

NEW BULGARIAN UNIVERSITY

**INTERPRETATIVE PROBLEMS OF THE TEXT IN
THE LYRICS SONGS BY JOHANNES BRAHMS –
WORD AND TONE**

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Abstract

The doctoral thesis examines the interpretation problems in the songs of Johannes Brahms as well as the role of language knowledge in the interpretation of a song.

Through the analysis among the singers, which was based on the interpretation problems in the songs of Johannes Brahms as well as the role of language knowledge in the interpretation of a song - the process of elaborating elements such as: the form of the songs, the rhythmic structure of the songs - the change frequency of beats, presentation of syncopes, as well as elements such as language, diction, declamation, breathing, phrasing, we have treated with care.

We have managed to decipher the interpretation problems in the solo songs of the composer Brahms, which are mainly related to the importance of the interpreter's language. This result refers to the research of the life and creativity of the composer, as well as the detailed analysis between the interpreters of the songs "Liebestreu", "Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer" and "Sapphische Ode". "Zigeunerlieder op. 103". Language, which is intertwined with music, has been characterized by problems related to articulation.

In all the songs, in addition to the challenges related to the rhythmic structure of the song, linguistic elements have been identified which are of special importance for the interpreter. The language basically not only helps to better reflect the entire narration of the song, but also helps the artist to naturally enter the character's world.

1. Introduction

Knowing the language is of great importance in the interpretation of a song. There are different musical elements in a song that depend on the language. Fluency in articulation is achieved by all performers. The reason why this can happen is because we attach a lot of importance to learning rhythm and melody and we do not include the language in this process in equal stages. Inattention to language - not aiming to understand the text that the singer interprets weakens the performance. Therefore, it is necessary that during the learning of the song, in addition to other musical elements, special attention is also paid to the language.

Through the songs of Johannes Brahms in the comparison between the German-speaking and non-German-speaking interpreters, it has been seen that the German-speaking interpreters had no problems with the articulation-balancing of the vowels, the pronunciation of consonants, the way of phrasing and the declamation. During the analysis, it was also observed that the German interpreters had more natural breathing, clearer diction and better

phrasing. While non-German speaking interpreters, it is observed that during the interpretation they have difficulties with the articulation-balancing of the vowels, the pronunciation of consonants, as well as the way of phrasing, the expression of emotion as well as the declamation of the text.

2. Johannes Brahms life and activity

2.1 The life and work of Johannes Brahms

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) Hamburg-Wien, was an excellent pianist, conductor and composer who left an indelible mark on the world of music.

If we ask the question: how important was Brahms as a composer? The answer comes from author Wolfgang Sandberger [Sandberger 2009, p. 2] who says that except for Opera, in all other musical genres of the 19th century Brahms has created exemplary works, including orchestral music, chamber music, piano music, Oratorio, choral music and also songs.

2.2 The influence of Johannes Brahms in the vocal chamber music of the 19th century

Numerous studies show that origins of German songs have long been very interesting.

Author Laurenz Lütteken [Sandberger 2009, p. 24] in the description of Brahms, says that he was a Galions figure who belonged to the middle class but who was also described as the organizer of many events. Among the composers of the 19th century who have left an indelible mark on the history of vocal music are, of course, Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, Wolf, and Wagner. Although they are considered as composers belonging to the period of Romanticism, nevertheless each of them had his own specific way of composing a song.

The topics that were covered in his songs were very interesting. According to author Peter Jost [Sandberger 2009, p. 220] we note that the past and childhood memories are topics to which Brahms adresses in a special way. Courses by Christiane Jacobson [Sandberger 2009, p. 220] who in his research made the difference between love and people says that about two thirds of the qualifications belong to the first group of topics, but that in both cases remotely reminiscent was the most common motive.

Author Jacobson among other things, says that apart from the structure that may be a little different, love and memory can be named as the two main areas of themes, which are not accidentally at the center of much-loved and respected folk songs. Among other things, the author says that these themes are basic experiences of very emotional human existence,

through accompanying emotional states such as happiness, misfortune, melancholy, or longing, themes to which Brahms attached great importance.

It should be noted that when we talk about the formation of Brahms as a composer, then a very important place is occupied by his teacher Robert Schumann, for whom he was not just a student, but also a friend.

According to Jost [Sandberger 2009, p. 208] for Brahms composing songs was a process which lasted about 45 years.

If we ask what were the commonalities and differences between these two composers, Rattle in his interview given to the Berliner Philharmonic¹ says that Schumann's music breathes in a completely different spirit. When Brahms is calm and careful, Schumann is not calm, but is honest and absolutely true, and thus he describes this: *Forte-piano: present aber zärtlich* (present but tenderly). Rattle says that Schumann has had a much bigger impact on Brahms than the opposite.

While Schumann was almost the only one to appreciate Brahms' work as a composer, his contemporaries such as German composers Hugo Wolf, Franz Liszt and Wagner were his biggest opponents.

It is quite interesting to analyze Brahms's relationship with the composers of that time, as well as his position and influence as a composer and conductor in German music of the second half of the century. According to "War of The Romantics"², on the one hand, Brahms was "der konservative" along with members of his party such as Joseph Joachim, Clara Schumann and the Leipzig Conservatory founded by Felix Mendelssohn, who represented the idea of absolute music, and on the other hand Brahms's great opponents Franz Liszt and Richard Wagner were "progressives". Xian Zhang in the article "Brahms, Mahler and Wagner: Influences and Connections"³ says that It is worth noticed that the influence of Brahms in the second half of the 19th century in the field of music was very large. Apart from the authority he enjoyed as a composer, he was highly respected and had an influence as a conductor.

¹ Berliner Philharmoniker, 2014. Simon Rattle talks about Brahms and Schumann. [online]; [viewed 20 January 2021]. Available from:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yXTTIKdy5q4&ab_channel=BerlinerPhilharmoni

² "War of The Romantics". [online]; [viewed 02 February 2021].

Available from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_of_the_Romantics

³ ZHANG, Xian, 2018. Brahms, Mahler and Wagner: Influences and Connections.

[online]; [viewed 04 Februar 2021]. Available from: <https://www.njsymphony.org/news/detail/brahms>

2.3 The relation between text and music in Johannes Brahms songs

Numerous studies that have been done on the relationship between lyrics and music in Johannes Brahms songs show which one had more priority during the process of composing a song or were both equally important. Some composers of the 19th century criticized Brahms for the way he composed. Among the greatest critics of the time were Hugo Wolf, Wagner, but also many other members who surrounded them.

As for the choice of the text by the composer Brahms, Peter Jost [Sandberger 2009, p.218, 219, 220, 221] says that if we carefully look at Brahms songs, we notice that in a large part of the songs poems by unknown poets dominate. As for the quality of the lyrics in the songs of him, we notice that there are different opinions. Referencing Brahms's songs, Ludwig Finscher states: "There is only a handful of great poems in all of Brahms's songs: by Höltz and Goethe, Eichendorff, Mörike and Storm" (Finscher 1983). [Sandberger 2009, p.218].

According to Jost, the literary eras of the classics and the Romantics, which for Schumann formed the basis of the compositions of his songs, appear in Brahms's songs only as a minority.

He also had a preference for folk poetry, which was not limited to German-speaking areas, but also from the Orient, as well as Eastern and Southern Europe.

If we question about the form of Brahms songs, according to Jost, the folk song was the ideal genre for him. But, in his early days, he occasionally used Bar-Form as well. Like in "Heimkehr" op. 7 No 6. We also note that the form of strophic songs has played an extraordinary role in the creation of his songs. This was the determining factor for about half of the songs, whether simple or with varied construction. The other half is dominated by the repetitive three-part form.

Criticisms of him for the lack of declamation texts were numerous.

There are different interpretations which call into question a declamation-driven interpretation of text-setting.

Heather Platt, during many research on Brahms's songs shows that measuring the form and meaning of poetry was of great importance to him.

Based on her research According to the author Heather Platt cited in [Rohr 1997, p. 11], Platt says that there are many levels of text expression in Brahms songs. After carefully analyzing 18 songs, she argues that "Text-based analyzes of Brahms lieder emphasize correct declamation at the expense of other aspects of the music, which are also tied to the text's structure".

Johannes Brahms and Hugo Wolf

Differences and commonalities between Johannes Brahms and Hugo Wolf. If we talk about Brahms and Wolf, it is automatically imposed to elaborate many topics that have to do with the 19th century commonalities in the way of composing. Heather Platt [Brodbeck 1998, p. 91, 92,93,94] in her research states that, although Hugo Wolf's negative opinion about the songs of him is well known, his influence on the twentieth century reception of these works has never been adequately investigated. Author Platt says Wolf's criticisms of him, which appeared in both his comments on Wiener Salonblatt and his personal letters, are often marginalized and embarrassingly attributed to the courage of the youth or his connection to the clicks of Wagner of Vienna.

Author Platt says that not all of his assessments of Brahms were negative. She says the difference in the aesthetics of Brahms and Wolf's songs depends on the status of the lyrics. Influenced by Wagner and his followers, Wolf took a text-oriented approach to the song. Platt says that in his remark to Engelbert Humperdinck, he states that poetry "is the true source of my musical language." While talking about Brahms, the author Platt says that he also paid a lot of attention to the lyrics and their relationship with music, but for him the song was first and foremost a musical genre, and was closely related to the folk song.

2.4 Different interpretations of Brahms songs

2.4.1 "Liebestreu"

From the wide opus of the songs of the Brahms, the song "Liebestreu" enters among the most popular songs. "Liebestreu" "Faithful Love" op. 3 No 1 is the second song in a row from the cycle "Sechs Gesänge für eine Tenor-oder Sopranstimme op. 3". According to Peter Jost [Sandberger 2009, p. 229] Brahms was very careful when arranging the first release of this song. He says that the beginning of the song "Liebestreu" written in January 1853 by the German poet Robert Reinick, should be understood as a programmatic act.

When we talk about the history of this song, Dieskau [Dieskau 2006, p. 35] says that Brahms preferred the dialogue texts and the art of one's voice, as is the case with the song "Liebestreu", which were built with great difficulty. But in the lyrics of the song, the dialogue songs, Brahms saw them as the only possibility for the dramatic construction, which he always aspired to.

Dieskau says that the dramatic side for Brahms was very important.

This song in a somewhat unavoidable manner, once again paves the way for many topics related to the method Brahms used to compose his songs. Probably due to the fact that it is one of the first songs composed by Brahms, the differences can be noticed much more easily than when we are dealing with songs that were written in near periods of time. The topics that we will examine now are not that we have not discussed them in the previous chapters, but even now, we will see different observations and opinions of different scholars regarding these issues. On the question of whether the songs of earlier periods or those of later periods were of better quality, we will now look at some opinions of different scholars.

Authors Natilan Casey-Ann Crutcher [Crutcher, 2019, p. 30] says that, many earlier scholars have not seen many differences between the earlier songs and the later songs of Brahms. The author says that when it comes to narratives, then it was anyway an interesting change, the mood or the general effect of the texts which have been used in later years in his songs. But, his early songs present elements that are characteristic of his mature style in their simplest and most extreme form. I agree with Crutcher's opinion about the songs "Liebestreu" (op.6, No 1, 1853), and "Treue Liebe" (op.7 No 1, 1851) where he says that they show the potential of his creative power.

Among the authors who give their opinion about the way of composing songs by the composer Brahms, is also the author Lucien Stark [quoted from Crutcher 2019, p. 32] who says that the confusions and irregularities in the phrases, have to do with the poetry itself and with the way Brahms put them in music. When it comes to the problems in the middle of the musical poetry relationship, the author notes that one of the problems with the song is that it cannot be easily adapted to the strophic mold that he used.

Poem / Music

According to Yonatan Malin [Malin, 2010, p. 156] the song "Liebestreu" is a poem, a dialogue between mother and daughter or son (it is not specified). This song has a total of three verses. Malin says that the song "Liebestreu" starts at a slow tempo, but that the music and metric rhythm lead to a dramatic context.

2.4.2 "Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer"

From the vocal creativity of Brahms, the song "Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer" op. 105 No 2 enters among most interpreted songs. According to the author Ferdinando Albergiani in the article "Interpretare il Lied -" Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer "op. 105

No 2 di Johannes Brahms”⁴, the poem is taken from the lie (“My slumber ever lighter grows”, from his 1857 collection Gedichte) which was written by the German poet Hermann Lingg (1820-1905). The author says that in the same years, together with the collection of some other poems, this poem is also published.

According to Fischer Dieskau [Dieskau 2006, p. 296, 297] The song “Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer” op. 105, No 2 in a row is the second among the 5 songs, from the cycle of songs composed in 1886 by Johannes Brahms.

Author Albeggiani in the article "Interpretare il Lied -" Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer "op. 105 No 2 di Johannes Brahms” says that Brahms places the poem in a modified strophic form. The two verses are divided into three parts.

2.4.3 “Sapphische Ode”

According to the author Kristoffer Brinch Kjeldby⁵ the poem "Sapphische Ode" was written by the German poet and composer Hans Schmidt (1854-1923). The author Kjeldby among other things talks about the friendship between Hans Schmidt and Johannes Brahms, and that Brahms was in his fifty's when he composed a lied based upon the poem. The lied was published in December 1884 by Stefan N. Simrock in Berlin. The author explains that the song is composed in a strophic form, containing two almost identical musical stanzas.

Poem

From the rich creativity of the composer according to the author Kjeldby the poem is written in ‘Sapphic stanza’ (an antique stanza named after Sappho of Lesbos) and is subtitled in Antiker Form.

From the wide opus of Brahms, the song "Sapphische Ode" is considered as one of the most beautiful songs composed by him. Peter Jost [Sandberger, 2009, p. 249] in his description regarding of the collection of "Fünf Lieder für eine tiefe Stimme" op. 94, describes the song "Sapphische Ode" as the Pearl of the summary.

If we ask, if the declamation was important to the Brahms, and if so, how important was the declamation to him? We get the answer from the author Jenner cited according to

⁴ ALBEGGIANI, Ferdinando, 2009. Interpretare il Lied – “Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer” op. 105 No 2 di Johannes Brahms. [online]; [20 August 2020]. Available from: <https://mozart2006.wordpress.com/2015/08/16/interpretare-il-lied-immer-leiser-wird-mein-schlummer-op-105-n-2-di-johannes-brahms-2/>

⁵ BRINCH KJELDBY, Kristoffer, 2009. Brahms: Sapphische Ode. [online]; [25 August 2020]. Available from: <http://www.musikvidenskab.dk/2009/10/22/brahms-sapphische-ode/>

[Parsons 2011, p. 193, 194], who discusses the relationship of pixel signs with pauses and cadences, she says that Brahms also writes melodies that underline grammatical structures. Lines that use repetitive words or that are constructed in similar ways are often placed in similar melodies. For example, the melody of the first two lines of the two verses of "Kein Haus, keine Heimat", op. 94, No 5, emphasizes their two-part structure and repetitions of dancing words starting at d. Opening of the second stanza of "Du sprichst, dass ich mich täuschte", op. 32, No 6, says: "Dein schönes Auge brannte, die Küsse brannte sehr" (Your beautiful eyes burned, your kisses burned intensely). Brahms places "brannte" to a descending leap, c2-f1, and then to illustrate the intensification, he returns this dyad for the words "brannten sehr". Parson states that while Jenner mentions the declamation, and says that Brahms stressed the importance of correct declamation.

Parsons says that in addition to numerous songs such as "Sapphische Ode", op. 94, No 4, where Brahms's music follows precisely the metrical structure of the poem, there are some instances where his declamation helps to clarify the meaning of the text.

3. Discussion

In order to better understand the way Brahms composed, consequently the difficulties of the performers in his songs, during the Compiling a comprehensive analysis, several aspects have been researched.

There are various opinions about the form of the songs of Brahms, therefore in the variety of songs by this composer, the songs "Liebestreu", "Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer", "Sapphische Ode" and "Zigeunerlieder op. 103" have been researched and analyzed not by chance.

All three songs are in the form of a strophic song which is performed quite well by Brahms.

During the analysis between the interpreters, where various aspects related to his songs were analyzed, it was noticed that a very important element for Brahms was the declamation of the text. This finding is consistent with the findings of researcher Heather Platt cited in [Rohr 1997, p. 11, 12] which says that there are many levels of expression of the text in Brahms songs. "Text-based analyzes of Brahms lieder emphasize correct declamation at the expense of other aspects of the music, which are also tied to the text's structure." The author in her research finds evidence of Brahms sensitivity to a variety of text including rhyme, pixelation, line structure and recitation. Even this finding by the author Parsons [Parsons 2011, p. 193, 194] which says that music scholars of the twentieth century,

including Helmut Federhofer and Siegfried Kross, have also demonstrated Brahms's concern for correct declamation, and they have shown that he emphasized accented syllables through pitch height, as well as by metrical placement, and that he relied on durations and harmonic structures to emphasize especially important words, reinforces my opinion that a very important element for Brahms was also the declamation of the text. The author Parsons also states that in addition to numerous songs such as "Sapphische Ode", op. 94, No. 4, where Brahms's music follows precisely the metrical structure of the poem, there are some instances where his declamation helps to clarify the meaning of the text.

Regarding the selection of interpreters, in addition to those who have been German such as Thomas Quasthoff, Christa Ludwig, and Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, special attention has been paid to the selection of non-German-speaking interpreters, such as Jessye Norman (American) and Liliya Nikitchuk (Ukrainian).

One of the objectives of this study is the importance of the language of the interpreter.

The criteria that were requested, made the selection of experts for the part of the analysis to be done selectively, where as a result their number was very limited. In addition to the condition where one had to be German and the other foreign, knowledge or insufficient knowledge of the German language, experience and quality of interpretation were very important. This is done in order for the problems that are treated in these songs such as language, diction, declamation, phrasing, to be more distinct. It has been noticed that different interpreters of Brahms songs, especially the non-German ones, have interpretive difficulties with the articulation-balancing of the vowels, the pronunciation of the consonants, consequently the way of the phrasing, the declamation of the text. Among German-speaking interpreters, however, these difficulties are little or not noticed. Through comparison, various elements related to interpretation have been analyzed.

3.1 "Liebestreu"

The song "Liebestreu" is a song in which from the first sound, the performer feels a kind of inner tension. It is a very specific song, due to the fact that the singer has to play both roles, mother and daughter. From the beginning to the end of the song, the performer must be very careful in the nuances, to enable the presentation of the characters in the best possible way. There are some elements that a performer should pay attention to in the song "Liebestreu". For the best possible interpretation of this song, dynamics has an important role. Through dynamics, the performer finds it much easier to differentiate characters, describe situations, and also present the feelings and emotions that mother and daughter go

through. In terms of dynamics, I think the complete performer of the song should treat the legato. Problems that may arise in articulation in this song, such as: poor balance of vowels and poor pronunciation of consonants, can be avoided if the phrases are sung legato. I have noticed that in the rhythmic structure of the song, the rhythm also has an important role in the portrayal of the characters. While another important element, is undoubtedly breathing. Designated places for breathing play a very important role in the good or bad interpretation of a phrase.

During the analysis, I noticed that the piano part plays a very important role in creating the atmosphere that this song requires. Musical elements such as the dynamics of the song *pp*, then low and repetitive sounds and chords with different harmonies in sextol rhythm, which are present at the piano part, affect the creation of the dark atmosphere which the nature of the song requires.

My opinion about “Liebestreu”

As an interpreter of many songs by the composer Brahms, I can say that the song "Liebestreu" is one of the songs with the most requests for interpretation. The fact that the singer has to interpret both the role of mother and daughter makes it clear that the details in this song are of great importance. As I mentioned above, "Liebestreu" is a song in which, in the first sounds, the interpreter feels a kind of internal tension. From the beginning to the end of the song, the performer must be very careful in the nuances, to enable the presentation of the characters in the best possible way. The first phrases "O versenk, o versenk dein Leid mein Kind, in die See, in die tiefe See!" had to be sung legato and with good diction. The presence of sextolas in the right hand on the piano have been problematic for me. In some places they have created rhythmic security. Very important elements have been breathing and dynamics. Breathing after the word "See" influences this phrase to be interpreted in a more expressive way. It is worth noticed that this is a song where the whole time the sound should be with *appoggio* and more rounded.

3.2 “Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer”

The song "Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer" is one of the most beautiful songs of Brahms. Such a beautiful harmonization of the music with the text, makes the performer enter the world of the characters in a very natural way.

If we ask what may be the challenges that the performer faces in this song, we can say that they are quite a few. The tempo at which the song should be sung (*Langsam und leise*),

in certain places can create breathing problems, for this reason the performer must be careful in this regard. The next challenge for the performer in this song, is the presentation of syncopes and the change of measures at almost the same time. All this can create a kind of rhythmic disorientation for the singer. Good articulation-pronunciation of consonants, good balance of vowels and declamation are elements to which the performer should pay attention.

Interpretation in a foreign language can be challenging for the interpreter.

My opinion about „Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer“

The song "Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer" is one of the most beautiful songs of Brahms, but also quite complex. As an interpreter of this song, I encountered many interpretative problems. Due to the slow tempo *Langsam und leise* (slowly and quietly) in some places I had a problem with breathing. The first phrase "Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer" should have started with *p* and *legato*. Articulation - good pronunciation of consonants, good balance of vowels and declamation are elements to which I have attached great importance as a performer.

3.3 “Sapphische Ode”

The song "Sapphische Ode", although small in appearance, is one of the most beautiful songs of Brahms. It is in this song that it is proved that the selection of the text was a very important element for Brahms. In the interpretive aspect, "Sapphische Ode" is a song with very high demands. In this song, the singer faces many interpretive challenges. If we talk about the rhythmic structure of the song, challenging is the presentation of syncopes from the first bars, as well as the change of measures. The presence of syncope can create a state of confusion for the interpreter, so this is an element which can affect the fading of the interpretation. Another challenge that the performer faces in this song is the presentation of long phrases. The interpreter must be very careful in planning the breathing. Therefore, the *legato* singing and a good balance of the vocals, make the interpretation of the song "Sapphische Ode" more qualitative. While another element which affects the more qualitative interpretation of this song is the declamation.

My opinion about „Sapphische Ode“

As I have highlighted above, the song "Sapphische Ode", although small in appearance, is one of the most beautiful songs of Brahms. Regarding the interpretation aspect, I can say that this is a song with great demands. Since the first problematic phrases,

there have been syncopations in the right hand of the piano, which are present almost all the time. The phrase "Rosen brach ich nachts mir am dunklen Hage" should have started with p and legato. "Sapphische Ode" is a song that requires a good balance of vocals as well as a good declamation of the text. Among all these elements, breathing has also been problematic. This is due to the fact that the tempo in which the song is written Ziemlich langsam (pretty slow) makes it difficult to realize the phrases. For this reason, as an interpreter, I had to be very careful in the dosage of breathing.

4. Some interpretation views on Brahms "Zigeunerlieder op.103"

4.1 Zigeunerlieder op. 103

It is quite interesting how the "Zigeunerlieder op. 103" was composed. This cycle consists of 8 songs. According to Astrid Wille⁶, a compilation of "Ungarischer Liebeslieder" had served as a sample. The texts were translated into German by Hugo Conrad, by the Budapest publisher Rózsavölgyi in the summer of 1887 and published in Leipzig (no date) to give the German musical world a small, modest picture of Magyar folk-sung melodies".

4.2 Hey, Zigeuner, greife in die Seiten ein

My experience with "Zigeunerlieder" has been quite interesting. I had the chance to sing this cycle of songs twice. What makes this cycle special is that each number should be treated differently from the other. In the song "Hey, Zigeuner, greife in die Seiten ein". there were some elements that I had to take care of. This is due to the fact that it is a song that starts fast and ends very quickly. Special attention has been paid to the rhythm, dynamics, diction, phrasing, nuances of the voice and breathing. The piano dynamics is P sotto voce ma agitato, but due to the Allegro agitato tempo as well as the content of the text, a more tense singing is imposed on the singer's part.

4.3 Hochgetürmte Rimaflut

Even the second song of this Cycle is composed in a fast tempo. The rhythm and chords used in the piano part are an inspiration for creating different nuances in the interpretation.

In the first phrases, breathing was problematic, due to the fact that there are long phrases that must be sung loudly. Against the rhythm in the piano part, the singer's line had to

⁶ Astrid Wille, 2016, Brahms "Zigeunerlieder op. 103". Entstehung, kultureller Hintergrund und Analyse [online]; [15 September 2022]. Available from: <https://www.grin.com/document/427245>

be sung *f* legato. During the interpretation, diction is also given importance. Importance is also given to placing the emphasis on the shortest note.

4.4 Wisst ihr, wann mein Kindchen

The song "Wisst ihr", which is the third song in a row, is a seemingly simple song, but as a singer I had to be careful in many aspects. From the beginning, the phrases had to be sung *p* legato and at the same time treated with more ease. One of the reasons why the song had to be treated with ease is the lyrics of the song, which had to be pronounced well in a relatively fast Allegretto tempo. Pronunciation of the word "allerschönsten" and "umschlungen" has been problematic. Even in the second stanza, the pronunciation of words like "Mägdelein", "iniglich", "erschuf" "Schätzelein", been problematic. The register in which these phrases are written does not allow for a great dynamic development in the singer's part. The first four measures had to be sung *p* legato, so that the following four measures could have a greater dynamic development. It is worth noticed that in this song as well as in the earlier songs, during the development of the phrases, the emphasis is always on the shortest note.

4.5 Lieber Gott, du weisst

Although the content of the text is regrettable, the tempo of this song Vivace grazioso shows that the song should be interpreted more easily. In the good interpretation of this song, the good pronunciation of the words and the places of breathing play an important role. Even in this song it is noted that in the piano part Brahms used arpeggios which according to Jenna L. Sims [Sims 2016, p. 39], The moving sixteenth notes drive the harmonic progression forward, and yet again, imitate the improvisational nature of Romani folk music. Arpeggios are one of the basic tools of improvisation, so their reoccurring appearance in Brahms' music as ornamentation in reference to the fluid construction of some Gypsy styles is unsurprising. As I mentioned above, breathing and good pronunciation of the words play an important role in the character of this song.

4.6 Brauner Bursche führt zum Tanze

Among the 8 songs in this cycle, this song stands out due to the treatment that should be done. This is because it is a very powerful song.

The Allegro giocoso tempo, as well as the rhythmic structure of this song give a different feeling if we compare it with the previous songs.

As *allegro giocoso* is recommended, the song should be sung *legato* and in a cheerful manner. Singing *legato* phrases has not been easy at all. Extra care was needed in the diction. In this song, we are dealing with a text where there are many consonants within a phrase.

It is worth noticed that in this song as well as in the earlier songs, during the development of the phrases, the emphasis is always on the shortest note. The appearance of syncopations in the piano part has been problematic for me.

Even in the second phrase of this song, we are dealing with a text that is not easy to pronounce.

4.7 Röslein dreie in der Reihe

From the whole cycle, this is the most complex song. This is due to the fact that the song contains a lot of text which must be pronounced quickly and clearly. The development of phrases had to be planned very well, because there were words within the text that were not easy to pronounce. The first two problematic phrases were the words "Röslein dreie in der Reihe", "das der Bursch zum Mädle geht" and the most difficult text to pronounce was "Schönstes Städtchen in Alföld ist Ketschkemet" which had to be sung in a light *staccato* and quickly. Therefore, in this aspect, extra care is needed because bad diction directly affects the slowing down of the tempo. This is a song that proves that singing in German is not easy at all, especially when German is not the mother tongue for the singer.

4.8 Kommt dir manchmal in den Sinn

In this love song good pronunciation of words and the way of phrasing them is of special importance.

In the first phrases "Kommt dir manchmal in den Sinn, mein süßes Lieb, was du einst mit heiligem Eide mir gelobt" the phrases had to be sung *p legato* and special attention was paid to the balance of the vocals. In general, the sound of this song should have been more rounded. It is worth noticed that in this song, as well as in the earlier songs, during the development of the phrases, the emphasis is always on the shortest note.

4.9 Rote Abendwolken ziehn

From the whole cycle of songs "Rote Abendwolken" is the most joyful song. The first phrases of the song where the boyfriend sings to his girlfriend with the words "Rote Abendwolken ziehn am Firmament, sehn suchtsvoll nach dir mein Lieb, das Herze brennt" are sung loudly and in a *maestoso* manner. During the interpretation, special attention was

paid to the diction. Due to the dynamics and length of the phrases, breathing has been problematic for me. In this song it is very important that the phrases are sung legato. In the first phrase, the peak of the development of the phrase is at the word "Firmament" while in the second phrase "sehnsuchts voll nach dir, mein Lieb, das Herze brennt" the phrase begins f legato and during the development the culminating point of this phrase is at the word "Herze". It is worth noticed that in this song, as well as in the earlier songs, during the development of the phrases, the emphasis is always on the shortest note.

5. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was that by comparing the interpreters in the songs of Johannes Brahms, knowledge could be gained about interpretation, which focused on the importance of language inclusion, as well as the connection or influence that language has with various musical elements such as diction, declamation, phrase. The hypothesis on which the work is based is: The way Johannes Brahms composed the songs creates difficulties for the performers. Three songs were taken from the composer's extensive opus to be analyzed. The criteria for selecting the songs were determined based on several principles: The form of the songs, the rhythmic structure of these songs, which includes the frequent change of bars, the appearance of syncope's, the poetic lyrics of the songs, as well as the elements related to the language.

During the analysis between the interpreters, where various aspects related to his songs were analyzed, I noticed that for Brahms it was not only the musical aspect that was important, but also the content of the text. Some studies say that Brahms did not pay enough attention to the declamation of the text, but during the analysis of these songs, I came to the conclusion that for Brahms the declamation of the text was important. This finding by researcher Heather Platt according to [Rohr 1997, p. 11, 12] which says that there are many levels of expression of the text in Brahms songs. "Text-based analyzes of Brahms lieder emphasize correct declamation at the expense of other aspects of the music, which are also tied to the text's structure" reinforces my opinion that a very important element for Brahms was also the declamation of the text. In her research the author also finds evidence of Brahms' sensitivity to a variety of texts including rhyme, pixie, line structure and declamation.

By comparing German-speaking interpreters such as Thomas Quasthoff, Christa Ludwig, and Elisabeth Schwarzkopf with non-German-speaking ones, such as Jessye Norman (American) and (Ukrainian) Liliya Nikitchuk, I came to the conclusion that German-speaking interpreters had no problem with articulation-balancing of vowels, the pronunciation of

consonants, the way of phrasing as well as the pronunciation. During the analysis, I also noticed that in German interpreters the breathing was more natural, the diction was clear as well as the better phrase. Whereas in non-German speaking interpreters I have observed that during the interpretation they have difficulties with the articulation-balancing of the vowels, the pronunciation of the consonants, consequently the way of the phrase and the declamation of the text.

The following research is also required:

- The structure and character of Johannes Brahms songs from the interpreter's point of view.
- The esthetic aspect in Johannes Brahms song.

6. Contributions

An attempt is made to explore the difficulties in interpreting Brahms songs from the point of view of the soloist singer whose native language is not German.

Ways to overcome these difficulties are sought.

A comparative analysis was made between different interpretations of German-speaking and non-German-speaking singers.

The author's personal views on the interpretation of some Brahms songs are presented. This text may help other non-German speaking singers in overcoming some difficulties in performing songs by Brahms.

Publications related to the thesis

Bytyqi, Ardiana, Sapphische Ode. In: Young scientific forum for music and dance, Sofia, NBU, 01/2021.

Bytyqi, Ardiana, The influence of Johannes Brahms on Romantic Music. In: Young scientific forum for music and dance, Sofia, NBU, 10/2022.