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# Artistic and Expressive Space of the Vocal Chamber Works of Bohdana Filtz

## Художньо-виражальний простір камерно-вокальної творчості Богдани Фільц

**Abstract.** The paper studies the chamber and vocal legacy of the prominent Ukrainian composer Bohdana Filtz (1932–2021), whose musical thinking was influenced by the traditional Ukrainian romance songs, in particular, the old Galician ones. Her orientation towards the genre of romance manifests itself in the poetic intonation of the textual basis and in the manner of her musical writing. In Filtz's chamber vocal works, she expands the boundaries of themes and genres of solo singing. Her solo pieces for voice are characterized by an attentive and careful attitude to the performance and skillful use of the entire range of the most “capricious and fragile” musical instrument—the human voice. In addition, she effectively builds the very part of the piano accompaniment, which always plays an important figurative and semantic role. Two significant components in the figurative and thematic content of Filtz's vocal music were defined—civil and lyrical. In her chamber vocal compositions, Filtz combines a purely personal idea with a universal, humanistic principle at the figurative and meaningful level, closely intertwining epic characteristics with lyrics and drama. Her tendency for the psychological acuity of the musical images of her vocal works was traced through their philosophic nature, enriched with drama, and sometimes with tragedy. Ukrainian classical and modern poets prevail in the poetic stanzas of her romances.

**Keywords:** solo singing, romance, processing, Bohdana Filtz, vocal chamber creativity.

**Introduction.** Bohdana Filtz's creative legacy consists of over 400 compositions, including a significant number of romances, children's songs, and choral, instrumental, and symphonic pieces. The composer was exceptionally prolific in the field of vocal music, which, according to Maria Zagaykevych, is primarily obvious “in [her] imitation of the established traditions of Ukrainian musical culture and in the natural inclination of the composer's talent—a developed melodic gift and an organic sense of the expressive potential of one of the most perfect instruments—the human voice” (Zagaykevych, 1992, p. 23). Along with the composer's unique, natural understanding of the expressive capabilities of the human voice, her fascination with vocal genres is a continuation of the traditions of Ukrainian solo singing of the Galician composing school, established by S. Ludkevich, A. Kos-Anatolsky, A. Soltys, M. Kolessa, and other celebrated masters. Her thoughtful attitude to the synthesis of words and music, the desire to capture the essence of poetic images, her romantic manner of expression, and her extraordinary intonation appeal contributed to the popularity of the artist's vocal compositions among singers and connoisseurs of vocal art. The paper focuses on the analysis of the musical-intonational stylistic features of the chamber vocal versions of Filtz's work,

on their emotional and figurative load along with the means of musical stylistics and vocal-performance features.

**Literature review.** The genre diversity of Bohdana Filtz's musical work was the subject of research of many Ukrainian musicologists: V. Belikova (1995, 2013), M. Zagaykevych (1992, 2010), V. Kuzyk (2007, 2013), and others.

The **aim** of this research paper is to analyze the work of Bohdana Filtz in the chamber vocal genre, to study the genre and stylistic features of her chamber and vocal works, and to define the vocal and expressive features of solo songs by the composer.

**Results and Discussion.** Bohdana Filtz was one of those composers, who value the creative impulses arising from the content of a literary work and its poetic intonation. In this regard, M. Zagaykevych notes that “... the composer always and consistently is guided by the close affinity of worldview and common aesthetic and stylistic inclinations in her choices” (Zagaykevych, 1992, p. 27). In the solo songs of Filtz, there is a subtle spiritual connection with the personalities of the poets, whose verses inspired the composer, with their unique vision of the world, way of thinking, and means of expression, which all affect the musical interpretation of the poetry, and aid in the choice of the expressive means, dramatic structure, and intonation vocabulary.

The question of authorship of the poetry, on which the musical works are based on, is of crucial importance for understanding the style of the composer's vocal writing and systemizing her vocal works. She turned to classical and modern Ukrainian poetry—to the poems by Taras Shevchenko, Lesya Ukrainka, Ivan Franko, Oleksandr Oles, Volodymyr Sosyura, Pavlo Tychna, Maksym Rylsky, Dmytro Pavlychko, Lina Kostenko, and others.

Bohdana Filtz' vocal interpretations of Taras Shevchenko's poems impress with their artistic integrity in regard to the consolidation of music and text. Romantically exciting, expressing national character and full of generous melodicism, they became a significant contribution to the corpus of music based on Shevchenko's poems. In Filtz's vocal works, the solo songs on Shevchenko's poems constitute a group, notable for their vivid artistic and stylistic features, where the organic unity of poetic and musical intonations is clearly visible. Filtz's attempt to reveal the psychological state of the lyrical heroes is especially evident in these songs: completion of this "super-task" is the basis for the unfolding of musical thought, it determines the formative principles, dramatic structure, and the type of vocal run.

The romances by Bohdana Filtz present different spheres of Shevchenko's poetic imagery (for instance, images of a woman, and mother with her child) with particular warmth and deep dramaticism. The solo songs of this group include such works as *Orphan, Son, To Little Maryana*, and others. These compositions differ in terms of dramatic structure, yet, they are all marked by one characteristic feature: the desire to convey emotion through the "intonation of tenderness," which is clearly evident in the poet's works.

A true manifestation of tenderness is *Orphan* (1958), the first song by the composer, where deep inner excitement and drama are revealed in the process of unsophisticated children's conversation. Distinctive features of this work are its vivid imagery, free compositional structure, and disrupted, sharp flow of music with sudden breaks and climaxes that approximates it to a small-scale psychological drama. Similar in terms of lyrical content and deep psychologism of the dramatic image is the song *Dream* that has the tragic theme of a mother and a child. The musical concept of the piece is based on the contrast between the harsh reality and the gentle motherly love. In order to achieve such a contrast, the composer uses subtle emotional and sound nuances, and as a result of the introduction of light rising intonation chants into the declamatory-recitative melodics, Shevchenko's tragic image juxtaposition is reproduced: the hopeless forced labor of a young serf-mother and her dreams of a better fate for her small son. In addition to the so-called lyrical-dramatic narrative, the songs listed above and other works of Taras Shevchenko, similar in character to "internal monologues," were embodied in the vocal works of Filtz. Light, distinctly concise in expression, the compositions *Oh, Anthesis Is In Bloom On the Hill* ("Oi po gori romen tsvite"), *How I Should Grieve*, *Wind in the Grove* are full of the Cossacks' rebellious spirit, a bold defiance of serfdom.

For example, the song *Oh, Anthesis Is In Bloom On the Hill* in its intonation, exquisite melody and emotional character is close to Carpathian Ruthenian or Lemkos'

songs, with their characteristic scope and freedom of musical thought, aimed at revealing the state of mind of a young Cossack. The central element in shaping and development of the musical image is a well-chosen introductory verse, a chant of sorts, typical of many Ukrainian contemplative songs. The solo song *Wind in the Grove* is distinguished by an organic combination of forms of folk song melody and its dramatic expression. Characteristic for Ukrainian songwriting (especially for the heroic-lyrical one), the smooth unfolding of the melodic line with a unique interval progression to the sixth and a gradual decline and the cadence endings of the phrases provides the sound a spaciousness and at the same time a soft, heartfelt tone. The juxtaposition with an excited and dramatic episode (fragmented, metrically unstable vocal phrases, rapid piano passages) convey a deep feeling of mental restlessness and grief. Elements of the folk cantilena song are also distinctive in the solo song *If I Should Mourn*, where the rebellious motifs of Taras Shevchenko's poetry are conveyed by the composer with exquisite expression.

Using the example of the Filtz's interpretation of the mentioned poems by Taras Shevchenko, conclusions can be made regarding the stylistic features of the composer's creative pursuits. First, the characteristic trait of all these songs is the obligatory presence of a song motif in the melody. Its role in shaping the system of imagery is always decisive. However, the song motif manifests itself with different intensity: there are romances where the cantilena form is presented only as an emotional accent, which is organically interwoven into the unfolding of a dramatic-recitative vocal narrative; meanwhile, in other musical pieces, soft cantilena is the basis of the entire vocal fabric, the main means of reproducing poetic content.

Another type of works, with allusions to bel canto, manifest the influence of the genre of Ukrainian romance songs, in particular Old Galician songs. The connection with folk song creativity can be traced not only through the sincerity of the expression but also through the features of intonation—the use of characteristic melodic turns, cadence forms, etc. In addition, Filtz's solo songs are not mere copies of their folklore originals. On the contrary, each has a special, individual perception of the concept, based on the poetic intonation of the textual basis and unique manner of musical writing.

Turning to the other prominent Ukrainian poets became a fruitful and creatively effective endeavor for Bohdana Filtz. In this context, romances based on the poetry of Ivan Franko are conceptual. The artist focused on Franko's intimate lyrics, mainly from the *Withered Leaves*, one of the most acclaimed collections of poetry by Ivan Franko. Thus, "...romantic inspiration by poetic images contributed to the establishment of broad melody, the use of pastel harmonic colors in Filtz's songs to the Franko's poetry words" (Zagaykevych, 1992, p. 34). For instance, the romance *Your Eyes Are Like the Sea* ("Tvoi ochi yak more") impresses with its integrity and power of the lyrical expression in reproducing the feeling of admiration for the beauty of the beloved, the feeling of happiness from meeting her charming gaze. The composition, simple in form, is nevertheless exemplary of essential songwriting and lyrical vocal singing. Similar to the songs

on Shevchenko's verses, this piece is related to the folk lyric chants of the Carpathian region, which are characterized by a special excitement of feelings, in terms of its intonation structure and methods of unfolding the vocal melody. In contrast to the light mood of the romance *Your Eyes Are Like the Sea*, in the solo vocal work *I Do Not Love You, Oh No!* ("Ya ne lublu tebe, o ni!"), the content and character of the musical expression is emphasized as dramatic, wholesome, and balanced in the mood. The composer conveys the exciting speech intonations of the poetic text by employing a rapid vocal melody of an expressive structure. The combination of lyrical moods with Franko's typical dramatic intonations, the unstoppable power of emotions are clearly visible in the solo song *Yes, You Are My One True Love* ("Tak, ty odna moya pravdyva ljubov"). The vocal part begins with a climax supported by a rich piano accompaniment and a syncopated rhythm; it sounds like a monologue: excited, nervous (extreme parts), and sometimes contemplative (middle part). Equally to the previous two works, this one demonstrates the composer's fascination with the romantic poetic images of Ivan Franko and her affirmation of broad melody as a creative dominant in her compositional style.

Filtz's musical interpretation of Lesya Ukrainka's poetry is characterized by a lyrical-romantic tone. A notable feature of the solo vocal works *It Was a Quiet Night* ("To bula tykha nich"), *I Stood and Listened to the Spring* ("Ya stoyala i slukhala vesnu"), *The Sun Set at Sea* ("Vzhe sonekhko sidaye") is their incline towards landscape soundscapes, the depiction of emotional life in close relationship with perception of the beauty of nature. Such aesthetic concept, which is a natural result of the figurative character of poems, is manifested in extreme melodization, a soft romance chant of the vocal part. This is evident in the romance *The Sun Set at Sea*. In addition, the dramatization of the musical expression, and the compositional complications of the texture are significant in the romances written to lyrics by Lesya Ukrainka. For example, in the romance *It Was a Quiet Night*, the development of motive elements of a three-part structure and sharpened harmonic techniques (detention, altered seventh chords, sudden sharp modulation transitions and deviations) provide the sound with an excited character and shade the depth of emotional experiences. Similar subtle pictorial touches are interwoven with the piano accompaniment. Thus, in the romance *I Stood and Listened to the Spring*, the light passages of the accompaniment seem to illustrate the pictorial content of poetic imagery—the murmur of melting water, the gentle swaying of the first green branches, etc.

The composer's especially warm attitude to the creative heritage of Oleksandr Oles was expressed in her chamber vocal cycle *Silver Strings*, consisting of six romances dedicated to the composer's teacher S. Lyudkevich. These "excited lyrics" covers different gradations of feelings and is implemented in different types of vocal melos—from emphatically "frank" singing to recitative arias constructions. However, in the creation of a musical aspect of the vocal part: "...the main role is played by the chant intonation, which falls on a particularly heartfelt musical expression and helps to emphasize

the properties of Oles's poetics: its romantic lightness, a subtle sense of the harmonious beauty of the universe, nature and human existence" (Zagaykevych, 1992, p. 37).

The nature of B. Filtz's figurative and substantive embodiment of Volodymyr Sosyura's poems has much in common with her vocal interpretation of the works of Oleksandr Oles, in particular, in the development of landscape lyrics, where sketches of nature organically merge with human feelings. Hence comes the increased attention to pictorial motifs, and at the same time to the rich melodic content of the music, unfolding of the psychological and emotional nuances. Sosyura's romances are imbued with a unique sense of beauty, where a bright melodic motif, often of genre origin, which seems to be an essence of lyrical effort, plays a major role in creating a romantic and elevated mood. Its variant repetition, and the transition to a higher sound level influence the emotional nature of vocal singing.

For example, in the romance *Oh My Spring* ("Oj, vesna moya"), the rounded melodic motif built on a fourth intonation, reminiscent of the chants of folk songs, serves as the central link of the vocal part. As a result of rapid climaxes, sharp agogic transitions, and the placement of "eloquent" musical pauses, the excitement of poetic thought is achieved. The solo song *Again the Lilies of the Valley Scent the Garden* ("Znov konvalii pahnut v sadu"), very concise and light, reflects a human unrestrained desire for happiness, delight, and the joys of earthly existence. In order to transfer the imagery of the poem into music, the stormy piano overplay suddenly cuts through the initial narrative tone of the vocal part of the romance and the soothing oscillating rhythm of the accompaniment, followed by a sublime concluding coda in the stanza "So I want to be happy!".

A vivid example of an innovative approach to genre forms is another romance written to Sosura's poem *Barcarola* ("The stars in the heights embroider patterns..."). Traditional techniques for barcarole—the oscillating movement of the vocal line and accompaniment, the expressive three-part metro-rhythmic organization (despite the 4/4 time signature) "...acquire a fresh interpretation because of added Ukrainian intonations, and the elegiac landscape is organically combined with inner sensuality and lyrical tension" (Zagaykevych, 1992, p. 42). In general, in the vocal interpretations of Sosura's poems, careful consideration of the words and character of poetic images was manifested in emotional consonance, in a more complex musical language, a faster beating of the pulse of musical thought. These solos are distinguished, as a rule, by an elaborate dramatized structure, the presence of sharpened harmonic complexes, which is related to the distinctive features of Sosura's poetics, his "...tense, 'nervous' phraseology, his extensive use of alterations and other ornamental sound elements" (Zagaykevych, 1992, p. 42).

Turning to the lyrics of Pavlo Tychyna is a manifestation of Filtz's constant search for "her" theme. She is clearly fascinated with the juxtaposition of sound imagery of nature and feelings typical to romantic art. In this context, the vocal diptych *Autumn Moods* based on Tychyna's lyrics is worth examining. The music of the solo songs clearly demonstrates one

of the most essential features of the composer's vocal writing—the natural and unforced unfolding of the melody, its soft cantilena essence. The vocal part of the first solo of this diptych *Hey, There Is a Willow On the Road* (“Hey, nad dorohoyu verba stojit”) is closely related to Ukrainian folk music. This undoubtedly resonates with the lyrics, where the basis of the folk song is evident, both in poetic imagery (the associative juxtaposition of “willow” and “sorrow” (“verba” and “jurba”) and in vocabulary (the starting “Hey!”). The second solo song *Oh, Don't Hide, Nature, Don't Hide* (“Oj, ne kryisyja, pryrodo, ne kryisyja”) has a philosophical undertone. It is composed in the same folk song style but here the author clearly emphasizes Tychyna's typical intonations of confusion and inner restlessness. The phrases of this solo song, supported by colorful fifth-fourth chords associated with the picture of autumn silence, are replaced by emotionally exciting colors (chromatization of the melodic line, intense interval movements, etc.).

The lyrical inclination is clearly felt in the vocal works based on the texts of Maksym Rylsky. For instance, the tender, “quivering” solo song *The Willow Branch* (“Verbova hylka”). The courageous, majestic character of the solo song *I Bow to Your Grandeur* (“Shylyayus' pered velychyu tvoeyiu”) (dedicated to the 1500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Kyiv) unfolds slowly and discreetly. With a bright melodic phrase at its core and a concentrated sense of respect, it conveys, at the same time, emotional elevation. The accompaniment of this work is characteristic and figurative—a thorough ostinato movement built on second and third oscillations, which seems to illustrate the centuries-old flow of the Dnieper through the ages. Dramatic accents and “agitated” instrumental passages (*Allegro agitato drammatico*) are organically interwoven with the emotional range of calm and grandeur.

An organic part of the vocal lyrics of Bohdana Filtz are numerous works for female trio ensembles. Their lyrical warmth, psychological content and emotional frankness of expression, a subtle sense of the soft melody are characteristic of Ukrainian folk songs, with some features of polyphonic singing. The possibility of interweaving different voices and creating an elaborate vocal “score” only enhances the scope of melody and lyrical excitement inherent to Filtz. All this is may be illustrated by the interpretation of a vocal trio written to Taras Shevchenko's poems *By a Spring Sycamore* (“Teche voda z pid yavora”) and *O Boisterous Wind Most Turbulent* (“Vitre buyny”) (there are also the solo versions of these works). These poems are samples of the so-called “maiden's lyrics”, dominated by dreamy thoughts and admiration of the beauty of nature.

Bohdana Filtz' oeuvre also includes many arrangements of folk songs for individual voices: baritone (*My Sheep, Sheep* (“Vivtsi moi, vivtsi”), *Don't Cough, Girl* (“Ne kashlyaj divchyno”), low female voice (*Oh, On the Mountain, an Oak Has Grown* (“Oi na hori dub rozvyvsia”), *Green Rue, Yellow Bloom* (“Zlena ruta, zhovtyj tsvit”), middle-range voice (*The Wind Is Blowing, the Wind Is Blowing* (“Vije viter, vije bujnyi”), *I Walk By the Grove* (“Kolo gayu pozhjaju”), and soprano (*Oh a Cuckoo flew* (“Oi letila zozulya”).

**Conclusions.** The analysis of the work of B. Filtz, in particular her compositions of the chamber vocal genre, allows

determining the characteristic musical and stylistic features of her music and, in general, the aesthetic principles typical for her chamber vocal pieces. The author of the poetry, based on which the music was composed, as well as the figurative and thematic priorities, are of great importance for understanding the style of the composer's vocal writing and the classification of the vocal legacy of B. Filtz. The composer was always guided by the close affinity of worldview positions and shared aesthetic inclinations with the poet. Filtz's fascination with romantic poetic imagery is indisputable because the works based on poems with a great lyrical potential dominate among her chamber vocal compositions. At the same time, she preferred the poems, deeply rooted in the spiritual life of the Ukrainian people.

In general, it is possible to define two important components in the figurative and thematic content of Filtz vocal music—civil and lyrical. In her chamber vocal compositions, the composer combines a purely personal idea with a universal, humanistic principle at the level of a figurative and meaningful picture, closely intertwining epic characteristics with lyrics and drama. The author's tendency for the psychological acuity of the musical images of her vocal works can be traced through their philosophic nature, rich with drama, and sometimes with tragedy. Ukrainian classical and modern poets prevail in the poetic stanzas of her romances.

A particularly notable feature of her individual compositional style is a “super-task” of her creativity: revealing the psychological state of poetic heroes and images, which is the basis for the development of musical thought. This determines the principles of form creation, dramatic construction, and character of vocal singing. In addition, consonance of music and words is clearly traced, and the vocal interpretations of romantic poetry are characterized by unique purity and dignity of expression of feelings, corresponding to the content of the texts. Soft melody and transparent texture give many of her solos a touch of elegiac mood, in which the lyrical is combined with emotional excitement and significant dynamism of the expression.

In most cases, a bright melodic motif, often of genre origin, which seems to concentrate the lyrical effort, plays a significant role in creating a romantic and elevated mood. Overall, the composer consistently affirms the role of broad melody as an artistic dominant of sorts in her own compositional style. At the same time, the natural and unforced unfolding of the melody, its “soft” cantilena essence seems to require the mandatory presence of the song motif in the melody. The role of the former in shaping the figurative system of the work is always decisive.

In Filtz's works, the author's intonation is organically combined with the folk tone as a result of a deeply unique and truly creative transformation of the features of the folk style. In addition, the extensive use of folk diatonic modes inherent in Ukrainian musical folklore in works of the chamber vocal genre, the influence of the mode structure of folk songs on the structure of the melodic fabric, and the harmonic language of solo singers are the important components of the compositional style of B. Filtz.

Development of the vocal line, as a rule, is the subject of a single wave of the build-up to a “high” climax at the end. The role of harmony in the artistic embodiment of the ideological and figurative content of vocal works is crucial. The use of harmonic coloristics, sound-image techniques, etc., and the use of harmony as a means of psychologizing the image reveals the logic of the composer’s musical thinking.

The influence of the Ukrainian romances, in particular, the Old Galician ones, on the composer’s musical thinking is also her signature trait. Orientation to the song-romantic

style is always individually expressed, which originated from the poetic intonation of the textual basis and Filtz’s manner of musical writing. In her chamber vocal work, she expanded the boundaries of genres and themes of solo singing.

Her solo songs are characterized by an attentive and careful attitude to the requirements of performing practice, skillful use of all the potential of the human vocal apparatus. In addition, she delicately builds the very part of the piano accompaniment, which always plays an important figurative and semantic role.

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#### Художньо-виражальний простір камерно-вокальної творчості Богдани Фільц

**Анотація.** Розглянуто камерно-вокальну спадщину Богдани Фільц (1932–2021), музичне мислення композиторки жанру української пісні-романсу, зокрема старогалицької пісні. Орієнтація на пісенно-романсовий стиль знаходить у її творчості особливе вираження, що походить з поетичної інтонації текстової основи та манери музичного письма. У її камерно-вокальній творчості розширено тематику і жанрові різновиди солоспівів. Для її солоспівів характерне уважне і дбайливе ставлення до вимог виконавської практики, майстерне використання усіх можливостей голосового апарату співака. Б. Фільц майстерно вибудовує саму партію фортепіанного супроводу, що завжди відіграє важливу образно-семантичну роль. Окреслено два важливі компоненти в образно-тематичному наповненні вокальної музики — громадянський та ліричний. У камерно-вокальних композиціях композиторка на рівні образно-значеннєвої картини задуму поєднує суто особисте із загальнолюдським, гуманістичним началом, тісно сплітаючи героїко-епічні характеристики з лірикою та драмою. Схильність авторки до психологічної загостреності музичних образів вокальних творів простежено через їхню філософічність, насичення драматизмом, а інколи — трагедійність. Серед поетичних строків її романсів переважають українські класичні і сучасні поети.

**Ключові слова:** солоспів, романс, обробка, Богдана Фільц, камерно-вокальна творчість.