

DOI: 10.7596/taksad.v9i4.2865

Citation: Batovska, O., Grebeniuk, N., & Savelieva, H. (2020). Italian Vocal and Choral Music of the Twentieth Century as a Phenomenon of Artistic Traditions. *Journal of History Culture and Art Research*, 9(4), 205-216. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.7596/taksad.v9i4.2865>

Italian Vocal and Choral Music of the Twentieth Century as a Phenomenon of Artistic Traditions

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Abstract

This article is an attempt to study the leading trends of Italian vocal and choral art of the twentieth century. The main stylistic features of the musical art of the twentieth century were convincingly manifested in Italian choral music and embodied in two important tendencies in its evolution. The first tendency was focused on a conscious rethinking of traditions, the second one – on a radical technological renewal of stylistic features of musical creativity. The stimulus for updating the content, genre, and stylistic components of vocal and choral music was the “dialogue” between epochs and artistic traditions. The main results of that process were as follows: a combination of spiritual biblical themes and a modern musical language as well as stylistic innovations; the revival of the *mystery* genre based on texts and plots of the Holy Scriptures; the reproduction of sublime *drama per musica* style; the revival of the traditions of the late Renaissance *madrigal* and combining these traditions with new means of expression and modern techniques of composition. One of the ‘iconic’, most significant representatives of Italian musical culture of the twentieth century was Goffredo Petrassi, a composer, teacher, and conductor. G. Petrassi's choral music had an enormous effect on the development of vocal and choral music in Italy in the second half of the twentieth century. The appeal to the national heritage in Petrassi's work was associated with the revival of vocal and choral genres and manifested itself in the use of stylistic features of the late Renaissance madrigal, characteristic techniques of ancient vocal music. On the other hand, studying works of Renaissance polyphonic schools combined with a deep interest in modern experiments in the field of musical composition, allowed the composer to create an amazing phenomenon of new Italian choral music, which in composition is close to both avant-garde and neoclassical works of the first half of the twentieth century.

Keywords: Italian vocal and choral music, artistic traditions, G. Petrassi, stylistic features, phenomenon.

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Introduction

Italian musical art of the twentieth century is a specific process that led to significant artistic results, the creation of artistic values that reflected establishing and developing a new culture of the century. A characteristic feature of Italian music of the twentieth century, that was common to all areas, is the high level of writing technique and appeal to the world and national traditions.

One of the brightest and 'iconic' figures of Italian musical culture of the twentieth century was Goffredo Petrassi (1904-2003) a composer, teacher, and conductor. His work fully reflects all aspects of style as a creative factor in the national culture of Italy. The composer's works cover a wide range of genres of contemporary music. He is the author of two operas, two ballets, eight concertos for orchestra, which are a bright page in the history of European music, five compositions for choir and symphony orchestra, numerous chamber instrumental and vocal works, music for films, and dramatic performances. The composer's choral works, which most fully embody his ethical ideals, attitude to issues of existence, important aspects of religious and philosophical worldview became probably the most valuable part of his legacy.

The versatility and genre diversity of G. Petrassi's musical heritage require a comprehensive study in terms of historical, genre, structural-dramatic, and other dimensions. The ways of shaping G. Petrassi's style as a composer, in particular in the secular choral genre, which occupies an important place in the Italian musical art of the twentieth century, are among the current problems for studying. This stipulates the topicality of our research and the article as the presentation of its findings. The aim of the research was to comprehend the stylistic guidelines of Italian vocal and choral music of the twentieth century and to study features of G. Petrassi's secular choral music *a cappella* with regard to the dialogue of cultural traditions.

Research Methods

The following research methods were used in the study:

- a historical and cultural method was used for understanding the stylistic trends in the development of Italian choral music of the twentieth century;
- a set of art methods was aimed at determining the genre and style features of G. Petrassi's secular choral music in the cultural and artistic context of the twentieth century and in respect of the dialogue of cultural traditions (stylistic, structural, semantic, choral).

Literature Review

The general theoretical basis consists of works on music and choral art, culturology, history and theory of music, some provisions of which will be specified in the presentation of the research material.

Conceptual theoretical principles were defined on the basis of works on the style of musical art written by such researchers as I. Batyuk, M. Billi, S. Bogoyavlenskiy, M. Bortolotto, V. Varunts, I. Grigoreva, F. D'Amico, M. Druskin, T. Dubravskaya, B. Earle, L. Kirillina, O. Kolovskiy, T. Livanova, M. Mila, M. Mikhaylov, E. Nazaykinskiy, O. Pereima, L. Pinzauti, B. Porena, L. Raaben, E. Restagno, V. Semeniuk, N. Simakova, A. Sheiko, R. Viagrande, R. Vlad, J.S. Weissmann, P. Chesnokov.

Considering the style of musical art was based on the findings of V. Varunts (1988), I. Grigoreva (2006), M. Mykhaylov (1990), Ye. Nazaikinskiy (2003), and Yu. Paisov (1991).

The question of parallels between the traditions of Italian vocal and choral music of the Renaissance and the present was studied by S. Bogoyavlenskiy (1986), M. Druskin (1973), T. Dubravskaya (2001), M. Mila (1959), L. Kirillina (1995), T. Livanova (1963), O. Pereima (2007), O. Ryzhinskiy (2011, 2016), and N. Simakova (2002).

The examination of worldviews and stylistic guidelines of G. Petrassi's work in the context of the development of Italian choral art of the twentieth century is presented in the studies by M. Billi (2002), M. Bortolotto (1960), F. D'Amico (1971; 2003), M. Mila (1943; 1959; 2003), B. Porena (1967), E. Restagno (2003), R. Vlad (1967), J.S. Weissmann (1957; 1959), and A. Sheiko (2016).

To analyze the choral cycle of G. Petrassi, we used the corpus of choral literature written by I. Batyuk (1999), O. Kolovskiy (1967), V. Semenyuk (2008), and P. Chesnokov (1961).

Results and Discussion

Italian choral music of the twentieth century is amazing in its diversity. This period can be defined as a real renaissance of Italian music. It became possible due to the emergence of a number of significant composers, whose creative heritage is now considered as the most important component of the musical art of the period after World War II. Choral works constitute a significant part of their heritage.

The main features of establishing the artistic foundations of choral music of the twentieth century are clearly reflected in the Italian musical art. Two tendencies became decisive in the development of Italian choral art of this period: neoclassical and avant-garde.

The first tendency was related to the revival of the ancient layers of choral music, dated back to the Renaissance, including intensive familiarization with them and their stylistic rethinking. The engines of these processes were the initiatives of the Catholic Church aimed at increasing the attention of composers and performers to the Gregorian chant and the traditions of Renaissance vocal polyphony.

The second tendency referred to avant-garde trends, new composition techniques, a radical renewal of stylistic principles, and modernization of musical language. In the field of choral music, the tendency manifested itself in the search for and introduction of new means of vocal intonation and ways of presenting choral voices, the use of non-musical components. A specific feature was a respectful attitude to vocal voices and choral sound, which contributed to the preservation of self-sufficient beauty of *bel canto*, intonation flexibility, and vocal expressiveness, even in serial works.

The search for new methods of sound production was based on the fundamental discoveries of the first half of the twentieth century in the sphere of composing technique that literally undermined the foundations of the functional tonality. Of particular importance to the Italians was the creative work of the composers of the Second Viennese school (mainly A. Webern and A. Schoenberg), which nevertheless can be considered as only one of the starting points of their creative evolution. The amazing ability of Italian composers to adapt other creators' experience to the conditions of the national-specific cultural environment was clearly demonstrated in the work of L. Dallapiccola, who was the first to introduce Italian composers to the peculiarities of serial technique. Dallapiccola significantly rethought the provisions of this method, coming to the discovery of a new phenomenon, successfully called '*dodecaphonic bel canto*' by L. Kirillina (1995). His cycle *Six Choirs on the Words of Michelangelo Buonarroti the Junior (Sei cori di Michelangelo Buonarroti il Giovane, 1933-1936)* consisting of three series is a striking example of the avant-garde revival of the art of the Italian madrigal. The composer dedicated this cycle to G.F. Malipiero, whose work was a musical landmark for L. Dallapiccola. The cycle was created for different performance groups. The first series (I. *Il Coro delle Malmaritate*; II. *Il Coro dei Malammogliati*) is for mixed choir, the second one (*Invenzione Il balcone della rosa*; *Capriccio Il papavero*) – for two sopranos and two altos and (or for a chamber chorus of six sopranos and six altos, preferably boys) and seventeen instruments (wind, strings and piano); the third series (*Coro degli zitti* – *Ciaccona*; *Coro dei Lanzi briachi*, *Gagliarda*) is for chorus (mixed voices) and orchestra. B. Earle states that in the vocal cycles of *Greek Lyric (Liriche greche, 1942-1945)*, created on the poems of ancient poets translated by S. Quasimodo, in the works of his mature period,

L. Dallapiccola fully uses the dodecaphonic technique, organically merging it into a unique whole with such various stylistic means of ancient vocal music as madrigalisms, declamation, sensory perception of the word, characteristic intonations. Such a combination became one of the fundamental principles of L. Dallapiccola's creative conception (Earle, 2013).

The modernization of the musical language and the search for a place in the new European culture became the main task that united Italian artists of different generations. The senior masters were replaced by talented musicians who established themselves in the postwar period.

Since the early 1950s, Italian artists have been actively involved in the most advanced musical trends of the time, especially the avant-garde. Among the most famous composers of that generation are Bruno Maderna (1920-1973), Aldo Clementi (1825-2011), Franco Evangelisti (1926-1980), Franco Donatoni (1927-2000), Sylvano Bussotti (b. 1931), Niccolò Castiglioni (1932-1996), and Giacomo Manzoni (b. 1932).

In the 1970s and 1980s, composers born after World War II made a name for themselves. A prominent representative of the neo-romantic trend, Marco Tutino (b. 1958), often turns to choral genres. Among his choral works, a special place is occupied by works on religious themes, in particular *Libera me, Lux Aeterna* (1992) on the text by Vincenzo Consolo, which is part of the collective *Requiem Mass for the Victims of the Mafia (Requiem per le vittime della mafia)*, *Kyrie, Agnus Dei* for soloists, chorus and orchestra (1998). Another representative of this trend, Carlo Galante (b. 1959), also tends to religious themes. His most famous choral work is a cycle for women's chorus and orchestra based on the texts of George Herbert's spiritual lyrics (1593-1633).

Composers of the second half of the twentieth century, led by B. Maderna, L. Nono and L. Berio, opened new perspectives in Italian music. O. Pereima, a researcher of contemporary Italian music, argues, that "these musicians no longer simply transfer the leading achievements of world music to Italian soil, adapting them to the national mentality and endowing them with specific features (as was the case mainly at the beginning of the century, in particular with the composers of the "generation of the 1880s"), they become co-creators of a new aesthetic worldview, offering their own original vision of contemporary music" (Pereima, 2007, p. 8).

The tendency to develop and often to rethink the ideological heritage of the Second Viennese School representatives was characteristic to the work of Goffredo Petrassi.

Shaping and flourishing of G. Petrassi's creative personality was enormously affected by the active work of the composers of the "Big Five" (G. F. Malipiero, A. Casella, O. Respighi, I. Pizzetti, F. Alfano), which became a solid ground for the revival of the strong national spirit of Italian choral art in the new context of the development of Italian choral art of the twentieth century.

G. Petrassi's long creative activity can be divided into three periods: *neoclassical*, *dodecaphonic*, and *synthesizing*.

The first period is neoclassical, focused on the spiritual and stylistic canons of ancient Italian art, passed through the prism of the worldview of the artist of the twentieth century. He organically combines the traditions of Italian ancient polyphony with elements of the neoclassical style. From 1934 to 1936 Petrassi wrote *Psalm IX (Salmo IX)* for chorus, orchestra and two pianos.

In 1940, he wrote *Magnificat*, a work for soprano, chorus and orchestra in which, according to the unanimous opinion of researchers, the style of the Venetian choral school – one of the leading polyphonic schools of the Renaissance - was manifested. In 1941, the composer created his most popular work – the dramatic madrigal *Choir of the Dead (Coro di morti)* for male chorus, brass instruments, three pianos and percussion, based on an excerpt from Giacomo Leopardi's *Dialogue of*

Frederick Ruysch and His Mummies. As a demanding critic of himself, G. Petrassi stated that I. Stravinsky and P. Hindemith influenced his early works (Restagno, 2015).

The second period is dodecaphonic, associated with experiments and mastering the twelve-tone technique. In the 1950s, the composer's work included compositions written in a more radical manner, using the principles of serial technique. At this time, he produces the cantata *The Dark Night (Noche Oscura)* for mixed chorus and orchestra, based on a poem by the Spanish poet San Juan De La Cruz, concertos for orchestra, the cycle of songs *Nonsense* for mixed chorus a cappella. But in 1956-1957, G. Petrassi did not use the serial technique, justifying his refusal with the reason that this technique was a tribute to a certain time in music (Restagno, 2015).

The third period is synthesizing. Having mastered the serial technique, G. Petrassi quite carefully combines the new musical language with the neoclassical means already tested in his works, also resorts to timbre-sonorous searches, due to which his style acquires a special originality. Since the 1960s, the composer's creative output includes mainly works on spiritual and religious themes among which are *Propos d'Alain* for baritone and 12 instruments, *Motetti per la Passione* for chorus a cappella, *Beatitudines: "testimonianza per Martin Luther King"* for baritone (or bass) and five instruments (dedicated to Martin Luther King), *Tre cori sacri*, chorus, and *Orationes Christi (the Prayers of Christ)* for mixed chorus and orchestra. The composer's last works were *Inno*, for 12 brass and *Kyrie* for chorus and strings.

The 1980s were the final creative stage of the artist. According to A. Sheiko, "five vocal and choral compositions – fundamental generalizations of the artist's conceptual search – became the quintessence of G. Petrassi's Catholic worldview. *Psalm IX, Magnificat* and *Coro di morti* were written in the early period of creativity. They reflect the active search for their own individuality in the vortex of the dominant tradition and the revival of aesthetics and manners of the masters of the pre-classical era. The boundary between the early and middle periods was the cantata *Noche Oscura*, written in a new, avant-garde twelve-tone technique. In *Orationes Christi*, a demonstration composition of recent years, the artist focused on the timbre-sonorous search, which is most characteristic of his later work" (Sheiko, 2016, p. 80). Thus, the extremely wide range of religious imagery to which the composer refers is a natural consequence of the long creative evolution of the artist, an indicator of his relentless spiritual improvement over a long creative life.

G. Petrassi died on March 3, 2003, less than one year before his centenary. His figure embodies an entire era in contemporary Italian art, he is rightly called the patriarch of the Italian avant-garde.

The interest in choral music can be considered symptomatic for Italian composers, for centuries they were the 'legislators' not only of the basics of vocal composition but also the methods of vocal training. O. Ryzhinskiy wrote in his study, "The uniqueness of these composers in the context of the history of the music of the XX century lies primarily in their deep attention to the discovery of the truly unlimited potential of the human voice. With the external tradition of interest of Italian composers of the postwar generation to vocal music, the initial setting of their work was not so much in compliance with classical norms and rules of vocal treatment, as in the desire to invent and implement an arsenal of new techniques aimed at maximizing the tone of voice" (Ryzhinskiy, 2011, p. 176). The attention to the human voice in G. Petrassi's work is largely related to the composer's desire to convey to the listener specific ethical, religious, and philosophical ideas in verbal terms.

G. Petrassi's choral opuses can be divided into the following three groups:

1. Choral cycles a cappella, united by a choice of texts by a certain author: *Nonsense* (1952) on the versus by E. Lear for mixed chorus a cappella, *Sesto Non-Senso* (1964) on the versus by E. Lear for mixed chorus a cappella.

2. Cantata-oratorio and musical-dramatic works with the participation of the chorus: *Tre cori con orchestra* (1932), *Coro di morti madrigale drammatico* (1940-1941), based on the text by the Italian poet Giacomo Leopardi *Dialogue of Frederick Ruysch and His Mummies* from *Moral Essays*, a dramatic madrigal for men chorus, brass instruments, three pianos, and percussion; *Noche Oscura* (1950-1951) based on a poem by the Spanish mystic San Juan de la Cruz cantata for mixed chorus and orchestra.

3. Spiritual and concert choral works: *Psalm IX* – for chorus, orchestra and two pianos (1934-1936), *Magnificat* (1939-1940) – for soprano, mixed chorus and orchestra, *Mottetti per la Passione [Tristis est anima mea Improprium Tenebrae factae sunt Christus factus est]* (1965) – for mixed chorus a cappella, *Orationes Christi [I. Pater venit bora; II. Paters si vis – Pater mei]* (1974-1975) – for mixed chorus, brass and strings [violas and cellos only], *Tre cori sacri* (1980-1983) for chorus a cappella, *Kyrie* (1986) – for chorus and strings.

In terms of the thematic aspect, G. Petrassi's choral works have three main lines: *socio-political*, *humorous-domestic* and *religious-ethical*. The last line can be called dominant, that characterizes a number of works of the composer throughout his work: from *Salmo IX (Psalm IX)* (1934) to *Kyrie* (1986). As for the first two thematic lines, they are related to the creative search of certain periods of the composer's work.

One of the brightest examples of the phenomenon of dialogue between artistic traditions is the choral cycle *Nonsense* (1952) based on the verses by E. Lear. In the work, the composer has an artistic dialogue with the ancient traditions of English literature – Shakespeare's comedy and grotesque. In his cycle, ahead of numerous avant-garde searches in the field of choral music of 1960-1970s, G. Petrassi used a wide range of such non-classical vocal techniques as sonorous singing, articulation based on acoustic features of phonemes, sonorous-noise sounds – whistling and whispering.

The chorus cycle *Nonsense* was written in 1952 for mixed chorus a cappella. Its structure consists of five numbers I. *There was a Young Lady whose nose...*; II. *There was an Old Man with a Flute...*; III. *There was an Old Man of Cape Horn...*; IV. *There was a Young Lady whose chin...*; V. *There was an Old Maid of Stroud...*

The composer used poems from the collection *Nonsense Songs and Stories* (1871) by Edward Lear (1812-1888) as a poetic base for his work. Edward Lear, an English artist and poet, was one of the founders of English 'nonsense poetry', an author of numerous *limericks* (a form of verse of English origin, usually humorous and frequently rude, in five-line, predominantly anapestic meter). E. Lear's limericks are amusing stories about deliberate actions of very extravagant lyrical heroes and heroines who have certain places of residence. E. Lear's characters were a natural continuation of a number of eccentric characters of English folklore (Belkina, 2006). E. Lear's unpretentious poetry, accessible in terms of perception and humor, found its second birth in G. Petrassi's works.

At the *genre* level, the composer adheres to the genre features of limerick, which belongs to the artistic texts of the small genre. The choral cycle consists of five numbers written basing on limerick texts of different nature. Part I. *There is a young lady whose nose...* of the series tells about a lady who had grown such a long nose that she did not even see its tip. Part II. *There was an Old Man with a flute...* tells the story of a man with a flute. Part III. *There was an Old Man of Cape Horn...* tells the story of old Cape Corn, who is very unhappy with his appearance in the world. Part IV. *There was a Young Lady whose chin...* tells the story of a Lady with a very sharp chin like a hairpin. Part V. *There was an Old Maid of Stroud...* depicts the horror of an elderly person who found herself in the crowd. According to the literary basis, the structure of the choral cycle is built on the principle of contrast.

In terms of the plot line, when embodying the text in the choral cycle, G. Petrassi strictly maintained the order of limerick, the first line represents the hero or heroine and usually ends with

the name of the city, village, country where he or she with which then rhyme the 2nd and 5th lines. Thus, the last line returns the listener's memory to the 1st line, repeating it in a slightly modified form.

This work is, in fact, instrumental music for the chorus. This is a miniature performance, game, theater. Such performances took place in the squares of European cities and aroused genuine admiration of the audience. Therefore, musical decisions, exaggerated, conditionally theatrical, emphasize the characteristic features of the characters. It is very important to take into account when performing this work that the instrumentality affects the careful attention to vocal pronunciation, strokes, nuances, dynamic contrasts, ways of articulation.

The dominant role of the theatrical component caused an even greater departure from the vocal nature of the melody. This was fully in line with the author's intention and was vividly embodied in the virtuosity of choral parts. Instrumentality finds its expression not only in the attraction to sonority, but also in the projection on the choral texture of the techniques inherent in symphonic writing, as well as in the use of genres associated with different types of movement scherzo, etude, prelude.

In the cycle, we can also trace the features of the concert choral style, which G. Grygoreva defines as a capacious concept of 'generalized concerticity' (*concerto grosso*) (Grygoreva, 1991, p. 20). The principle of 'generalized concerticity' in the choral cycle is manifested primarily in the branched texture, which includes divisi parts and solo selection (score: p.6, 7, 10, 19), polyphonic technique (score: p. 5, 9, 11- 12, 15-16, 19), alternation of constant and variable polyphony (score: pp. 3, 7, 9, 13, 18), a frequent change of texture types (score: pp. 5, 8-9, 15), timbre-choral dialogicity (score: pp. 3, 5, 7, 10, 13, 17).

The figurative contrast, special character, culminations-flashes cause a dynamic interpretation of form making the dramatic profile of the work no less important.

The cycle is built on bright contrasts of the sound of one voice and mixed chorus, chorus groups (score: pp. 3, 7-8, 15, 17-18), extremely loud dynamics and muted (score: pp. 3-6, 7-8, 13), often changing strokes: from staccato to legato (score: pp. 3, 8-9, 13), transparent harmonic verticals and dissonant consonances (score: pp. 9, 13).

The peculiarity of the work is the diverse use of expressive possibilities of variable sizes and rhythms (except for piece III), which in combination with a flexible melody of instrumental nature causes extraordinary plasticity and expressiveness of the spoken word. After all, the pragmatic orientation of a limerick is aimed at entertaining the recipient.

A limerick occupies a special place among comic texts, it is distinguished by its non-standard form and unusual content. The above suggests that to create a humorous effect, which is achieved by the unpredictability of the characters, play on words, the tone of a poem, typical of a limerick, G. Petrassi applies the principles and types of choral concerting, in particular, the use of soloists, alternate music one party, contrasting timbre and dynamic comparisons, i.e., dialogicity. Moreover, sections of the form, types of melodic movement, rhythmic structures enter into dialogue.

The duality of the nature of the choral texture (its conditionality by the laws of vertical and horizontal) presupposes the alternate dominance of one or another of its types of choral, polyphonic, heterophony. These properties of the choral texture also contain the prerequisites of the concerto, and the maximum use of textured, dynamic, registered resources of the choir enhances its virtuosic and coloristic qualities.

Thus, choral concerting, based on the synthesis of the principles of 'virtuosity' and 'colorfulness' (richness of timbre phonism), is manifested in the unconventional interpretation of the

chorus, associated with the instrumentalization of choral texture and an emphasized role of phonism (enrichment of timbre and harmonic color).

All this is due to the dominance of the aesthetics of the game and imagination in the musical cycle, playfulness, the spirit of experimentation, ingenuity permeates the entire musical 'fabric' of the cycle. Ye. Nazaikinskiy (1982) emphasizes that the logic of concerto genre is the game logic, the logic of collisions of different components of musical 'fabric', different lines of behavior. The same opinion is confirmed by Yu. Paisov's words about a special type of concert in the modern version of the choral genre. According to the author, concerting is expressed in the drama of timbre-acoustic, high-altitude, textured contrasts, spatial-acoustic comparison of performing groups (dialogicity), expression of contrasting emotions and states and the fullest possible use of virtuoso capabilities of performers (representativeness). A significant role is given to the virtuoso-coloristic concerting, aimed at maximizing the disclosure of performance opportunities (Paisov, 1991).

Thus, the manifestation of the concerto is reduced to representativeness, which is manifested in timbre-color, dynamic, textural contrasts, and virtuosity of performance.

The principles of musical thinking determine the nature of the theme in all issues of the cycle. In all the parts, melodies and intonations of the instrumental type, which are not "comfortable" for singing, but clearly expressive and sharply characteristic, are of great importance. The exception is piece III, where the melody of the song type, mostly diatonic, predominates.

For all the originality of each part of the cycle, for all their uniqueness, the features of choral writing which can be called constant for G. Petrassi, are clearly identified. First of all, we are talking about the sound that is vividly represented in almost all parts of the cycle.

The sound representation combines an external plastic sign and a psychologically accurate transfer of the internal state at one time or another harmoniously. Piece V is demonstrative as the thematic core is a juxtaposition of the complexes of thirds (major third) between groups of female and male parts of the choir. They represent two layers: the first one in the female choir reveals the meaning of the poem (*There was an Old Maid of Stroud, who was terribly trapped in the crowd*), and the second layer in the male choir performs a visualizing function, in other words, paints a picture of the commotion (score: pp. 17-18). This visualizes the text and at the same time conveys a state of inner confusion, fear, and intense anticipation of the elderly person.

In pieces I and II the sound representation is manifested at different levels: first, at the level of sounding of individual words of the text by different parts of the chorus (score: pp. 4-5, 8). You can hear mocking "sympathetic" sighs (score: pp. 3-4, 6, 8), the sounds of the flute (see in the Note Appendix, p. 9), how the snake is crawling and hissing (score: pp. 7, 10), melancholic sobbing (score: pp. 11-12), harp playing (score: pp. 15-16), transmitted by colorful combinations of different seventh chords, ninth chords and whole-tone consonances.

Hence, we observe the globalization of the sonorous-coloristic sense of image and the rejection of tonal-harmonious functional stereotypes of thinking. We should also note the techniques of musical expression used by the composer: choral melodeclamation, vocalization (loud sound, closed mouth); choral glissando; sound presentation techniques; dissonant choral pedals-layers, language recitation. In the cycle, the composer practically does not use classical types of presentation of musical material (unison, harmonic, homophonic-harmonic, etc. types of texture). They are replaced by textural varieties introduced by composers of the first half of the 20th century (for example, diagonal and pointillist textures transferred to vocal music from instrumental) and unique ways of presenting musical material, created by using the technique of Klangfarbenmelodie, which is translated from German means "Melody of sound and color". This technique is sometimes compared to 'pointillism', a technique of painting by the Neo-Impressionists.

The influence of the symphonic genre was manifested in the use of means of representation (sound effects, timbre, variety of manners of such sound production as scream, whisper, glissando, articulation, form of syllables and pronunciation of words), in contrasting juxtapositions, including strokes and nuances; use of a wide dynamic scale.

The musical language is characterized by the melody of instrumental nature, rhythmic sophistication and ingenuity in combination with metrical freedom, which leads to a more accurate and subtle sounding of the limerick; harmonious color remains a stylistic feature of all parts of the cycle.

Thus, the main means of expression in the cycle is a new language of choral music. The operation of special timbre-color sonorities, in general, is characteristic of the music of the twentieth century. G. Petrassi's sonority includes a number of new means of musical expression, conveying specific characters' characteristics. His music pushes the spatial and acoustic boundaries of sound extremely widely. The deeply developed sphere of musical language includes articulation, specially organized melody, rhythmic, methods of sound production. This musical system includes intonations of rhythmic, intoned whispering language (score: p. 10). The vertical expansion of the acoustic boundaries of the range was expressed in the use of extreme registers of bass and viola (score: pp. 7-10, 14-16, 19-20).

Accordingly, in the analyzed Petrassi's cycle, the features of the avant-garde direction are manifested in the following features: the reliance on the polyphonic technique of writing in combination with sonority; monologue nature of expression; features of the presentation of thematic material, the gradual addition of new timbre colors and textured layers to the linearly set out at the beginning of the topic, i.e. the principle of gradual compaction of sound tissue.

G. Petrassi's choral music had a huge influence on the development of vocal and choral compositions in Italy in the second half of the 20th century. Studying the works of Renaissance polyphonic schools combined with a deep interest in modern experiments in the field of musical composition allowed the composer to create an amazing phenomenon of new Italian choral music, which in composition is close to both avant-garde and neoclassical works of the first half of the 20th century. The bold intonation, harmonic and timbre organization of the works demonstrate the organic combination of the traditions of ancient counterpoint with the latest technique of dodecaphony and has rich potential for further experiments in the works of younger contemporaries of the composer.

Summing up the description of some innovations found in G. Petrassi's choral opuses, we can see one interesting feature, the question of timbre, which is always relevant to the composer. The textural originality of this music in synthesis with the traditions of the great masters of the past makes G. Petrassi's choral works an attractive object for both researchers and performers.

Conclusions

The main stylistic features of the musical art of the twentieth century were convincingly manifested in Italian choral music and were embodied in two important trends in its evolution. The first trend is focused on a conscious rethinking of traditions, the second one – on a radical technological renewal of stylistic features of musical creativity.

The genre and style searches of Italian composers of the twentieth century were based on the intensive development of the traditions of Gregorian and vocal and choral polyphony a cappella. At the same time, Italian composers joined the latest European achievements, combining national pre-classical models with forms, genres, and the musical language of the twentieth century.

The phenomenon of artistic traditions became a stimulus for updating the semantic, genre, and stylistic components of choral music. The main features of the phenomenon were:

- a combination in vocal and choral works of highly spiritual biblical themes and the modern musical language and stylistic innovations (*Requiem for mixed ensemble*, *De profundis clamavi for mixed ensemble*, Three works for chorus on spiritual texts by I. Pizzetti, the oratorio *The Last Supper* (1927), G.F. Malipiero's cantata *La Passione*, *Missa Pro Mortuis*, and mystery-play *Santa Eufrosina*);
- the revival of the genre of mystery-plays on the basis of texts and plots of the Holy Bible (*The Sacred Performance of Abraham and Isaac* by I. Pizzetti, *San Francesco d'Assisi* by G.F. Malipiero, *Maria egiziaca* by O. Respighi).
- the revival of eternal themes and images in works on mythological plots (V. Tommasini's opera *Medea*, I. Pizzetti's *Fedra*, *Dèbora e Jaéle*, trilogy "Orpheids", G.F. Malipiero's *L'Orfeide*, *Hecuba*, *Venere prigioniera*; R. Leoncavallo's *Edipo re*);
- the reproduction of the sublime style of *drama per musica*, its musical expression, spiritual sublimity, its characteristic detailing of emotional and psychological nuances of the text and coloristic skill of vocal intonation;
- the revival of the traditions of the late Renaissance madrigal in the choral work of composers who performed in the 1930s, and the combination of these traditions with new means of expression and modern techniques of composition (*Psalm IX*, dramatic madrigal *Coro di morti* by G. Petrassi, *Sei cori di Michelangelo Buonarroti il Giovane* by L. Dallapiccola).

Goffredo Petrassi's work is significant for the Italian choral art of the twentieth century. Addressing eternal themes, philosophical issues, ideals and images of past epochs became a passive form of protest against the inhumane realities of the twentieth century. For the composer, the appeal to the national heritage was associated with the revival of vocal and choral genres and manifested itself in the use of stylistic features of the late Renaissance madrigal, characteristic techniques-signs of ancient vocal music.

Understanding the timbre expressiveness as an important means of revealing the poetic image, the skill of using vocal timbres in the appropriate tessitura, and register conditions, the art of sound reproduction of psychological states demonstrate that G. Petrassi was a worthy successor of the masters of ancient vocal art.

One of the brightest examples of the manifestation of the phenomenon of artistic traditions in the Italian vocal and choral music of the twentieth century is the cycle *Nonsense* by G. Petrassi. In this work, by means of musical expression, the composer skillfully embodied the features of English humor, which are inherent in the genre of limerick. Among them, M. Belkina defines the following features: a broad context that allows for different interpretations; a paradoxical play with words, where the meaning "turns inside out", turns over and instantly returns to its place; the ability to see the absurdity of life and smile at it; the pervasive nature of humor flows from one form to another: a mild irony, a subtle hint, sadness or ambiguous silence, a sharp turn (Belkina, 2006).

The bold intonation, harmonic and timbre organization of the work demonstrates an organic combination of the traditions of ancient counterpoint with the latest technique of dodecaphony and has the rich potential for further experiments in the works of younger contemporaries of the composer.

Thus, the study of works of Renaissance polyphonic schools in combination with a deep interest in modern experiments in the field of musical composition allowed G. Petrassi to create an amazing phenomenon of artistic traditions of new Italian choral music, which had a huge impact on vocal and choral composition in Italy in the second half of the 20th century.

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