

## THE PORTRAIT OF RUXANDA IN THE OPERA "ALEXANDRU LĂPUȘNEANU" OF THE BESSARABIAN COMPOSER GHEORGHE MUSTEA

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**SUMMARY.** This study aims at describing the methods and means of expression used by the composer Gheorghe Mustea in portraying the character Ruxanda. The dialectics of the heroine's character is presented in a wide range of moods, which I will analyse by synthesizing the two emotional areas: the X-major-clear sphere / the Y-minor-obscure sphere.

**Keywords:** Gheorghe Mustea, Alexandru Lapusneanu, Ruxanda, opera, bessarabian Composer

In the opera "Alexandru Lăpușneanu" by Gheorghe Mustea, Ruxanda is portrayed just as in the short novel – a delicate person, subdued to the community which is the boyars. It is not by chance that Grigore Ureche describes her as "a competent, wise and merciful woman, a model of good works".<sup>2</sup>

"In their opera, "Alexandru Lăpușneanu", the composer Gheorghe Mustea<sup>3</sup> and librettist Gheorghe Dimitriu have attained a profound psychologism

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<sup>2</sup> Ureche Grigore, *The Chronicles of the land of Moldavia (Letopiseșul Țării Moldovei)*, Hyperion Printing House, Chișinău, 1990

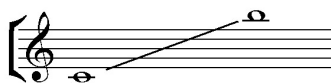
<sup>3</sup> Gheorghe Mustea: Flute player, Romanian panflute player, conductor, teacher and composer, Ghe. Mustea was born on May 1<sup>st</sup> 1951 in the village Mândrești, in Telenești County. He studied with Prof. Alexei Bivol (flute) at the „Ștefan Neaga” Secondary Music School in Chișinău (1966-1970) and at the „Gheorghe Musicescu” Institute of Arts in Chișinău (1970-1975 and 1975-1980) with professors Vladimir Rotaru (Flute), Vasile Zagorsky (Composition), Isai Alterman (Orchestral conducting), Mihail Caftanat (Score reading), Zidia Axionov (Folklore), Lev Adam (Polyphony), Galina Kocearova (Music theory and solfege). He took advanced courses of orchestral conducting with A.S. Dimitriev in Leningrad. He worked as a flutist and pan flute player between 1969-1970, then musical director and conductor of the "Folk Dances Ensemble" Orchestra at the „Șt. Neaga” Secondary Music School (1973-1975; 1978-1980); Professor with the „G. Musicescu” Music Academy in Chișinău (1980-1983 and since 1989), conductor of the Philharmonic Symphonic Orchestra in Moldova (1983-1989); First conductor of the National Radio Symphonic Orchestra (since 1989), Rector of the State University of Arts (between 1999-2002). He was awarded the titles of Honoured Master of Arts of the Republic of Moldova (1989), People's Artist of the Republic of Moldova (1980) and the Glory of Work (1998); he was a State Prize Laureate (1990) and a member of the Musicians' Union in Moldova. He wrote scenic, vocal-symphonic, choral, vocal, chamber instrumental and film music works.

of the musical-dramatic action. Both the libretto and the music closely follow the development of the action from Negruzzi's short story. In essence, the music of the opera is psychological, with a theatrical plasticity and a power of suggestion, determining the pulse and the dynamics of the feelings.

Altogether, the entire score is tackled in a profound manner and the rich palette of musical expression is used. Each scene is based on a centre of gravity related to the literary side of the opera, brought to life by edifying replies". (1)

This musical fragment spans over a fourteenth (compound interval) (between C<sub>4</sub> (*middle C*) and B<sub>5</sub> natural),

**Ex. 1**



The vocal line appears in concentrated, well-balanced phrases, which do not surpass the limits of musicality:

**Ex. 2**

*Andante*

a - vea un su - flet bun și blând și o-me- nesc  
dar bles - te - ma-țiii de bo-ieri când l-au tră - dat din om în  
Ti - grusân-ge - ros s-a pre-schim - bat

The melodic development of this vocal line stands out through the profound and refinement of the expression, through the elegance of the musical writing, through the state of prayer and grace.

Yet, sometimes, the melodic line is rather sinuous, with big intervallic leaps, less recommended for vocal uses, but perfectly adequate to the musical expression in question.

Ruxanda appears both in catalysing stances, as well as in situations in which she is the main character in the development of the events.

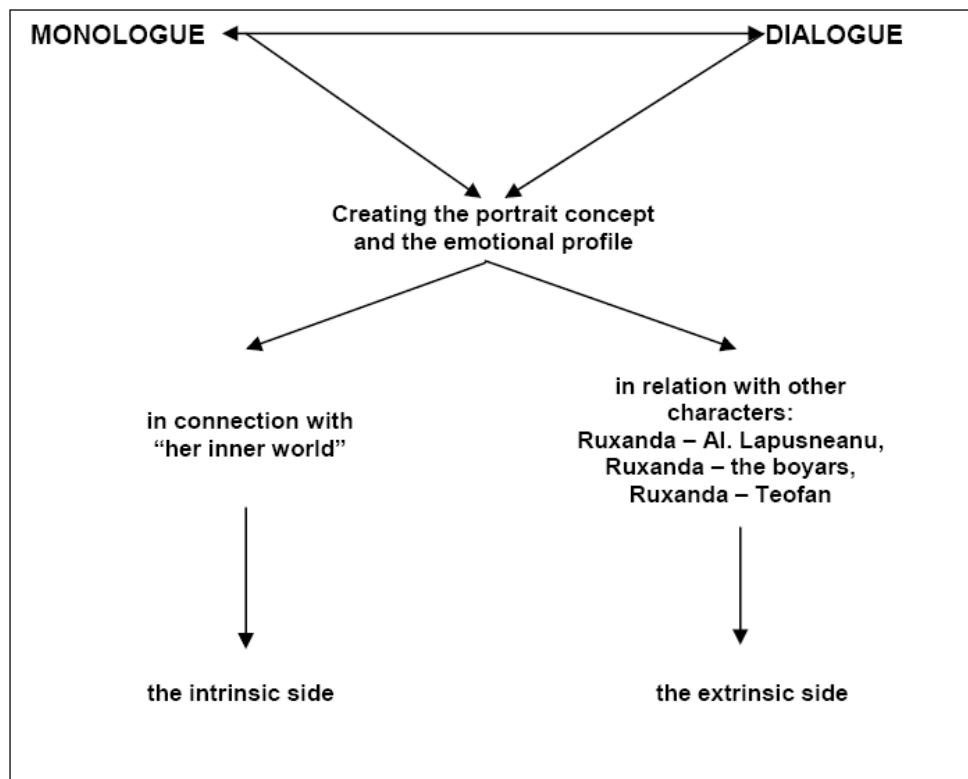
Her portrait takes shape between two polarized stances:

Aria – (Monologue)

Duet – (Dialogue)

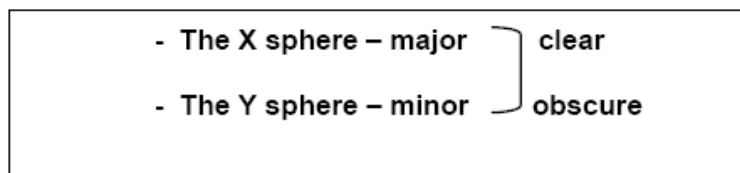
In these both stances, the composer nuances the emotional profile of the heroine in a particularly varied manner:

**Ex. 3**



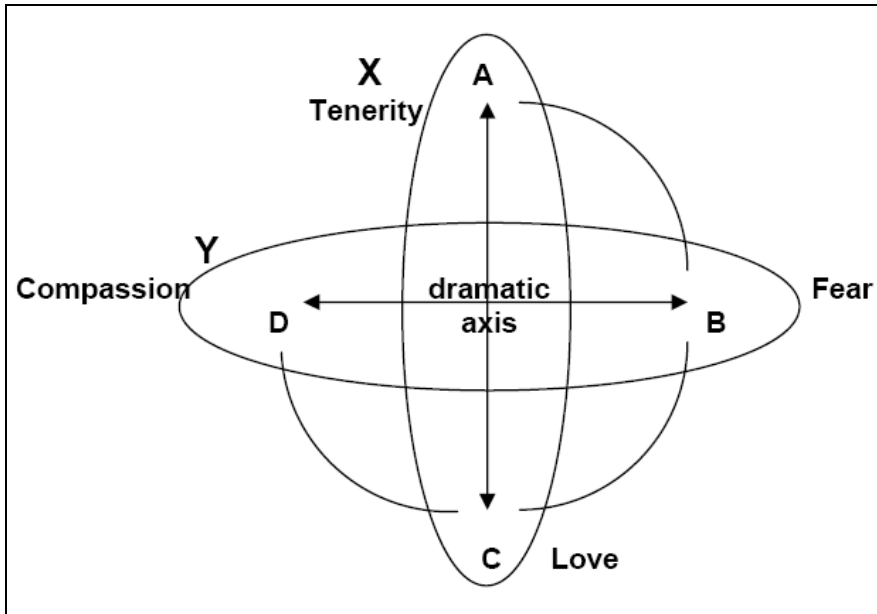
Hence, applying the dialectic method on the heroine's character reveals a wide spectrum of moods. Ruxanda's emotional profile spans over two emotional areas:

**Ex. 4**



Briefly stated, each sphere has an axis with two poles, each pole representing one of the four moods. Now, we shall analyse the complex construction presented below:

Ex. 5



The **AC** axis (*tenerity - love*) of sphere **X** (*the major sphere*) represents the *introverted side* of the heroine and the **BD** axis (*fear - compassion*) of sphere **Y** (*the minor sphere*) – *the extroverted side* of Ruxanda. Last but not least, **the dramatic axis (BD)** is predominant throughout the entire development of Ruxanda's musical profile and portrait concept.

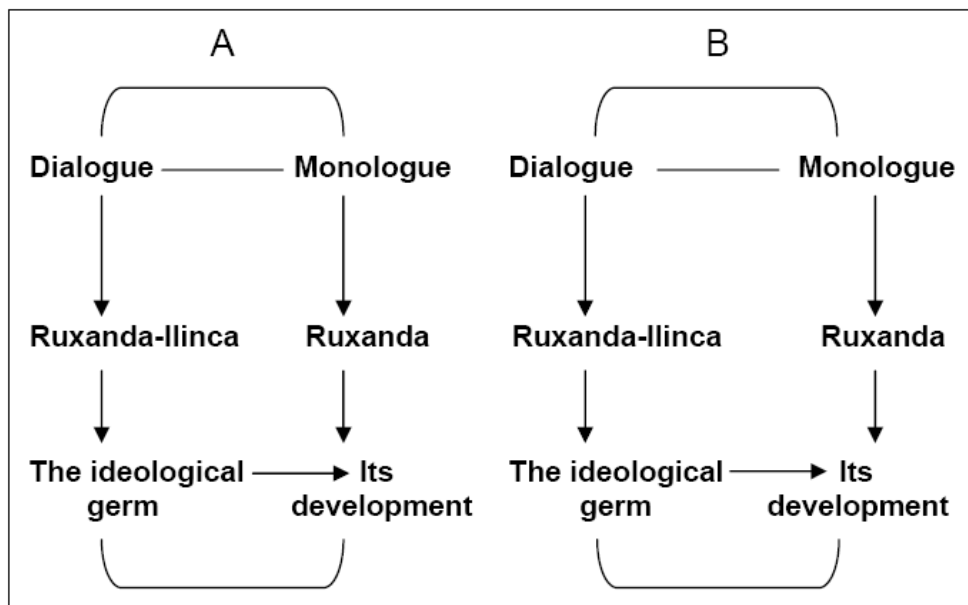
The two diametrically opposite spheres act throughout the entire trajectory of Ruxanda's character, as in a setting of parallel mirrors. They complete one another through their antagonism.

Out of all of Ruxanda's interventions throughout the opera, the scene and aria which is most suited to the character's profile, as outlined by the composer, is certainly "*Week woman, I have long forgotten*". Its pages are filled with a troubled lyricism that develops on a contorted and intensely achromatized musical background.

The discourse is built on a general cluster, followed by a dialogue of recitatives (spoken voice) between Ruxanda and Ilinca (which stands as an introduction).

Architecture - wise, this fragment presents a linear framework at microstructural level, generating an ideology which persists through alternative expositions: *dialogue/monologue* (*dialogue* – proliferating the ideological germ, *monologue* – developing the germ). Overall, the outcome is a continuous spectrum:

**Ex. 6**



The lyrical experiences and epical-dramatic argumentations of the fragments and situations that are made musically sensitive by the composer are extremely lively felt and rendered. The entire melodic discourse is characterized both by *singability* (the presence of a generous, wavy cantilena), as well as by a precipitated development, which is an unusual, ever-changing intervallic progression, with various intervallic leaps (in particularly, augmented and diminished ones), in a climate of harmonic instability.

Given the above, we can conclude that the emotional process of this character is very complex and of high intensity.

From the musical viewpoint, this process is defined by various intervallic expositions:

- *fear* is depicted through the contours of the ascending chromatic scale:

**Ex. 7**

*Allegro*

a) *mf Agitato*

o um-bră nea-gră stă în preajma mea me-reu iar când a - dorm ea se stre-coa-ră-n vi-sul meu

*cresc.*

b) *Allegro*

ea mi-a ră - pit pe veci în - cre-de-rea și som-nul și *f* li - niș-tea

*un poco piu mosso*

- *humbleness* (submissiveness) – through the contours of the descending chromatic scale:

**Ex. 8**

*Allegro*

*poco meno mosso*

*p* e so - țul meu da - toa - re-i sunt iu - bi - rea mea și-i tot mai greu să

fiu cu el a - lă - turi

- *compassion* (*mercy*) – is rendered through an alternation between static (through quasi-recitative exposition) and intervallic mobility (the presence of leaps of minor third (m3), perfect fourth (P4) and perfect fifth (P5):

**Ex. 9**

$\text{♩} = 84$

*mf* e vi - no - vat știu bi - ne un rău

ne- îm - pă - cat i-a tul - bu - rat în su - flet

tot ce a - vea cu - rat

- *pain* – revealed in a “colored” panoply, a mixture of intervallic leaps. The melody is sinuous, quasi-instrumental:

Ex. 10



- *temerity* – by using the method of the diminished fifth leap:

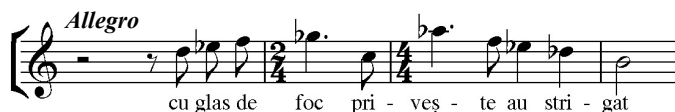
Ex. 11



- *displaying the key words*, which are transcribed on the staff through various intervallic leaps:

- **fire**: by means of a diminished fifth leap;

Ex. 12



- **death**: by means of a diminished fourth leap;

Ex. 13



- **wife**: by using a leap of a minor ninth (9m);

Ex. 14



- the syntagm: “**I am afraid...**” (diminished octave leap)

Ex. 15



Throughout Ruxanda's portrait, the composer resorts to various methods:

- free speech;
- melodic recitative;
- chromatic structures;
- a musical pitch followed by *glissando*;
- a various panoply of consonant and dissonant intervallic leaps;
- an elevated, wide-breath cantilena.

Throughout the opera, the composer fully reveals to us the character's psychological makeup and the dramatics of the situations, based on intonations from folk melodies. The music does not limit itself only to portraying the heroine, but it tends to plastically outline the psychological profile of the character.

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