

**ANALYTICAL VIEW ON THE LYRICAL ORATORIO
CÂNTECE DE VREMUIRE (SONGS OF CHANGE)
BY VALENTIN TIMARU**

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SUMMARY. The lyrical oratorio *Songs of Change* for mixed choir, children's choir, soloists and orchestra, was composed in the year 1979 and revised in 1982. The text is written by the composer, in the spirit of the Romanian popular verses, and depicts essential scenes for the human life: birth, wedding, death. The work is structured in five parts (*Abua – Prolog, La curțile jocului, La porțile dorului, Ciobănaș de la miori* and *Descântecul zorilor – Epilog*), each movement resonating with significant events in the trajectory of life. Thus, birth, childhood, wedding and death are suggested by lullabies, children's songs, wedding songs and funeral songs.

Keywords: Timaru, Songs of Change, vocal-symphonic, oratorio

Among the different genres approached by Valentin Timaru, the vocal-symphonic creation (2 oratorios, 5 cantatas and a mass) represents an important part in his composition, by the diversity of the themes addressed in the works made on the popular verses (the lyrical oratorios *Songs of Change* and *Following Miorița*, where the author combines different popular variants of the ballad *Miorița* with Alecsandri's model²) or those which have as a starting point texts belonging to Blaga (the cantatas *Toate drumurile* and *Dați-mi un trup voi munților*), Nicolae Labiș (the cantata *Meșterul*) and Dumitru M. Ion (the cantata *Mihai vodă Viteazul*). The musical and compositional value is remarkable due to the diverse aspects of construction, the techniques and models that many times resort to traditional elements of composition combined with a "modern" writing.

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² Lucian Ghișa, *Oratoriul românesc (The Romanian Oratorio)*, Ed. MediaMusica, Cluj -Napoca, 2012, p. 153.

The lyrical oratorio *Songs of Change* for mixed choir, children's choir, soloists (soprano, baritone, tenor, bass) and orchestra, was composed in the year 1979³, revised in 1982⁴ and dedicated *in memoriam* Gheorghe Petrescu. The text is written by the composer, in the spirit of the Romanian popular verses, and depicts essential scenes for the human life: birth, wedding, death.

The title of the oratorio *Cântece de vremeire (Songs of Change)* is a reference to the periods of time passed, anticipating the analogy present in the text of the work. The composer makes a collage, by yielding the heterogeneous elements that catch the symbolism of the human feelings in the defining moments of life. The stages covered by the human being are presented in the four types of songs: the lullaby, the children's songs, the wedding songs, the bride's songs and the funeral songs. The lack of the songs for the elderly is motivated by the author by the conception of this Oratorio under the (symbolical) value of a funeral mass⁵.

The work is structured in five parts (*Abua – Prolog, La curțile jocului, La porțile dorului, Ciobănaș de la miori* and *Descântecul zorilor – Epilog*), each movement resonating with significant events in the trajectory of life, suggestively expressed through the popular verses and adapted by Valentin Timaru in the folkloric spirit. Thus, birth, childhood, wedding and death are suggested by lullabies, children's songs, wedding songs and funeral songs.

E.g. 1

The Lyrical Oratorio <i>Songs of Change</i>			
I st P.	<i>Abua (Prolog)</i>	Lullaby	<i>Abua, Culcă-te mititel</i>
II nd P.	<i>La curțile jocului / At the Gates of the Dance</i>	Children's songs	<i>Barză, barză ce-ai în cioc, Baba oarba</i>
III rd P.	<i>La porțile dorului / At the Gates of Longing</i>	Wedding songs	<i>Suie-m-aș să mă tot sui, la-ți mireasă ziua bună</i>
IV th P.	<i>Ciobănaș de la miori / Little Shepherd of the Sheep</i>	Songs of passing, songs for the elderly, funeral songs	<i>Miorița (Abua) Plugușorul</i>
V th P.	<i>Descântecul zorilor (Epilog)/ Incantation of the Dawn (Epilogue)</i>	Burial songs, party songs	<i>Zorilor, surorilor Mi-ai tot poruncit Cântec de leagăn la-ți mireasă ziua bună Culcă-te, mititel</i>

³ **The first audition** took place in the hall of Casa Universitarilor in Cluj, on the 26th of May 1979, performed by the children choir of the Music Highschool, the choir and the orchestra of The Philharmonic Orchestra of Cluj, the soloists Doina Neculce, Alexandru Fărcaș and Iulian Jurja, under the baton of the conductor Petre Sbârcea.

⁴ **The first audition** of the revised edition took place on the 29th of May 1982, enjoyed the presence of the same choirs, philharmonic orchestra and location, the soloists being this time Niculina Mirea, Ioan Micu, Iulian Jurja and the conductor Horia Andreescu.

⁵ Lucian Ghișa, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

The structure of the orchestra is as follows: the woodwinds group – 2 flutes (alto – *G* and *piccolo*), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets in B flat (real sounds), 2 bassoons; the brass section – 2 trumpets in B flat (real sounds), 4 horns in F (real sounds), 3 trombones and a tuba; 3 percussion groups, harp, soloists (Soprano, Baritone, Tenor and Bass), children's choir, mixed choir and the strings. The availability with which the composer handles the orchestral apparatus relates to the aesthetic needs of the work. Therefore, for the instrumentation of the lullaby of the first part, Valentin Timaru uses the strings, offering them a function of sustaining and thematic takeover of the voices. The flutes are an inner part of the movement, being used in the introduction, in order to counterpoint the thematic idea or for binding the harmonic-orchestral ambient, while the harp intervenes in key-moments in order to "sweeten" the musical discourse. The instrumentation of the second part (*La curțile jocului / At the Gates of the Dance*) was accomplished in agreement with the specific timbrality of the children's choir. In this direction, the passages of quasi-isorhythmics of the woodwinds (flute, oboe, clarinet) are accompanied by the strings, the harp and other percussion instruments with a specific sound. In the third part - *La porțile dorului / At the Gates of Longing*, the orchestral apparatus reaches considerable dimensions, in the woodwind section also the bassoon being used, and in the percussion group, the timpani are the most used instrument. The fourth part introduces for the first time the horns, and in the end the trombones and the tuba are added. *The Epilogue* brings one more time the intervention of the brass instruments, the horns being used to their full chromatic capacity, but also in the orchestral-soloist passages.

The first part – *Abua (Prologue)* expresses the quintessence of the lullaby, lovingly sung by the mother and transposed by Valentin Timaru in a preponderantly modal-chromatic sonorous ambient, combined with heterophonic structures, resulted by the overlapping of the voices (soprano, mezzo, alto, tenor and bass) with the instruments of the orchestra. The exploitation of the lullaby transcends the usual dynamics, the composer suggesting also dissonant intervals (4+, 2 and 7 in flutes), thus alienating itself from the silence expressed in the sonorous process.

The incipient motif, with a generating disposition, is built on the trisyllabic onomatopoeic formula *abua* (illustrating the putting to sleep of the baby), with a predominant structure of the trichord type (*E flat, F, G*) interrupted by a *m3* (minor third); likewise, *M2* (major second) and *m3* (minor third) are appreciated as predominant intervals in the construction of

the lullaby. These features represent, in the opinion of the specialists, distinct elements of the archaic musical thinking.⁶

E.g. 2

Valentin Timaru, *Cântece de vremeire / Songs of Change*, 1st part, bars 1-8

The musical construction is based on oligochordic modes, vocal imitations in stretto (soprano, mezzo, alto), polyphonies, but also some „harmonic dissonances”; these represent unmelodic interval collisions (flutes, strings) that, related to the whole sonorous spectre, skilfully incorporate themselves in the harmonization of the lullaby.

After the resumption of the motif *abua* (soprano solo), the sonorous discourse acquires obvious modal features, the chord enchainment being carried out through the denotation of parallelism. The harp is the instrument which noticeably depicts this technique, in the same time owing well-defined harmonic traits. The transition of the musical context, equally represented by the rarefaction of the dissonances, envelops the continuation of the incipient motif by the illustration of the mother’s wishes for the new-born: *Culcă-mi-te mititel/ și te scoală voinicel/ că maica te-a legăna/ și din gură ți-o cânta.*

The second part – *La curțile jocului / At the Gates of the Dance* is destined to the children’s choir, with the exception of the Coda, where the choir (soprano, mezzo, alto) and the soprano’s solo drift the melodic ambient towards the first part. The author uses as source of inspiration the children’s folklore, using the distinctive traits applied for the psychological, formative and entertaining education of the children. The first song *Barză, barză ce-ai în cioc* leads the child towards the contact with the environment and the animal world.

⁶ Elena Sîrghi, *Particularitățile funcționale și structurale ale Cântecului de leagăn din spațiul folcloric ale Republicii Moldova (The Functional and Structural Particularities of the Lullaby in the Folkloric Area of the Republic of Moldova)*, Doctoral Thesis, The Academy of Music, Theater and Plastic Arts, Chișinău, 2016, pdf format, p. 98.

E.g. 3

Bar ză, bar-ză ce-ai în cioc Bar-ză, bar-ză ce-ai în cioc un bo-boc,
un bo-boc - Bar-ză ce-ai în cioc bar-ză dar în pi-cioare rîș cli toa re râș cli toa re

**Valentin Timaru, *Songs of Change*, second part, children's choir,
bars 116-131⁷**

The compass (the tenth), the used intervals (M2, m2, m3, M3, P4, P5, P8), the predominant rhythmic formulas (the quavers, the quarter notes) enlarge minimally the specific frame of the children's songs.

The second song used by Valentin Timaru is a well-known song in the Romanian folkloric area, being exploited in numerous variants, implying in the same time a syncretic game. The composer gives the verses of *Baba oarba* a unique musicality, but one that is specific to the musical literature for children.

E.g. 4

The second part, <i>La curțile jocului / At the Gates of the Game</i>				
Introduction	A	B	A var.	Coda (from the 1 st part)
	<i>Barză, barză ce-ai în cioc</i>	<i>Baba oarba</i>	<i>Barză, barză ce-ai în cioc</i>	<i>Abua Culcă-te mititel/ și te scoală voinicel</i>
109-115	116-145	146-172	173-230	231-272

In the table above, we can notice the strophic organization from the following structure: introduction, A-B-A var., coda, where each strophic segment arranges a children's song. A – *Barză, barză ce-ai în cioc*, B – *Baba oarba* and again A – *Barză, barză ce-ai în cioc*, the variational incision comprising the division of the children's choir in three voices and the intonation of the song in canon. The Coda implements not only the thematic material of the first part (*Abua, Culcă-te mititel*), but also the soprano solo and the choral structure (soprano, mezzo, alto), the composer creating a forceful and assumed quasi-cyclic unity.

⁷ The numbering of the bars is made in the continuation of the first part.

The third part (*La porțile dorului / At the Gates of Longing*) is made of two sections, based on the exploitation of the songs of passing, coming from the nuptial ritual. The first segment, centred upon the song *Suie-m-aș să mă tot sui*, is related to the poetic-folkloric universe by the combination of the folkloric elements with the adaptation of the popular texts, made by the composer⁸. The second section focuses on the wedding song *la-ți mireasă ziua bună*, where two verses of the lullaby *Culcă-te mițitel/ și te scoală voinicel* are integrated, inducing the inner connection with the maternal affect.

E.g. 5

The third part, <i>La porțile dorului / At the Gates of Longing</i>		
Introduction	I st Section	II nd Section
Orchestra	<i>Suie-m-aș să mă tot sui</i>	<i>la-ți mireasă ziua bună</i> <i>Culcă-te mițitel</i> <i>la-ți mireasă ziua bună</i>
bassoons (soli), timpani, strings	Modal-chromatic discourse, dissonances	Modal-chromatic
<i>bars 275-282</i>	<i>283-341</i>	<i>342-358; 359-374; 375-385</i>

The first section employs the song *Suie-m-aș să mă tot sui*, in the instrumentation of which is engaged a good part of the instrumental groups (strings, harp, percussion and woodwinds: flutes, oboes, clarinets). The choir entrances in *stretto* are accompanied by the additions of the soloists (baritone, bass), and the fragments of harmonic isorhythmics are given value by the answers of the soloists (soprano, baritone, bass), but also by two moments of extension, by the introduction of a short orchestral comment in the middle of the text (*bars 296, 299*). The music discourse evolves around the modal-chromatic area, being interrupted by moments of homophony, accompanied by characteristic dissonances of m2, 4+ and chords of M7.

E.g. 6

Alto

Su - ie - m - aș - să mă tot sui La por - ț i - le

Sopran

ce ru lui su - ie m - aș să dăm dru mul o ză - lu - i pe fa - ța pă - măn - tu - lui

Valentin Timaru, *Songs of Change*, the third part, bars 283-291

⁸ Lucian Ghișa, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

The verses of the second section, *la-ți mireasă ziua bună/ De la soare, de la lună*, induce, more than the celebration of the nuptial ritual, a reach towards the idea of death. The manner of the compositional approach combines the modal-chromatic musical material with homophonic and heterophonic devices (women's choir: soprano, mezzo, alto). The bars 359-374 (*Allegretto*) represent the insertion of the lullaby, exposed in the first part, *Culcă-te mititel*, ascendingly transposed with a m2.

The fourth part, *Ciobănaș de la miori* (*Andante sostenuto*) presents a variant of the popular ballad *Miorița*, the red wire of the musical-poetical action being sustained by the dialogue between the teller (bass solo) and the little shepherd (tenor solo). The communion of the two voices is accomplished by refined compositional devices, emphasized by the modal-folkloric ethos of the Romanian song, exceptional rhythmic divisions, complementary overlapping and a *doîna*-like nuance of lament, concordant with the funeral appearance of the movement.

E.g. 7

Bass solo

Foa - ie ver - de de - trei flori. foa - ie ver - de
 de - trei flori cio - bă - naș de la mi - ori un ț - a - fost moar - tea să
 mori un ț - a fost - moar tea să mori

Valentin Timaru, *Songs of Change*, the fourth part, bars 385-398

The motif *abua* (*abua, abua, abua-te cu maica*) is inserted among the verses of *Miorița*, and valorized by the women's choir (soprano, mezzo, alto) and the soloists, by the entrances in *stretto* and the polyphonic completions. Thus, the motif of the lullaby, employed in the first part *Abua* (*Prologue*) and in the Coda of the second movement (*At the Gates of the Dance*), acquires the quality of a unifying leitmotif among the parts.

The end is destined to the orchestral ensemble and the children's choir, through the introduction of *Plugușor*, the author wishing to stress the idea of (years) passing: „Să trăiți, să-mbătrâniți / May you live, may you grow old”. The use of the motif *abua*, but also of the children's choir, represents the combat of the little shepherd's tragic fate, a fight between life and death.

The fifth part, *Descântecul zorilor (Epilog) / Incantation of the Dawn (Epilogue)*

The most ample movement of the oratorio, *Incantation of the Dawn*, includes aspects of synthesis from the previous parts. In section II, the wedding song *la-ți mireasă ziua bună*, is combined with the verses *Zorilor surorilor* (Section I), while in Section III, the lullaby *Culcă-te mititel*, is transposed ascendantly (in relation to *the Prologue*) with a M2. Likewise, *The Epilogue* represents the only part where the author uses ample orchestral transitions.

In section I, the choir (SMsATB) is used to display the verses *Zorilor surorilor/ mândrelor, voi zânelor (Dawns, you, sisters, beauties, you, fairies)*, thus the dawns are called upon in order to delay the preparation of the burial ritual of the departed⁹.

E.g. 8

The musical score for E.g. 8 is written for three vocal parts: Soprano, Mezzo-soprano, and Alto. The time signature is 3/4. The Soprano part begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics for the Soprano part are: Zo - ri - lor su - ro - ri - lor mân - dre - lor voi. The Mezzo-soprano and Alto parts are shown with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp, with the word 'Voi' written below the staff at the end of the line.

⁹ Lucian Ghișa, *op.cit.*, p. 150.

ANALYTICAL VIEW ON THE LYRICAL ORATORIO *CÂNTECE DE VREMUIRE ...*

The musical score consists of two systems of five staves each, labeled S, Mzs, A, T, and B. The lyrics are in Romanian. The first system includes the lyrics: "zâ-îne - lor", "Zo -", "zâ-îne lor", "zo -", "zâ-îne - lor", "Tu ce-ti-nă de brad rău te-ai du-ple - cat³ din co-dru-ai plecat", and "Tu ce-ti-nă de brad rău te-ai du ple - cat³ din co-dru-ai plecat". The second system includes the lyrics: "- ri - lor su - ro - ri - lor", "Mân - dre -", "- ri - lor su - ro - ri - lor", "a", "su - ro - ri - lor", "Mân - dre", "ce³ti-nă de brad⁵ din co - dru - ai plecat", and "ce - ti-nă de brad⁵ din co - dru - ai plecat".

Valentin Timaru, *Songs of Change*, the fifth part, bars 589-598

The manner by which the voices are appointed is anchored in the principles of the homophony, the musical discourse remaining in the modal-folkloric area. In order to let the harmony flow, the author uses homonymous notes, to emphasize the symbolism of the text, the dialogue between voices (women, men), and in order to underline the popular Melos, Valentin Timaru uses the harmonic and melodic orchestral completion.

The orchestral transition introduces the theme of section II, exposed by the solo bass and taken over by the solo tenor. This segment (*Mi-ai tot poruncit*) depicts the moment of the burial and the lamentation of those who are left behind. Under the flag of the battle between life and death, the author introduces (*bar 694*) a lullaby which is a variant of the melos *Abua* of the first

part. As in the previous movements, the feminine voices lovingly express the chant and the wishes of the mother, the polyphonic discourse of the women's choir being overlapped with the soprano solo (*la-ți mireasă ziua bună, zorilor, surorilor*), where the wedding song combines funeral aspects. With an obvious positive perspective, the oratorio doesn't end with death, but with life, the last section of the fifth part being dedicated to the lullaby, the composer resonating here as well with the aspects of the cyclic unity of the oratorio.

The lyrical oratorio *Songs of Change* for mixed choir, children's choir, soloists (soprano, baritone, tenor, bass) and orchestra, encloses the stages of life through lullabies, children's songs, nuptial and funeral songs, the unifying cycling elements being the leitmotif *abua* and the lullaby, Valentin Timaru offering a live and happy view of life, a victory over death. The text of the work is inspired by the popular verses and transformed by the author, the elements of the Romanian folkloric spirituality being found in the verses of *Miorița*, but also in *Plugușorul*. The action is intended to the choir and the soloists, the orchestra having a role of support and figuration. The musical discourse encompasses aspects of homophony, polyphony and heterophony, while the Melos brings about the modal archaic and the "modern" chromatic, combined with the valorisation specific to the popular ethos. The valorisation of the text is musically treated by specific formulas, exceptionally divided rhythms, melodic formulas reported to the essence of the written song, while by the clear differentiation and division of the vocal groups, the author proves his skill and refinement in leading the voices.

Translated by Ana-Maria Veleșcu

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