sound and Word

in Composer Sabin Păuța's Cycle of Songs Un strop de lumină... [A Drop of Light...]

The image shows a musical score for Soprano (Sopr.) and Piano (P-no.). The Soprano part is in treble clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a 3/8 time signature. It begins with a measure rest, followed by a melodic line starting on G4. The piano accompaniment is in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. It features a steady bass line with chords in the right hand. The lyrics are: "1. Ab - sen - ța iu - bi - rii e noap - tea po - la - ră, cor - te - giu de". The score is marked with a box 'A' at the beginning of both staves and includes dynamic markings 'mf' for the soprano and 'mp' for the piano.

Ex. 8. S. Păuța, *Sclipiri siderale*, mm. 5-7.

The piano accompaniment in the bass abandons the rhythmic support of the solo voice, bringing a peculiar element through the intervals of perfect fifths and octaves, which enriches the sound of the harmonic blocks and expands their range, marking the strong beats of the triple meter.

Absența iubirii e noapte polară [The absence of love is a polar night] (Ex. 8) is the first line, which encapsulates the author's vision¹⁰ of a life deprived of the most precious feeling, rendered in the key of F minor. The sonic atmosphere has a tinge of gravity. In the first section, the soloist's melodic line spans a limited range, being built on an intervallic structure of up to a third. The dotted rhythm is placed regularly, two measures apart.

Section *B* begins with an ascending leap of a perfect fourth, also present in other works of this cycle, except that here the climax is reached only in the majestic finale, performed by the soprano on the note F^2 in *forte* – a rare element in the songs of this cycle.

Biruința [Victory] is a song that gleams with light and vivacity, composed in the key of F major and based on a poem inspired by the Easter Holiday (*Viața triumfă / Izbândă-i a Sfântului Miel* [Life triumphs / Victory belongs to the Holy Lamb]). The composer has a propensity for the triple metric structure, which he always manages to present in a different melodic, rhythmic or harmonic guise. The rhythmic parameter is enhanced by the syncopation brought cyclically at three-measure intervals, similar to an ostinato rhythm. The melodic line of the soprano reflects the character of American music, in a note of serenity. An element of novelty is the descending intervallic leap of a perfect octave, quite singular in this cycle of songs.

The double *A B – A B* binary form presents particular features: the first section (*A*), in the key of F major, consists of 2 phrases of 6 + 7 measures each, which contain a single

¹⁰ Conversation with Adina Covaci from February 9, 2024.

theme repeated in varied forms, whereas the second section (*B*), of the same phrase length, contains a different theme, which modulates to the key of B flat major.

The song concludes with a coda that expands the sound material on metrically accented chords, in a harmonic progression I-II-I (measures 66-69) – serving as climax, on the note F^2 , as in the song *Sclipiri siderale* [Sidereal Glitter], in a serene, triumphant tone: *Când toți cei din jurul tău știu* [When all around you know] (Ex. 9).

65

Sopr.

toți știu!

P-no.

f *ff*

2'30''

Ex. 9. S. Păutza, *Biruința*, mm. 65-69.

Eclipsă [Eclipse] is a song in binary form repeated three times (*A B – A B – A B*), in which sections *A* and *B* are slightly asymmetrical. The poetic text illustrates mankind's tendency to focus on a short-lived phenomenon – the eclipse, losing sight of the truly important elements of life. The sound material is exposed in the relative keys of F major and D minor. The establishment of the parallel key of D major (section *B*) through a sudden modulation changes the sonic atmosphere with the presentation of a preceptive message: *Așa că-nvață căutând cu mâna / Să vezi cu inima unde-i fântâna* [So learn by feeling with your hand / To see with your heart where the fountain is] – revealing the redeeming clue by bringing to light, from the depths of the freshwater spring, the inner goodness leading to a life lived in joy, like life in the Garden of Eden.¹¹

¹¹ Conversation with Adina Covaci from February 9, 2024.

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Symbiosis Between Sound and Word

in Composer Sabin Păutza's Cycle of Songs Un strop de lumină... [A Drop of Light...]

69 **Refren** **H**
Sopr. *mp* *f*
bi - ne s'ar sim-ți cu bu - nă - ta - tea. A - șa că'n - va - tă,
P-no. *p* *mf*

72
Sopr. *mf*
că - u - tând cu mâ - na să vezi cu i - ni - ma un - de'i fân - tă - na Ce
P-no.

Ex. 10. S. Păutza, *Biruința*, mm. 69-74

Darul de sus [The Gift from Above] is a tribute to the Singing Maestro Teodora Ciucur¹² (with the name Teodora symbolizing “God’s gift”), the one who revealed the secrets of vocal singing to soprano Adina Covaci, passing down, with sincerity and clarity, the vocal art to a new maestro.

The double A B C ternary form contains a varied internal structure in terms of the size of each period (8, 9 and 16 measures, respectively). This song stands out for the melodic line of the soprano that includes numerous syncopations in compound duple meter (4/4),

¹² Conversation with Adina Covaci from February 9, 2024, about soprano Teodora Ciucur: “*O fîiñă minunată, cu o voce minunată! M-a învățat să gândesc profund în muzică, nu doar să cânt. M-a învățat principii de bază și o multitudine de secrete care aduc frumusețea. Întotdeauna mi-a spus că trebuie să crezi în ceea ce cânti, altfel nu vei transmite mesajul*”. [“A wonderful person with a wonderful voice! She has taught me to comprehend music profoundly, not just to sing. She has taught me the basic principles and a multitude of secrets that bring beauty. She has always told me that you must believe in what you sing, or else you won’t convey the message.”].

bringing to mind a characteristic rhythmic pattern of the light music of the second half of the 20th century.

Another element that enhances the modernity of this song is the ending of each line with anticipation (e. g.: the last note in measure 9 – B flat – is not a constituent element of the F minor chord, but part of the chordal structure of measure 10 – B flat minor), resulting in a different way of treating the sound material and thus creating a deliberate discrepancy between the melodic line of the soloist's voice and the piano accompaniment.

5

Sopr. *mp*

P-no. *p*

9

Sopr.

P-no.

I.Fi - in - ță

dul - ce și su - bli - mă, un Dar de Dum - ne - zeu lă - sat
dra - gos - tea, nă - dej - dea, va - lori în cân - tec m' ai tra - sat

Ex. 11. S. Păutza, *Darul de sus*, mm. 5-11.

As in other songs, the subdominant chord with mobile third is also present here (measures 28-29).

The entire piece has a limited vocal range, with the composer choosing the middle register to reflect the softness of the voice described by the poetic text. The finale comes in a soft nuance (*mezzo-piano*) up to *pianissimo*, with a sound effect that reflects the evocation of a memory.

Conclusions

In his latest cycle of songs – *Un strop de lumină... Cântece de Sabin Păutza, pe versuri de Adina Covaci* [A Drop of Light... Songs by Sabin Păutza, to Lyrics by Adina Covaci], Maestro Sabin Păutza, an experienced composer in various musical styles and genres and an internationally acclaimed stage artist, creates a valuable page in the history of the 20th-century Romanian song.

Viewed from an overall perspective, this cycle of songs reveals characteristic features of the treatment of the sound material such as the binary form or the bar form or the counter-Bar form with repetition, with or without a coda, based on a homophonic musical syntax, specific to the form of the song.

The musical discourse illustrates the fusion between the semantics of the poetic text and the materialization of the sound material. The cantabile quality of the melodic lines is a distinctive feature in composer Sabin Păutzas' work. He has a deep understanding of vocal art and adapts the vocal range to accommodate the soloist's voice. The melodic contour of the soprano is based on melodic arches, preceded by anacrusis. The *B* section often begins with intervallic leaps of fourths, fifths, sixths, or even octaves, which become climactic points of the piece or section. The composer frequently employs a pedal for the final phrase of the soloist's voice, thus entrusting the piano with the conclusive moment.

The rhythmic parameter is often punctuated, sprinkled with symmetrical or asymmetrical syncopations. The aksak rhythm, specific to Romanian and other peoples' folklore, brings freshness to some of the songs.

In this cycle of songs, the compound triple meter (6/8, 9/8, 12/8) carries the same weight as the compound duple meter (4/4), with each occurring in 6 songs; the alternative meters are used in only 4 of the 15 songs, adding a note of diversity to the cycle of songs.

The piano accompaniment plays a significant role, being entrusted with all the introductory moments of the songs, with the interludes placed after the first statement of the two/three sections, as well as with the finales, played mostly by the piano. The harmonic structure consists of frequent chord progressions of tonic – dominant or root – fifth, as well as of insertions of small chromatic passages, which give a sense of unity to the entire cycle of songs. The subdominant chord with mobile third is an easily recognizable stylistic signature of the composer.

The tempo and the dynamics of the phrases are precisely indicated by the composer, providing performers with a clear direction in choosing the means of artistic expression.

The sensibility and depth of the poems written by soprano Adina Covaci are wrapped in a particularly expressive, versatile and modern music, with themes overflowing with a distinct melodiousness, which maestro Sabin Păutza himself considers the most inspired works of the genre of all she has written so far.¹³

¹³ Păutza and Covaci. *Un strop de lumină... Cântece de Sabin Păutza, pe versuri de Adina Covaci*.

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Translated from Romanian by Marcella Magda