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**VOCAL MINIATURES OF CLAUDE DEBUSSY OF 1890s:
NEW VECTOR OF ARTISTIC SEARCH**

Chamber and vocal music of Debussy invariably attracts the attention of musicologists. In this context, the issues of periodization of vocal works are among the most topical ones. The beginning of the 90s of the 19th century opens a new period of creative work of Claude Debussy. The "apprenticeship period" is coming to an end, the genre panorama of his music is changing (instrumental compositions come to the fore, the interest in the opera genre arises), but it is the vocal compositions of these years that allow us to better understand the new vectors of the artist's artistic search. This perspective of the consideration of the vocal heritage of K. Debussy and determined the purpose of this article: to reveal changes in the creative principles of the composer in the 90s of the 19th century and to clarify the criteria for the periodization of his chamber-vocal works.

Keywords: Claude Debussy, vocal miniature, French music 1890s, Stephane Mallarme

Vocal compositions of Claude Debussy have long been included in the repertoire of performers and won recognition of the public. Their unchanged presence in the modern world is evidence of the indisputable artistic discoveries of one of the main representatives of the French musical culture of the late 19th – early 20th centuries. The importance of K. Debussy's vocal heritage is also determined by the fact that in the sphere of vocal music, as noted by many researchers, the composer's individual style was formed [9,12,13]. Principles of Debussy's work with a poetic text were continued in the works of composers of the following generations – M. Ravel, F. Pulenko, A. Honegger, O. Messiaen etc. Therefore, Debussy's chamber-vocal music invariably draws the attention of musicologists [see: 1,5, 6,7,9,12,13 and etc.] and sets before them a whole series of tasks in the process of comprehending this sphere of the creative realization of the composer.

In this context, the issues of periodization of vocal works are among the most **relevant** ones. Despite the great interest in Debussy's work of foreign and Ukrainian researchers, the problem of periodization of his chamber-vocal works was not specifically set. The beginning of the 90s of the 19th century opens a new period of creativity of Claude Debussy. The "apprenticeship period" is coming to an end, the genre panorama of his music is changing (instrumental compositions appear, the interest in the opera genre comes to the fore), but it is the vocal compositions of these years that allow us to better understand the new vectors of the artistic search of the

composer. This perspective of the research of the vocal heritage of the 90s has defined the **purpose** of this article: to reveal changes in the composer's creative principles in the 90s of the 19th century and to clarify the criteria for the periodization of his chamber-vocal works.

The beginning of the last decade of the 19th century marks significant changes in Debussy's creative orientations. It is symptomatic that 1890s begins with the publication of "Five Poems by Charles Baudelaire". This fact attracts special attention, since Debussy was extremely demanding of himself. In 80s he was actively writing (this creative decade released almost half of all the works of the composer mentioned in the full catalog), but his opuses remained known only to a narrow circle of listeners in Parisian salons. The edition of "Five poems by Charles Baudelaire" – a large-scale vocal cycle, which the composer decided to print as an extremely limited number of early works, – symbolically summed up his first creative period, almost exclusively associated with *vocal genres*.

Romances, mélodies, vocal scenes, cantatas, choirs – this is the list of genres that attracted the attention of the young author. We emphasize that they are all connected with the *word*. Among 70 works by Debussy written before "Five Poems by Charles Baudelaire," only 11 (!) were not meant for singing. At the same time, with the exception of early student studies, it is obvious that the emergence of non-vocal works was inspired by practical tasks, mainly the needs of ensemble salon music making¹.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the situation is changing. Now almost all new works the composer **publishes**, and his creative efforts are directed not only to the creation of vocal music, but also capture the field of *instrumental genres*. Since 1890, the genre panorama of Debussy's work has expanded considerably. Vocal compositions arise with a much longer time gap, and their further concert life is not as successful as the fate of the instrumental works created in the early 1990s.

¹ Among 11 early non-vocal works of Debussy - "Bohemian Dance" (*Danse Bohémienne*, 1880) for piano; trio in g- major for piano, violin and cello (*Trio en sol majeur*, 1880); devoted to N.F. von Meck Symphony in b minor (*Symphonie en si mineur*, 1881), preserved in application for piano four hands; *Andante Cantabile* (1881) for pianoforte four hands; overture "Diana" (*Diane, ouverture*, 1881) for piano four hands; as well as the orchestral Suite Triumph of Bacchus (*Le triomphe de Bacchus*, 1882), Nocturne and scherzo for cello and piano (*Nocturne et scherzo*, 1882), Intermezzo for piano four hands (*Intermezzo*, 1882); created for the examination at the villa Medici "The first orchestral suite" (*Première suite d'orchestre*, 1883), "Divertissement" (*Divertissement*, 1884) for pianoforte; "Little suite" (*Petite Suite*, 1889-1890) for piano four hands.

Thus, in April 1890, Debussy concludes "Fantasia for piano and orchestra" (*Fantaisie pour piano et orchestre*) and this same year creates a whole series of piano pieces: "Dream" (*Reverie*), "Tarantelle styrienne" (*Tarantelle styrienne*), "Slavic ballade" (*Ballade (slave)*), "Romantic Waltz" (*Valse romantique*), "March-ecossaise on a folk theme" (*Marche ecossaise sur un thème populaire*) in four hands. In the same year, the composer begins work on the "Bergamas Suite" (*Suite bergamasque*), completed in 1905. In 1891 he wrote "Two Arabesques" (*Deux Arabesques*) and "Mazurka" (*Mazurka*) for piano, begins to work on the symphonic prelude "Afternoon of the Faun" (*Prélude à l'Après-midi d'un faune*, completed in 1894)². In the following year, 1892, Nocturne for pianoforte appeared (*Nocturne en ré bémol*), the composer began composing a string quartet (*Quatuor à cordes*, completed in 1893). In 1894, Debussy created the first version of the cycle "Images" (*Images*) for pianoforte and began the suite "For piano" (*Pour le piano*, 1894-1901).

As far as it is concerned the vocal works, in the early 90's there appeared only one miniature "Beauty in a sleeping forest" on verses by Vincent Hisp (*La Belle au bois dormant*, 1890), one miniature by Paul Bourget's verses «Beautiful evening» (*Beau soir*, 1890 or 1891), The first note of "Gallant festivities" on verses by Paul Verlaine (*Fêtes galantes*, 1891-1892), which includes three miniatures; *mélodie* "Angels" on the verses of Gregoire Le Roy (*Les Angéelus*, 1892); "Lyrical prose" on own texts (*Proses lyriques*, 1892-1893), consisting of four vocal acts.

The above review of the early works of Debussy eloquently shows that since the beginning of the 1990s **the genre preferences of the composer have shifted from chamber-vocal to instrumental ones**. Only in the first years of the last decade of the nineteenth century the composer wrote more instrumental music than in the eleven previous years³. In addition, the interests of the composer are now turned to opera. Debussy begins to work on the opera "Rodrigo and Jimena" (1890-1893), but in letters he constantly complains about the difficulties in combining his musical

²In the exact translation, the title of the work of Debussy is "Prelude to the afternoon of the Faun". this literal translation of the name is used by L. Kokorev in the last russian-language monograph on Debussy [6]. However, we will keep the name "Afternoon rest of the Faun", which is customary for the post-soviet music space, which seems more euphonious, and the "deciphered" meaning of the expression "*À l'après-midi*" as an "afternoon rest" in the Russian version is quite possible in the semantic space of Mallarme's poem.

³The first piece of work, mentioned in the catalog of works by Debussy, is "Mélodie" on the text of Alfred de Musset (end of 1879).

ideas with the rather cumbersome and traditional libretto by Catulle Mendès. In the end, he leaves the opera unfinished, discovering in the spring of 1893 his "ideal" author – Maurice Maeterlinck⁴. Since that moment, for almost ten years the composer has plunged into the realization of his most large-scale creative project – the opera "Pelleas and Mélisande" (completed in 1902).

Debussy himself was probably aware of a new turn of deployment of creative energy, to which he came as a result of close contact with the most radical art circles in Paris. Debussy's gradual departure from "cooperation" with authoritative poets in the field of the undivided "individual" unfolding of creative fantasy-into the sphere of "author's" *instrumental music* (and in vocal genres – to an attempt to act as the author of the literary text in «Lyrical Prose»); and the recognition of the value of their musical compositions (the desire to *publish* them); and even a "new glance" at *himself*. The eloquent confirmation of the birth of the "new Debussy" is his ***refusal from the ordinary name of Achille*** and the use of the double name Achille-Claude or Claude-Achille from December 1889 to July 1892, and from September, 1892, the already familiar name ***Claude Debussy***.

Commenting on this fact, the French researcher F. Lesur writes: "In the early 90s, a sign appears that clearly indicates ***Debussy's desire for change***: he renounces his everyday name, which he never liked, in favor of the name Claude-Achille, which appears as a new signature in various modifications and a very variable chart of its outline" [12, p.109].

Certainly, the changes that took place reflected not only the external circumstances of the composer's life, but were determined by changes in his artistic and aesthetic landmarks. Due to the active exchange of ideas with the representatives of the most part of Parisian society, which was liberated in terms of artistic experiments, in the works of the young and defiant "Claude Debussy – the French musician" (as the composer would later proudly call himself), new principles of musical thinking are established, which led to innovative artistic solutions in the works of the beginning 90-ies. The creative experiments of the impudent "violinist of

⁴ On May 17, 1893 Debussy attended the only performance «Pelléas and Mélisande» by M. Maeterlinck at the theater "Les Bouffes parisiens". A year earlier he had already purchased a printed version of the play and was now finally fascinated by the work of the Belgian symbolist. The composer immediately began working on creating music.

traditions" will not leave the field of attention of the French musical community any more and they will grow up with all sorts of scandals accompanying Debussy until his death.

As a sensitive artist, Debussy could not resist responding to the latest trends in the artistic life of Paris in the late 19th century. Its features were named by the French art critics "end of the century" – *fin de siècle*. Exploring the artistic life of Paris in this period, S. Yarotsinski writes: "The revolution of the ideas of 1885-1895 as a whole did not, however, *find a proper correspondence in the revolution of forms*. Failing to come to maturity for embracing all the richness of the new content, these forms, under the pressure of irrational trends, degenerated into all mannerisms, which soon, by 1900, flourished. The artists involved in the movement felt confident until their spiritual leaders (Mallarmé, Gauguin) were among them, but when they were no more, the groups, objectively consolidated, dispersed like a herd of stray sheep "[7, p.109].

"Being in the air" of the era the desire to realize the "revolution of forms", "liberating" from the past and the present found its adherents in the realm of literature. Stefan Mallarmé became the "prophet" and the ideologist of the "new art", resolutely renewing the traditional approaches to understanding the goals and objectives of poetry.

It is symptomatic that all foreign researchers emphasize the great importance of Debussy's communication with Mallarmé for the formation of the creative individuality of the composer. The acquaintance of Debussy with Mallarmé took place in the autumn of 1890. One of K. Debussy's acquaintances is the symbolist poet A. Ferdinand Herold – introduced Mallarmé to the newly published "Five Poems of Charles Baudelaire". It is significant that the vocal miniatures of this cycle that provoked bewilderment and were not successful "extremely impressed Mallarmé with new beauty" [12, p.115]. The poet was so fascinated by the unprecedented expressiveness of the music of a young and almost unknown composer that he decided to invite him to participate in the preparation of the production of his "Afternoon of a Faun" at the "Théâtre d'art" of the avant-garde stage director Paul Faure.

The suggestion of Mallarme reveals the existence of an instantaneous deep creative resonance between the poet and the composer, as Mallarme's musical tastes were rather unusual. According to the testimony of close friends, when he attended Sunday concerts of Lamure, he did not expect any "musical discoveries". Pierre Louis said that Mallarme "did not go there to listen, but to write. *The noise of the orchestra excited his imagination*, quite apart from knowing that they were playing – "Tambourine" by Rameau or "Siegfried idyll" [12, p.115]. Hence – the extraordinary tasks that Mallarme was ready to put in front of the composer.

However, the conceived performance of Mallarme was never put on stage, and the composer's planned work on composing "Preludes, Interludes and Final Paraphrase for the "Afternoon of a Faun" (*Prélude, Interlude et Paraphrase finale pour l'Après-midi d'un faune*) the creation of "Prelude", intended for performance in Brussels within the framework of the concerts of "Free Aesthetics" on March 1, 1894. In Brussels the Faun, however, also was not heard and was presented to the Parisian public on December 22 of the same year in a concert organized by the Independent Music Society (conductor G. Doré).

Concerning the artistic design of this "resonant" work, Debussy wrote: "Music in Preludes was a very free illustration of Stefan Mallarme's beautiful poem. It did not pretend to any synthesis with it. These were rather consistent pictures through which the wishes and dreams of the faun entered the midday heat, which, leaving the pursuit of fearful nymphs and naiads, allowed himself to plunge into a delicious dream filled with dreams, finally realized full possession of the universal nature" [12, p. 515]. It seems that it is precisely the "dreams" and "desires", like the unstable channels of connecting the soul with the surrounding world, which reveal those elusive subject-object connections that Mallarme has been thinking about for the first time, become the object of the composer's creative attention. Thanks to cooperation with the most mysterious and hermetic French poet of the epoch *fin de siècle*, new artistic orientations are fixed in the works of Debussy, which opened a new era in the musical art.

The importance of communication with Mallarme for the composer's creative path is difficult to overestimate. "The opening of the contact of Mallarme-Debussy at

the end of 1890 represents in a new light not only the genesis of Prelude, but the **genesis of the aesthetics of the musician**", – states F. Lezur [12, p.116]. It is due the influence of Mallarme on Debussy the greatest degree of boldness of musical decisions in the works of the early 90s were created. Communicating with one of the most influential avant-garde figures of French culture of the end of the century, acquaintance in his house with talented poets and symbolists and writers Charles Maurice, Henri de Regnier, Viele-Greffe Pierre Luis, probably Paul Gauguin finally approved Debussy in the intention to speak a new musical language, free from all kinds of limitations and capable of instilling unprecedented impressions and sensations on the listener.

The main influence of Mallarme on the composer Yarotsynsky is defined as follows: **"Meanwhile it is clear that, just like romanticists and Baudelaire, he sought to eliminate the border separating "self" from "not-self"** Thus, if they were dissolved in panpsychism or pantheism, Mallarme tried to stay on the neutral ground of knowledge and, **in search through his poetry, intentional structures in acts of consciousness hoped to discover the meaning of the world in the piece-symbol, since, in effect, he assumed universal intentionality.** He aspired, therefore, as someone wittily said about phenomenology, **to the absurd limit of "the eye that looks at itself"** [9, p.66].

Now Debussy resolutely rejects the academic rules of harmony, which he was taught at the conservatory, from the established genre stereotypes and, "observing himself," fixes the birth of the "new Debussy", not Achille, and not even Claude-Achille, but Claude Debussy, ready to serve the most intimate and pure art of Music. In a letter to E. Chausson on September 6, 1893, the composer writes: "Verily, music should be a science of the Highest, guarded interpretations so long and so difficult to understand that they would discourage the human herd, using it as freely as a handkerchief! So, first of all, I propose to create a Society of Musical Esotericism ..." [2, p.44].

Analysis of works of the early 90's, primarily of vocal genres, clearly shows "the new Debussy". This allows us to clarify somewhat the traditional periodization of Debussy's creative work, which has developed in musicological research. As a

rule, the execution of the "Afternoon of a Faun" at the end of 1894, which made Debussy famous, is indicated as the beginning of the mature period of creativity. It seems expedient to designate the beginning of a new period of the composer's work in 1890 (the year of the publication of "Five poems by Charles Baudelaire, changes in name and genre reference points, the beginning of active communication with Mallarme).

In the existing musicological literature devoted to Debussy, the main attention in the process of becoming an individual composer style is given to the "Afternoon of a Faun". For example, the authors of the fundamental "History of Western Music" section on Debussy are divided into paragraphs: "Debussy to Prelude" (1862-1893) and "Pelléas's Time" (1894-1902) [11, p. 949-951]. Authoritative Jean Barake in the monograph "Debussy" the period between the return of Debussy to Paris from Rome and the performance of "Faun" is defined as "the bohemian period" and believes that our ideas about Debussy at this time remain "very vague" [10, p.85]. Barake writes: "During this period, Debussy breaks all ties with the Conservatory, the Institute and the official music. From this moment he feels an increasing disgust towards the official musical environment, to which he refuses to belong" [10, p. 90].

A certain line between the early "bohemian" and "mature" Debussy is made in 1894 and the authors of the most fundamental study of the composer E. Lokspayzer and G. Halbreik [13]. More cautious periodization of creativity builds F. Lezur, noting the importance of 1890 as in his own way in the works of Debussy [12].

In turn, we emphasize that the execution of the "Afternoon of a Faun", of course, changed the circumstances of Debussy's life, brought him fame and strengthened his awareness of his creative abilities and the correctness of artistic reference points. However, the concept of the "Faun" arose much earlier than 1894, as well as the intention of "Pelleasa", so "tie" the new period to the opera also seems not completely logical. In our opinion, the year 1890 marks the beginning of the "mature" period of the composer's work.

New artistic reference points clearly appear in the genre, which has been tested to this time – the genre *mélodie*. Changes in creative attitudes are especially clear in

the process of comparison with the method of work of the composer over the poetic text in the previous decade.

Thus, the Ukrainian researcher S. Lukovskaya, who carried out a detailed analysis of Debussy's vocal miniatures on Paul Verlaine's poems, points to changes in the principles of the composer's approach to the poetic word in the works of the 90s. Comparing musical readings of Verlaine's poems in the 80s and 90s, the researcher accentuates a significant change in the composer's own artistic position with respect to the poetic text in the process of creating a vocal miniature. "The musical versions of the three poems from "Wisdom", writes S. Lukovskaya, "characterize the new creative aspirations of the composer. Especially bright new trends are manifested in the musical reading of the last poem, which testifies to the independence of Debussy's musical thinking, who is not afraid to break the balance between the functional significance of the vocal and piano parts, entrenched in his work in the late 80's. This deviation of the composer from the exact following of the poetic text is very revealing, since it is not a simple return to one's own early principles. If in the first vocal miniatures the freedom of dealing with the poetic text was associated with the desire to create an expressive *vocal part* (which allowed the chanting of words, repetitions of poetic lines, introduction of vocalizations etc.), now the *piano part dominates everything, which creates an independent plan for revealing the artistic image*. It is natural that exactly in the 1990s Debussy's interest in instrumental genres that was no longer connected with the word, capable of independently solving the artistic tasks, increased." [7, p.133-134].

The abovementioned new principles for the correlation of vocal and piano parts in the vocal genre are fixed in the works of the 90s. The essence of the vocal part itself is changing. Describing the innovations of Debussy, Yarotsynsky writes: "In spite of the fact that most often he uses the melodic recitative that we know from his songs, which respects the intonational properties of the French speech and its accentuation, the composer does not appear, however, as a slave of this formula, **more likely to capture and transmit to us what is hidden beneath and between words, than what they mean objectively**" [9, p.184].

It should be emphasized that Debussy's main goal is to realize his understanding of the work as the synthesis of all languages, as well as the process of the merging of "self" and "not-self", perceived by the composer in the process of communicating with symbolic poets. It is significant that he writes in a letter to Raymond Boner, October 5, 1890: "*What is the reason to look at first for the label everywhere and thereby reduce ourselves to the level of things sold in the markets? Let's write music filled with all our life, not a small corner of it, which seems rare to us only due to our nose in air and the idle chatter of those who do not do it (music)*" [2, p.36]. These new tasks of creating "music of all life" without borders and barriers are fully realized in the most extraordinary and large-scale vocal opus of the early 90's – "Lyrical proses".

Consequently, the realization of the *new function of the word in the vocal composition*, which causes a bold search for new techniques and principles for the manifestation of hidden levels of the unfolding of the meaning, dictates a new understanding of the correlation of the vocal (associated with the sounding word) and piano (purely sound) series, as well as the interpretation of harmonic logic as "acoustic" system, free of functional tonal connections. Innovative principles appear already in Paul Verlaine's "Three Poems", but even more definitely the novelty of Debussy's artistic position appears in the vocal cycle "Lyrical prose" (1892-1893), the creation of which becomes the stage for writing the most large-scale composer's work based on the prosaic text – the opera "Pelleas and Mélisande".

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