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J. PUCCINI'S OPERA WORKS AS A PHENOMENON OF LATE ROMANTIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE THEME "ETERNALLY FEMININE"

The purpose of the article is to reveal the tendencies of the interpretation of female images in the J. Puccini's opera, to reveal their aesthetic constituent as an idealization of the image, the most characteristic stylistic linguistic indices. **The methodology** of work is determined by the synthesis of genre-aesthetic and stylistic approaches, oriented both on analytical deepening, and on value generalizations. **The scientific novelty** of the article is the discovery of complex genre contamination as the basis of the opera method of Puccini, which is directly implemented in the images of female characters (on the example of the image of Mimi from "Bohemia"). **The conclusions** of the article suggest that the idealized elevation of the image takes place in the opera together with the amplification of the melodramatic origin, the means of expression, inherent in the melodrama. Closing the tragic intentions of the image, they bring him beyond the limits of the plot composition to the cultural-semantic space of "eternal" personification of the idea of sacrificial love.

Keywords: J. Puccini's style, melodrama, tragic, opera image, sacrificial love.

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Оперна творчість Дж. Пуччіні як феномен пізньоромантичного розуміння теми «вічно жіночного».

*Мета статті – виявити притаманні Дж. Пуччіні тенденції інтерпретації жіночих образів в опері, виявити їх сталу естетичну складову як ідеалізацію образу, найбільш характерні стилістичні мовні показники. **Методологія** роботи визначається синтезом жанрово-естетичного та стилістичного підходів, орієнтована і на аналітичне поглиблення, і на ціннісні узагальнення. **Наукова новизна** статті полягає у виявленні складної жанрової контамінації як основи оперного методу Пуччіні, що безпосередньо реалізується в образах жіночих персонажів (на прикладі образу Мімі з «Богемі»). **Висновки** статті дозволяють стверджувати, що ідеалізоване піднесення образу відбувається в опері разом з підсиленням мелодраматичного начала, засобів виразовості, притаманних мелодрамі. Загострюючи трагедійну інтенцію образу, вони виводять його за межі сюжетної композиції до культурно-семантичного простору «вічних» персоніфікацій ідеї жертовного кохання.*

Ключові слова: стиль Дж. Пуччіні, мелодрама, трагічне, оперний образ, жертовне кохання.

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Оперное творчество Дж. Пуччини как феномен позднеромантического понимания темы «вечно женственного».

*Цель статьи – выявить присущие Дж. Пуччини тенденции интерпретации женских образов в опере, выявить их постоянную эстетическую составляющую как идеализацию образа, наиболее характерные стилистические языковые показатели. **Методология** работы определяется синтезом жанрово-эстетического и стилистического подходов, ориентирована и на аналитическое углубление, и на ценностные обобщения. **Научная новизна** статьи заключается в выявлении сложной жанровой контаминации как основы оперного метода Пуччини, которая непосредственно реализуется в образах женских персонажей (на примере образа Мими из «Богемы»). **Выводы** статьи позволяют утверждать, что идеализированный подъем образа происходит в опере вместе с усилением мелодраматического начала, средств выразительности, присущих мелодраме. Обостряя трагедийную интенцию образа, они выводят его за пределы сюжетной композиции в культурно-семантическое пространство «вечных» персонификаций идеи жертвенной любви.*

Ключевые слова: стиль Дж. Пуччини, мелодрама, трагическое, оперный образ, жертвенная любовь.

The relevance of the research topic is due to the fact that a special figurative plan of G. Puccini's operatic works remains unclarified which was formed by female characters and directed in the highest emotional expression, that's why it determines the specific musical and intonational, stage-acting effects. The influence of the female images on the formation of an aesthetic idea and a holistic style decision in the operas of this composer remains an open and not fully formulated, definite issue. **The purpose of this article** is to identify the

tendencies of female images of an opera interpretation characteristic for G. Puccini, to reveal their permanent aesthetic component as the idealization of the image, the most characteristic stylistic language indicators.

In this regard the article suggests appealing to the genre nature and specific expressive indicators of melodrama as a component of operatic poetics that becomes its defining aesthetic and psychological indicator, reveals the main purpose of its characters as conditional “heroes” of an operatic action that has a high artistic and informational conditions (about this as well as about certain aspects of the history of melodrama: [3-4]).

The main content of the work. The term “melodrama” has several meanings since it is applied to different types of theatrical drama combining with certain artistic forms and their expressive possibilities, stands out as a rather autonomous aesthetic paradigm. Literally translated from the Greek melodrama (from melos - "music" and drama - “action”) means musical-dramatic action expressed by means of music or in connection with musical means. In this sense the word "melodrama" was used in Italy (and partly in France) in the XVII-XVIII centuries as a synonym for *opera*, however it was understood not so much as a musical but as a literary, poetic genre. In this sense Italian literary critics still speak of Metastasio as a “master of melodrama”.

The term "melodrama" received the second meaning in the second half of the XVIII century in France to designate a special kind of plays with one or two actors (hence they are also called monodrama or duodrama) the declamation of which was accompanied by music that filled in the breaks between lyrical monologues. An example of such melodrama is considered to be J. J. Rousseau’s “Pygmalion” (1762).

Another meaning of the term "melodrama" appeared during the years of the Directory in France that denotes an adventurous theatrical history with sudden sharp stage positions and a raised emphatic style. It was similar with “Pygmalion” type of melodrama because of the presence of music that reported the approaching of sad or pathetic situations with an alarming *tremolo* which increased the emotional intensity of the action. Playing an important role in the plays of this genre which originated in the boulevard theaters of pre-revolutionary Paris, these musical interludes were called melodramas which gave the name to the whole genre; later they played a role of a secondary moment and gradually atrophied. Then the term was applied to plays devoid of musical accompaniment

but at least partially corresponding to the structure of that particular historical genre that had taken shape in France in the last years of the 18th century [2].

The legitimacy of such a narrowing of the notion of melodrama follows from the fact that the transition from the first meaning of the term to the second and third one did not mean the transformation of a single genre, but on the contrary chaotic and unassembled signs, which provided a single genre form, appeared from different theatrical and situational sources but so far they have recorded the phenomena that are different in their species and semantic essence.

In general the melodrama, passing a rather long way of historical formation becomes a genre-semantic branch of art that has an independent aesthetic orientation on a certain type of interpersonal (subject-subject) relations and dialogical experiences that also attract affective ways of self-expression, self-esteem.

Melodrama combines dramatic and lyrical experience, points to those situations and psychological relationships when some opposition between external circumstances and the internal attitudes of the subject occurs but this opposition can be resolved in each of the parties. The subject is given the right and opportunity to change their attitude, to understand themselves, to empathize themselves and to open their internal forces; external circumstances also allow such changes.

The main difference between melodrama and tragedy is that it offers a happy ending. A happy ending in tragedy or even its speculation destroys the tragic effect. Unlike the tragedy melodrama does not need the death of the best hero. It rather develops the instincts and practices of self-preservation and personal survival strengthening the experience of emotional responses, and for this purpose it strengthens its musical side. Melodramatic tone in opera is able to prevail even when the main character (one of the main characters) dies, perishes, passes away: the form in which it happens removes a sharp experience as tragical, the tragic effect is softened by lyrical emotion created by a musical-sonorous way.

The pairing of the main characters is due to the leading theme of love and allows the authors of operas, including Puccini, to choose a female image as sacrificial which brings a note of high tragedy but dissolves it by providing another subject of the operatic aesthetic dialogue to achieve well-being and to continue their existence. The tragic intention arises as a line of communication between two opera personalities but only one of them dares to solve it and achieve its implementation and an atonement of the tragic guilt, because, according to

Puccini, it is the woman who is capable of a tragic act. Such are Tosca, Liu, Chio-Chio-San; such is Mimi in the opera "Bohemia", albeit in a more "earthly" plot incarnation but significantly advanced in comparison with the literary source. Actually this character begins the gallery of Puccini's mature female operatic characters which indicates that he has reached the permanent author's style coordinates [1].

A mandatory attribute of the melodrama is a fairly convincing long-term disclosure of the emotional state of the character, experience of feeling. This is how the lyrical component is introduced into the melodrama. A long-lasting individual emotion, a motivation of the plot from the side of a personal experience, the opportunity to plunge into this experience and discover its beauty are necessary moments of melodrama.

That is why the *opera melodica* is the equivalent of melodrama in musical art; opera justifies expectations precisely because of its melos, melodic property as a melodrama. On a melodious basis opera melodrama connects the psychological capabilities of a person, first of all, experience of feeling with actions, *the ability to join the eventful life process*. In this way, *the melodrama combines the ideal and the real human worlds* not remaining in them forever but pointing to the possibility of transition from one to another which is its own meaningful dialogue. Thus melodrama influences the formation of the romantic drama which is a "high" genre of the Western European theater of the first half of the 19th century, and *all the main features of the romantic style find a vivid expression in the melodrama of its heyday*.

Melodramatic and opera lyricism are almost synonymous terms. The main side of the operatic effect is lyrical which reveals new possibilities of interpersonal emotional involvement. Opera lyrics is the most socially demanded type of musical and performing art, it is simultaneously implicitly present in the epic and dramatic genre theatrical forms thanks to the expression of the personal beginning in them, including the author's personality; operatic poetics is aimed at identifying and artistic embodiment of common processes of "mental life" that are the most important for human existence, that is, those intimate-psychological manifestations of personal consciousness declaring the socio-historical conditionality of personal uniqueness. Therefore, it can be claimed that a historical-epochal typical image of a contemporary is created in a lyrical way in opera art, it corresponds to the "big" movements of culture, that is the "big time" of cultural human consciousness.

The lyrical *word* appears to be a "poetry concentrate" (L. Ginzburg) the impact of which is building up with the centuries-old tradition of preserving and transmitting

universally significant cultural values, the musical form has a more meaningful thesaurus that generalizes and embodies semantic cultural dominants with specific logical means.

The supporting stages of the formation of musical textual semantics suggest that the genre designation of the operatic form is due to its transitional positions of three main levels of music as an autonomous textual phenomenon: oratorio, motivity and melody. The complexity of the *melodic sphere* of music is explained by its historical prerequisites and psychological purpose, and the opera form becomes the most developed and large-scale genre basis of its embodiment. Therefore in general terms, operatic melos, which determines the language of operatic characters, can be viewed as a kind of speech sphere of music created by accumulating of verbal-musical figures and their interaction-integration that leads to the emergence of *new melodramatic combinations*.

Opera vocal melos which predominantly chooses a solo-ensemble form of utterance is usually aimed at expressing the personal "I" which is always a reflection of the character's dialogical relationships with environment. All the musical and melodic syntagmas, that contribute to this *secumloquium*, form a lyrical and melodramatic imaginative sphere, being formed by long-term communication of verbal and musical logo forms represent the ability of the opera plot to develop on the background of immersed lyrical and lyrical-dramatic verbal-musical text creating their own "imaginary world" and another artistic event reality.

The specificity of the lyrical and melodramatic content of the opera can be defined as an awareness of the individual creative attitude to the "linguistic memory" of the genre, both poetic and musical, the purpose of which is to create an autonomous operatic "stylistic memory" and also to illuminate the nature of the *melodrama which is a phenomenon that directly performs a lyrical interaction of words and music*.

Acquiring a leading role in the development of musical theater and influencing the semantic aspirations of the opera, the melodrama balances the tragic and utopian value poles of the world perception, allows a fictitious idealized reality to successfully replace the real social life, to raise the fateful meaning of the individuals' specific actions in certain circumstances, that is, to enlarge, to raise the existence of an individual to the level of "precious" universal meanings - to the *level of an opera hero*.

The same happens in the opera "Bohemia", the analysis of its figurative content leads to the selection of its main parameters such as: the difference between Puccini's interpretation and the literary source (H. Murger's novel "La Vie de Bohème"); the place of

Mimi's image in the compositional system of the opera, its interaction with the images of "Bohemia", Rudolph and Musetta; musical and dramatic functions of Mimi's image and its evolution throughout the opera; musical intonational expression of the tragic content of Mimi's image; types of intonation and their meaning in the musical concept of opera; leading musical symbols in the opera "Bohemia".

Unlike Murger, Puccini makes Mimi's image main and leading throughout the opera, a kind of "epicenter" of dramatic action (event series), relationships (the lyrical side of the opera), experiences (expressive culminations). Therefore this image has a monothematic basis; this heroine's separate leitmotifs submit to her (total of 5), developing in the context of opera they become symbols of not only Mimi's fate but also the tragic fate of person in general. The tragic idea of the opera: the opposition of a person to the fateful power of external circumstances and finding their own spiritual power, superior to fate, in the beauty of sublime experience that turns the consciousness. Thus, Puccini inherits the ancient model of the tragic with its catharsis effect (the main effect of the last scene of the fourth act), enriching it with the "psychological realism" of the tragic Shakespeare-type theater.

Mimi's image in the opera develops in direct connection with Rudolph's image and in the more distant, mediated connection with the images of "Bohemia". Rudolph becomes an intermediary between the Bohemia world and Mimi's lyrical world which is also expressed in the "mixed" vocal and instrumental character of his main leitmotif. The division of the opera thematism on the instrumental and vocal according to the type of intonation allows Puccini to clearly separate the forces of action, the reality that is merciless to a human, and the forces of countermeasure, that is, the heroine's lyrical world, her special dimension of reality as "a dream of happiness" (words from the 1st act aria). In addition, special semantic functions are formed for each type of intonation, for each genre-stylistic prototype, in this way Puccini achieves figurative clarity, precision of relations, logic of constructing the musical text of the opera close to the literary plot.

Referring H. Murger's novel that consists of a series of short stories, Puccini significantly transforms its content and strengthens its unity. Firstly, he combines two plot lines: the relationship between Rudolph and Mimi and the relationship between Jacques and Francine. He extends the episodic story "Francine's muff" (the 18th chapter of the novel) to the entire line of relationship between Mimi and Rudolph, raising them and giving them a tragic nature. Secondly, if Murger makes Rudolph's image (autobiographical for Murger) the

only one in all the stories, then Puccini sets Mimi's image with him, who gradually becomes the main subject subordinating all the others because it is a kind of "epicenter" of the tragedy. In this way Puccini changes, raises and due to Mimi's image he provides Murger's plot with tragic features. This image is the bearer of a tragic relationship which is passed to other actors by Mimi but initially it is not inherent to them. Mimi in the opera "Bohemia" turns out to be an altruistically loving, sacrificial person whose death is shocking and transforming the whole world of "Bohemia".

Her relationships with other characters are distinguished by three main features. Her image is primarily revealed in the ensemble scenes with Rudolph, that is, dialogic with respect to Rudolph. On the one hand, Rudolph is the closest consonant character for her, in communication with whom she realizes her fate, her destiny; this is expressed in the musical and thematic content of the opera. Rudolph's image is "mirror" in relation to Mimi's. Under the influence of the latter, Rudolph's image acquires lyrically-melodramatic attributes in the first act, being dramatized in the third one and reaches the tragic peak in the fourth act. On the other hand, Rudolf becomes a guide to the world of "bohemia" for Mimi which is especially clearly revealed in the second act. Unlike Murger who made Mimi an integral part of bohemian life, her musical language is fundamentally different from the musical characteristics of "bohemia" in the opera. The vivid dance "waltz-like" Musetta's characteristic is particularly contrasting.

Instrumental and dance constructions become typical for the "Bohemian" musical language. Mimi's musical language differs from them not only in a vocal intonation origin but also in the variety of *melodic intonation* methods. This diversity allows you to musically reveal the evolution of Mimi's image. Therefore, for the "Bohemian" world, including Rudolph, a leitmotif principle is characteristic, that is, the presence of stable repetitive characteristics of the heroes, a kind of "visiting cards" (musical emblems), then for Mimi the monothematic principle is basic which subordinates the leitmotif techniques. The development of the "theme of fate" is connected with her image, the elements of which are accumulated in the text of the opera, and it is fully manifested in the third act and in the second half of the fourth act (in the scene of Mimi's death). "Bohemia" can be considered the first opera in which the meaning of the theme of destiny has already turned out to be fully aesthetic.

The musical and dramatic functions of Mimi's image are determined by the fact that it becomes the center of attraction of the main theme of the opera and the core of the musical scenario. The other characters of the opera have one musical characteristic, but in Mimi's party there are 5 main themes, most likely leitmotifs, since each of them is very laconic. The first one appears at the very beginning of Rudolph and Mimi's scene in the first act and can be called the "theme of the name" (sounds in the words "My name is Mimi"). The second unfolds a complex of "fatal themes", being Mimi's "theme of the illness". The third leitmotif is of a particular importance with a characteristic sequential course, which foreshadows the theme of Mimi's last "farewell" arioso of the 4th act. It is distinguished by its smoothness, intonation of the third chanting, simultaneously rhythmical evenness, simplicity. It is interesting to note that this motive is repeated in Rudolph's party who "echoes" Mimi. The 4th leitmotif can be called "the theme of life" or "the dream of happiness" (it appears in the first act on the words "I like the work ..."); in semantic terms it is dual. On the one hand, it is an arioso cantilena based on the typical for the image third intonations. It is animated by the triplet structures which are a common stylistic feature of Rudolph and Mimi's parties, a sign of excitement, worrying, and in some cases alarm. It is interesting to note that in the "theme of love", that sounded in Rudolph's party shortly before the appearance of Mimi's 4th leitmotif, there is also a base on the third intonation, in its structure and character this leitmotif is close to the "theme of the dream of happiness". It can be assumed that Puccini showed that Rudolph's feeling has an addressee in this way, it is awakened by Mimi and is its peculiar reflection, and the "theme of love" becomes its indirect characteristic and organically belongs to the complex of Mimi's lyrical themes.

We want to note that Puccini is a master of both collective group portraits (the image of "bohemia") and detailed psychological characteristics, that is, of a "large" and a "small" stroke. With the help of one stylistic detail, for example, a triplet, a tremolo, a Scotch snap, tritone passage, he creates the direction of image development, gives it thematic significance. Even the so-called background means receive the figurative significance in Puccini's musical text of the opera, characteristic, independent sign functions. In Mimi's party, a special semantic function has a "quiet" dynamic, that is, the use of PP, PPP, PPPP. Her image is accompanied by a special "silence" which acquires tragic meanings in the last, most literally melodramatic episode of the opera (in the scene of Mimi's death). Mimi's 4th leitmotif, that

is, the “theme of life” in this scene sounds on PPPP becoming the “theme of leaving”, non-existence, disappearance ...

Opposite loud dynamics (FF, FFF) most often expresses despair, pain, protest or denotes expressive melodic climaxes, higher expression of feeling. Also at the conclusion of the arioso from the 1st act Puccini introduces a vocal-recitative patten into Mimi’s party bordering on verbal speech; although it is melodic but it is close to the “natural” speech, and this type of intonation that has appeared in Mimi’s party will be developed in the third and fourth acts. Emphasizing the affective culmination of the tragedy Puccini introduces “half-chanting – half-recitative” into Rudolph’s party, the Sprechstimme technique, that is, the main melodramatic — melodeclamatory — technique.

In the fourth act some more variants of Mimi’s farewell arioso theme appear. It can be said that the monothematic “farewell complex” is developed in the opera. In the third act it includes the “cold motive” and the “fatigue motive”. The fourth passage, the chord composition of the vertical and an amplification of the declamatory intonations in the melody are characteristic for the “cold motive”. These stylistic features become indicative of a farewell complex. The cold motive is sustained in the manner of recitation in Rudolph’s part, it sounds against the background of the triplet excitement motif, leads to the appearance of chromatic passages both in the vocal and in the orchestral parts. Such chromatic passages will sound in the scene of Mimi’s death. It is important to note that the figurative content of the musical theme is revealed in the accompanying verbal speech. The word helps Puccini to clarify the meaning of a musical technique and form its symbolic functions.

Mimi’s farewell arioso concentrates the style of all the motives of fate. It is not by chance that in Mimi’s party two themes publicly confront each other in this last scene: “the theme of life” and “the theme of farewell”. After a deep immersion into the silence of catharsis the theme of arioso sounds again but as a protest against what happened - tutti FFF (purely melodramatic exclamation effect).

Summarizing, we want to note that the **scientific novelty** of the article is to identify a complex genre contamination as the basis of Puccini’s opera method, that directly realized in the images of female characters (for example, Mimi’s image from “Bohemia”).

Conclusions of the article suggest that the idealized lifting of the image occurs together with the strengthening of the melodramatic beginning in the opera, the means of expressiveness inherent in melodrama. Sharpening the tragic intention of the image they take

it beyond the limits of the plot composition to the cultural-semantic space of “eternal” personifications of the idea of sacrificial love.

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Date of submission: 28.06.2017