

**"FAUST" BY CHARLES GOUNOD WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF
GENRE-STYLE MYTHOPOETIC SPECIFICS OF FRENCH LYRIC OPERA**

The article is devoted to the stylistic and spiritual-semantic aspects of Gounod's opera "Faust" considered within the framework of the poetics of French lyric opera.

Keywords: French lyric opera, the opposition "individual - patriarchal," Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's Faust, "religious-philosophical tragedy".

Among the many themes realized by romantic artists, the theme of "Faust" holds a special place. Having served not just as a plot for many samples of romantic poetry and music, it resulted in an entirely new trend in the art of the XIX century. And it's no coincidence, the spirit of "Faustianism", as it is commonly named, was the best match for the pathos of passionate thirst peculiar of the Romantic era and the eternal search of the ideal, permanent internal dissatisfaction and struggle. According to N. A. Kholodkovsky, "Faust" – is the sea, vast and ever-beautiful, changeable and varied, now stormy, menacingly oncoming to the shores, then majestically calm and serene, reflecting the sky with its hot sun, with its countless stellar worlds, full of life and bliss, full of mysteries and inexhaustible wealth ... "[8, p. 2]. "Faustianism" in the works of Schumann, Liszt, Berlioz, Wagner is considerably complemented by Gounod's opera masterpiece. His "Faust" is one of the most famous works of the composer, the title roles of which represent for performers a kind of test on maturity, a test not only of singing but also artistic opportunities and, accordingly, need not only professional singing elaboration, but also the generalizations of historical-stylistic cultural, intonation and figurative-stage procedure, determining the relevance of the topic of the presented article. Its subject is focused on revealing of poetic-intonation uniqueness of Gounod's "Faust" in the context of genre- stylistic, spiritual-semantic specifics of French lyric opera.

The French musical theater of the XIX century was distinguished by the variety of genres, fixing the most illustrative spiritual- aesthetic processes that took place in the French culture of that period in general. If in the first half of the XIX century French opera was represented by large-scale opera compositions in the style of "Empire", and later the genre of the so-called "grand opera", born at the intersection of adoption of national musical-theater traditions and genre-stylistic innovations, then in the middle and the second half of the century one of the leading places in musical theater of France belongs to lyrical opera.

Its emerging was quite natural and caused not only by the specifics of the French musical theater of that era, but also the general genre-stylistic and spiritual quest, illustrative for the Western culture of the XIX century, discovering for itself both social-psychological realities of the world and the human, and their deep spiritual (including Christian) context. Summarizing these trends, N.G. Nevskaya in her dissertation research "Implementation of Faustian theme in the music of the XIX century (2011) reveals the typical features of lyric opera in various European musical and historical traditions throughout the XIX century. Summing up the result of her observations, the author differentiates the works close to this genre field, into three groups.

The first one includes the operas that emerged on the basis of the biblical story, containing "lyrical-romantic drama, "inserted" into the historical-biblical conflict. Among them are the "tragic-sacred" scenes of "Moses in Egypt" by G. Rossini, "The Flood" by G. Donizetti, "Nebuchadnezzar" by G. Verdi, "Samson and Delilah" C. Saint-Saens. In this regard significant are the works by J. Massenet whose operas can be divided into two branches. On the one hand, he refers to the story of J.W. Goethe and creates "Werther," and therefore, among his contemporaries, has earned the title of "the poet of the female soul"... On the other hand – in his works an important place belongs to operas on religious themes which the composer called "sacred." In fact, "Eve", "Immaculate Virgin" represent a combination of lyric opera and spiritual oratorio. The Old Testament story is addressed in opera "Samson and Delilah" by C. Saint-Saens, in the same vein are developed the works by S. Frank, who practically "does not distinguish between genre "zones" of opera and oratorio" [5, p. 92-93], revealing in his concepts the problems of cosmogonic order.

The second type are the operas on historical-religious themes. These include "Les Huguenots", "The Prophet" by John Meyerbeer, "Lombardi", "Simon Boccanegra", "The Sicilian Vespers", "Don Carlos" by G. Verdi, "Maid of Orleans" by P.I. Tchaikovsky. These works, "unfold massive religious and ethical debates and the main historical conflict – more a conflict of worldviews ... "[5, p. 93].

Finally, the third type, according to the classification of N. G. Nevskaya include the operas, the substantive basis of which constitute "lyrical drama, implying a religious conflict," [5, p. 93]: "Norma" by V. Bellini, "The Flying Dutchman", "Lohengrin," "Tannhäuser," "Parsifal" by R. Wagner, as well as "Faust" by C. Gounod.

As seen, the author when differentiating the famous opera masterpieces of the XIX c., to a greater extent, in our view, takes into account not only the national-genre

side of these works, but the peculiarities of their displaying the lyrical factor itself, the lyrical drama in its correlation with the spiritual and religious principles. The French lyric opera of the middle and second half of the XIX c., with all its contact with the designated general genre-stylistic quests of the musical theater of the epoch, however, has a number of specific features distinguishing it from the rest of the genres of European musical theater.

Analyzing this genre within the framework of general evolution of the French musical theater of the Romantic era, it should be pointed out that, on the one hand, French lyric opera can be seen as a kind of antithesis of the "grand opera" of G. Meyerbeer, which is manifested in its structural, scale parameters, in the absence of large mass scenes, in an apparent dominance of lyrical quality and the corresponding types of characters, in leveling the socio-historical factor, etc. On the other hand, this genre retains many aspects of the "grand opera" concept, representing them, however, in a somewhat different sense-figurative and scale-structured "format."

The figurative-semantic nature of the French lyric opera, in our opinion, is the confrontation of the individual "I", the individual drama of the main characters, gaining extremely high importance in the culture of the XIX century, and no less significant spiritual and patriarchal tradition – the environment in which the main characters live and act. The specifics of the indicated conflict between the individual "I" and the standards of "patriarchal society" in the French lyric opera is also determined by its essential Christian (often mysterial) subtext, making the works of this genre sphere acquire also moral-ethical significance, while the essential factor of the main characters' fate becomes their spiritual transformation.

Such semantic "solutions" of French lyric opera enable researcher N.G. Nevskaya to draw analogies between its typology and genre aspects of "religious and philosophical tragedy", the concept of which was developed by F. Schlegel and kept its relevance to the artistic practice of the entire XIX c. [see. more on this: 2, 3, 4]. "The base criterion of the religious-philosophical tragedy in the broadest sense is the conflict of "the superior and the inferior", God and Satan." Speaking further about the dramatic logics of this genre, the author points out that its "procedurality consists of the following stages: the harmony of Creation (God-human) – Testament (agreement -warning) – **exposition**; temptation-sin (violation of the Covenant of God, and together with it, the moral law) – **introduction of the conflict**; redemption (the tragic predeterminacy of human life) – **anagnorisis and repentance-catharsis**" [5, p. 39].

The "plot" logics of "religious and philosophical tragedy," unfolding through the fates of the people who have made their choice, as we see, clearly shows the

biblical origins. In this case "humans often become an instrument of Providence, – emphasizes J.P. Eckermann, – and they should be seen as a vessel for receiving the moisture, which the God will pour in it "[10, p. 554]. It should be also noted this is the very message that defines the concept of Goethe's tragedy "Faust", which will become the literary source for the opera by C. Gounod. The main subject of the God's dispute with Satan is *humans*, and with them the personal tragedy of their life journey, which is the result of their choice.

The semantic logics of French lyric opera, as well as "religious-philosophical tragedy," unfolding through the fates of the people who have made their spiritual choice, also clearly shows the biblical genesis. Such analogies largely determine the personal qualities of some of the French lyric opera characters (especially female ones), deprived of exclusivity and, at the same time focused on the Christian virtues. And the above mentioned opposition "individual – patriarchal" largely determines the style qualities of this genre of French musical theater, born at a kind of intersection of Romantic and Biedermeier tradition. At the same time, the first one of them is associated with a comprehensive display of the inner world of the main characters, their individual psychological drama, while the second one captures the patriarchal world in which the opera characters are staying. This side of French lyrical opera has always been significantly highlighted through support the typical generally valid means of musical expression – folklore, traditions domestic music-making, as well as through direct or more or less indirectly expressed support on liturgical-singing tradition.

"His style became the "language of France" for hundreds of composers of much more modest talent ..." [quot. by: 5, p. 77]. Such an honored evaluation of his heritage received the great French composer Charles Gounod. In order to understand the "paths" of forming the composer's opera works, his sense-spiritual specifics, it is necessary to focus on some aspects of the author's worldview, his aesthetic views, largely determining the poetics of the musical-genre areas, which the composer addressed throughout his whole life.

The creative career of C. Gounod in general was not a prosperous rise to fame. So, among the fourteen operas he wrote, most were not successful and were removed from the scene after a few performances. The pleasant exceptions in this series were "Faust" and "Romeo and Juliet", having glorified the composer's name for centuries. That said, being an innovator in the field of opera theater, C. Gounod was the author of oratorios, the main theme of which was the cult topic. It is significant that the "French authors always distinguish not opera but ecclesiastical oratorios" [4, p. 307]

of the composer, emphasizing the many achievements in this very area. Interest in this field of Gounod's creativity is largely determined by the nature of his personality and spiritual ideals.

On the one hand, like F. Liszt, he was a bright and secular, public figure in the panorama of equally brilliant capital of the world: "His Parisian origin affected his mind, live and direct, the passion for biting wit his bright and independent judgments about musical masterpieces "[7, p. 159]. On the other hand – like his contemporaries, at throughout his whole life, the composer remained a deeply religious "artist wearing soutane." In "a certain period of his life (from October 1847 till February 1848) there existed "Abbe Gounod" wearing spiritual dress, provided by the letter of archbishop of Paris, grating him the right to live in the Carmelite monastery and study as a non-matriculated student, the theology courses at the church of St. Sulpice" [7, p. 162]. This is what Gounod himself wrote about this period in his "Memoirs of an Artist": "That was my third year of performing the duties of regent when I was drawn to priesthood. Besides music, I began studying philosophy and theology, and even putting on a cassock, during the winter attended theology courses at the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice "[1, p.90-91]. According to N.G. Nevskaya, "this stage, in fact, has become fundamental for the composer. The bright evidence of this are the spiritual works that took a significant place in his oeuvre. They form a kind of endless circle, since with them Gounod began and with them also finished his career in art as a "Christian artist" [5, p. 81].

The indicated aspects of C. Gounod's spiritual biography evoke associations with the fate of Franz Liszt, who was ordained abbot in the mature period of his creative activity. Comparing these two outstanding figures of Western European musical romanticism, E. Wilson-Dickson wrote: "Both composers were constantly veering from secular life to the religious one. Theater life for Gounod and easy success on the concert platform for Liszt often drowned out in their souls the desire for monastic cell. And then, during a thunder of applause and at the top of glory a sudden thought drove them away ... and they shut themselves in monastic asceticism... They were alike in their religiosity, in their striving for holy life and wish to write sacred music, which they willingly and vainly considered to be the best of all that they had written in other areas "[6, p. 189]. It can be also noted that the indicated spiritual "ambivalence" of these authors were not a capricious whim or the manifestation of passion for changing impressions. On the contrary, for each of them the spiritual activity in the rank of abbot (albeit a short period) was a serious vital decision. Although eventually each of them has not become a priest (in the full sense

of the word) the depth and sincerity of faith found the imprint in all their creative activity, having determined the "dominance" of directly or indirectly expressed spiritual and Christian ideas in their works. Further to the thought let's remember the words of C. Saint-Saens, who stated that "Gounod did not stop writing for the church all his life, accumulating masses and motets; it was at the beginning of his career, in the Mass of St. Cecilia, and at the end, in the oratorios "Redemption" and "Death and Life" [6, p. 192]. Given the significance of Christian moral and ethical issues in the opera compositions by Gounod, N.G. Nevskaya in her dissertation concludes that "the cantata-oratorio works of the composer form a certain arsenal of dramatic, intonation-thematic means, which will be later materialized in his opera works and, above all, in operas "Faust" and "Polyeucte" [5, p. 88].

The foregoing, in our opinion, largely determines not only the imagery structure of a large part of the musical and theatrical legacy of the composer, but also the genre-semantic specifics of French lyric opera itself. "Faust" by C. Gounod in fact is an example of this typology.

J.W. Goethe's tragedy "Faust" by its very nature is, in our opinion, a unique cultural "crossroads," leading the dialogue, on the one hand, with established cultural paradigms (ancient, medieval, renaissance), and on the other hand – with those eternal problems, archetypal meanings that are rooted in myth, first of all a biblical one, that allows defining the book of the German classic as a kind of "quasi-Bible" of the world literature "[9, p. 4].

Gounod and his librettists turned to the first part of Goethe's tragedy, focusing main attention on the love story of Faust and Marguerite. The fundamental changes of Goethe's story in Gounod's opera are associated with the absence in it of scene "Prologue in Heaven", which actually laid "the foundation" of the main religious-philosophical conception of Goethe's tragedy. In this regard, in the dramaturgy of the opera by Gounod, according to N.G. Nevskaya "... is obvious the "reemphasis" of the content dominants from religious-philosophical – "God – Satan – human" – to the mirrored "human – Satan – God," which unfold in the prologue of the opera" [5, p. 99]. We can also note that Gounod's opera shows obvious rethinking of spiritual significance of the characters and their role in the development of the action. The leading character here is Marguerite (Gretchen), to the image of whom are actually brought all the "threads" of spiritual-religious subtext overtones of the opera, enabling its correlation with the "religious-philosophical drama", consecutively fixing the fall from grace, redemption-repentance, salvation and transformation of the main character.

The dramatic logics of mythopoetic "cross section" of Gounod's opera embodying a religious conflict, is built on the principle of complete circle-cycle: from the fall from grace (collusion of Faust and Mephistopheles in the Prologue) to redemption and forgiveness (Mephistopheles-Marguerite – final). Both scenes are framed by choral Paschalia, symbolizing the eternal Renewal and Salvation. So the storyline of Gounod's opera becomes correlated not only with the semantics of oratorio genre (close enough for the composer), but also with mysterial cyclicality making up, as a result, the in-depth sacred subtext overtone of the analyzed opera within the genre framework of which (the classics of the poetics of French lyric opera) under the external unassuming modesty of figurative-musical expression is hidden a deep spiritual-religious idea.

Representing Goethe's idea, C. Gounod, at the same time appeals to the best traditions of French musical theater, which, as noted above, corresponds to the poetics of French lyric opera. "Faust" uses detailed scenes, combining solo episodes, recitatives, ensembles, choirs, ballet, instrumental episodes combine with individual finished items (aria, cavatina, aria, duet, couplets, terzetto). This combination leads to a very organic unity of stage and musical development. Apart from that, opera widely used the system of intonation relations both at the level of the leitmotifs, and the themes-remiscences connected primarily with the images of Faust and Marguerite. This system does not play that self-sufficient role like in the operas by R. Wagner, but is an important component in the creation of the dramaturgic unity of the opera. Let us also note a special kind of melodic richness of the musical style of the opera, which is manifested in the abundance of bright plastic tunes on which detailed solo, ensemble and choral items are built. The indicated quality of the melodic language of "Faust" by Gounod is completed by the composer's constant appeal to the genres of functional music, intonation field of folk songs (though without quotes), romance, rhythm-intonation structures of march, waltz, i.e. to the spheres of popular music, which determined the simplicity of the language of this opera, imprinting a "big" idea with "small" typical generally valid means of musical expression. The latter, as already mentioned, is one of the essential methods of Biedermeier, the stylistics of which also determines the poetics of French lyric opera.

"Do not expect the clues ... Just as it is with the history of the world and mankind, the problem finally decided, each time discovers new ones which should be solved" [quot. by: 5, p. 45]. This is what J.W. Goethe wrote in one of his letters to Count Reinhardt about the concept and idea of his famous "Faust." Gounod's opera is

one of the links in the chain of clues not only to the great poem by Goethe, but also high music art.

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