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## **BASS PARTS IN OPERAS BY R. WAGNER IN THE ALTERNATIVE IMAGES OF HEROES AND ANTI-HEROES.**

*This article identifies in the bass repertoire on the works of R. Wagner some patterns of selecting the characteristics of heroes and anti-heroes, determined the expressive alternatives of bass-baritone singing and buffo basses. In general, all significant on epoch-making creative twists works of R. Wagner possess the timbre dynamics correlated either with passion collisions or with differentiation on reasoners and will-expressing individuals turning the will into action-evil, or approving by passive resistance to evil, including in the personal unity of one person of type of the characters post-Tristan compositions. The bass parts in the operas of R. Wagner originally from the reformative operas of the 1840s, are endowed with reasoner – «antireasoner» functions including in several works thematically and expressively-sign close to the symbols of the part of Jesus Christ in the German passion, as well as to the legendary-mythological images of the international-inter-ethnic significance.*

*Keywords: role of hero – anti-hero, German passion, reasoner – antireasoner, bass operatic roles, high bass – bass-baritone.*

The relevance of the research theme is solved by singing preferences and the public demand for them: Wagner's operas today form the epicenter of the repertoire choices of opera singers of the highest qualification league, Wagnerian repertoire defined the bases of Ukrainian opera tradition from the beginning of the XX century. Let us remember that in 1920 Odessa city Opera House was named after A. Lunacharsky, and given that the People's Commissar of Education of the young Soviet state was a staunch admirer of Wagner, and also because of the exceptional importance of the German composer's works they were in the theater's repertory.

The study of Wagner's works in musicology is very significant, including the works of A. Serov, A. Lunacharsky, A. Koenigsberg, M. Tarakanov, M. Druskin, M. Cherkashina, E. Markova and others. However, the main subject of study became the reform declared by Wagner whereas the landmark correlation of the composer with the traditions of the German and world music are less covered in Russian and Ukrainian-language literature. In foreign publications this aspect is presented in the work by H. Häusler [6], which defined Wagner's themes and means of Biedermeier, as well as in the book by J. Cassou [2], where Wagner was indicated in connection with the development of Symbolism.

The purpose of this work is identifying in the bass repertoire, built on the works of R. Wagner, some patterns of selecting the characteristics of heroes and anti-heroes, determined the expressive alternatives of bass-baritone singing and buffo basses.

Specific objectives of the study: 1) identifying the specifics of the heroic parts and their antipodes in stage action, coupled with the bass vocality and solved according to the accepted artistic symbolism of the period of the 1840s – 1860s; 2) determining the characteristics of the evolution of basses in Wagner's heroic and antiheroic characters in the works of the 1870s – 1880s; 2) paying attention to the appearance of mythologic indicators of hero-antihero in the semantic filling of Wagner's bass parts.

The methodological basis of the work is the intonation approach of B. Asafiev's school in Ukraine [1; 3; 4, etc.], where the style comparativism and hermeneutical methodological sections are the major figures in the sphere of analytical, historical-chronological, structural-functional analyticity, comprehensive principle and others, collectively enriching the traditional holistic musicological analysis.

The object of study are the bass parts in the operas of R. Wagner, the subject – the indicated parts within the chronology of the 1840s – 1860s and the 1870s – 1880s. The scientific novelty of the work: 1) for the first time are accented certain timbre preferences in imprinting the actual image-idea in accordance with the "call of the time", 2) for the first time in this perspective are analyzed the respective parts in operas by R. Wagner; 3) original is the approach from mythologic settings of moral ambivalence good/evil in using bass timbre in the works of the composer from the 1840s – 1860s to the 1870s – 1880s. The practical value of work consists of the usefulness of its materials for singers-practitioners, for working at vocal classes and at the courses of music history, the history of performing art in universities and related secondary educational institutions.

R. Wagner from the 1840s to the 1860s created his concept of opera – musical drama as the fruit of reform aimed at building the National theatre glorifying the history and myths of the nation. From the "Flying Dutchman" to "Tristan" develops a clear aspiration to the symphonic-poem integrity of reading the dramaturgic plan of the opera, until the single-tone writing "Dutchman" and "Tristan." In the 1870s – 1880s there occurs the unfolding of this concept of musical drama, on the one hand, in the direction of cyclization-symphonization of musical-epic narration ("The Ring"), and on the other – in "Parsifal" at the new level appears the introduction of symphonic-poem principle into opera.

These dramatic quests of Wagner were associated with the quality of expressiveness of the created characters' features, elevated by mythological or historical theme over the

existential dramatism of human passions in favor of capturing the *heroic* deeds – with the understanding of heroism in the line of cogitative antinomies of the Romantic era and developing symbolist art-style paradigm. And a special meaning load obtains the bass timbre in the characterization of these heroic peripeteia, since the intellectual understanding of things, omniscience of underlined by bass part character was strongly associated with the German passion tradition of representing Jesus's part by bass singing. Accordingly, the tenor interpretation of the narrator's part in passions likened the characters, fitted with the respective voice- plastic quality, with representing the multiplicity of human ways to the Truth.

In this regard, it is significant that the first reformative opera of R. Wagner – "The Flying Dutchman" – focuses on the bass voices, representing the Dutch and Daland. The symbolism of the Ahasuerus, the biblical character, punished by the painful immortality for denial of sympathy to suffering Christ [5, p.13-14] that formed the personifications of the Flying Dutchman, the Wandering Jew, Immortal Mark and others, created in the main character a wonderful combination of moral positive and negative: " ... it is the enemy of Christ, but at the same time, the witness of Christ, the sinner, struck by a mysterious curse and a frightening only with his look as a ghost and a bad sign (comp. later legend of the Flying Dutchman ") [5, p. 13]. *The only time* in the operatic heritage of R. Wagner occurred the nomination of the protagonist in the baritone part, interpreted in the performing efforts as a bass-baritone sound. The protagonist, a twinning with the biblical antihero Ahasuerus, acting as the antipode of Christ in the specifics of the story feed of the character was joined with the Son of God, by *co-presence* of the Feat of Christ, as well as the measure of suffering, in which he was immersed, and yearning for Penance, which had to come to him outside and personalized in the image of Senta. Unrepentant sinner and sufferer, the witness of the Feat – this is a symbolic moral "node" that characterizes the named character, likened by bass timbre with Christ passions, but at the same time noted by that "tenor" motorics that distinguishes bass-baritone timbre sense, comparing with Him, and at the same time putting off such likening.

In subsequent reformative operas, including mysterial-visionary opera "Lohengrin", the composer clearly focused on the tenor initiative of rendering the figurative-scene pathos of music: Tannhauser, Lohengrin are tenors, they are confused and fragile in performing

their high mission, the meaning of which finally triumphs in the development of their characters-images. And that is in accordance with the mission of passion tenor-Narrator informing multiple human detections of reaction to the Truth. And support or opposition to the said the heroes is formed by the bass and baritone parts, clearly divided on the heroes and anti-heroes: the bass-baritones Wolfram (in "Tannhäuser"), King (in "Lohengrin") as the center of positive – and Telramund as an expressed anti-hero ("Lohengrin").

The timbre line of "Tannhäuser" is picked by "Tristan", the opera, created in the 1850s and made up the emblematic and the center of innovations of Wagner. In the concept of "Tristan and Isolde" significant is the bass environment of the hero, whose part is solved as the part of Tannhäuser in the line of new to the opera theater of the 1840s – 1850s dramatic tenor, i.e., baritonely colored tenor with mixed high sounds traditionally resolved by tenors with solely falsetto singing. The punishing law, stern but morally impeccable, is personified by King Mark, while the baritone part of Kurwenal, squire and associate of Tristan makes up a kind of link between the Law embodied by Mark and the existential service personified by Kurwenal. Accordingly, the bass timbre clearly forms imprinting of the moral core of stage action and the noble reasoning Mark in pro passion plot structure of the opera represents correlated with Christ fulfilling the will of the Father.

A special kind of *exclusivity* of timbre readings distinguishes opera "The Master-Singers of Nuremberg" by R. Wagner extremely valued for its *nationality* by the Russian representatives of the Mighty Handful. The central character of the opera, "demiurge" of good events of class unity of Germans – this is a craftsman and a master of singing in one person, historic figure, Hans Sachs, one of the most original composers of the XVI century, those melodies inspired the creators of the Lutheran Church. Sachs's part is the bass part, according to the plot function – "hyper-reasoning" and at the same time accommodating from the height of moral problems, the "Figaro complex" wisdom at the level of religious *all-understanding* and activity in the accomplishment of *good deeds* – of existential and *over-existential* property. Besides him, *eight* more characters are resolved in bass tessitura, while tenors – six. Of all the participants-soloists female roles were *only two* (both sopranos: let us not forget, in passions soprano symbolize the Soul, which is correlated with the plot function of the protagonist, pointedly called Eve). Alone this reason of the predominance of

male singing in the opera develops the color of likening to old-church timbre settings which made kin this opera with the singing preferences of the composers of the Mighty Handful.

In performing interpretations, the specified image of Sachs is solved in the role of bass-baritone, for compatibility with Jesus' passion *omniscience* is obvious – and at the same time apparent are everyday "de-etymologizations", understanding the intricacies of the events indicative of passion tenor manifestation.

The antipode of Hans Sachs is Sixtus Bekmesser, his bass part is frankly resolved in the spirit of buffo bass. The image of Bekmesser is solved in terms of claims to leadership, rejected by society, imprinting the art of the passing generation, pressed by the expansion of youth and supported by experience and by the sacrificial consciousness-action of H. Sachs. Music imprinting is solved by the caricature of vocal figuration, which made up the sacred symbol of Baroque vocal and its models in romantic bel canto, pressed by pathetic intonation sphere.

It should be noted the fact that these bass parts tend to the line of "high" bass since their "percussive" moments were focused on the expressiveness of the middle and upper registers of singing range.

In this context, Wagner's decision appears logical to highlight Wotan's part – "pass-through" for all the four operas of the tetralogy – as the party of "high" bass and in general bass-baritone. As that the most psychologically developed stands Wotan's part in the second opera of the tetralogy – in "Valkyrie", where the scenes of this character with Brunhilde, his beloved and rejected in the plot twists and turns daughter, presented in the most "incarnated" key, whereas in other parts of the tetralogy, especially in "Das Rheingold" and "Siegfried" Wotan is more demonstrative-symbolic in the implementation of the marked role of "high bass" – bass-baritone.

There occurs a strange parallel to the same timbre equipping of Figaro in A. Mozart's opera: indeed, Wotan appears in the same role of intellectual redundancy for "squabbling of the world", which is comically resolved in the work written on the play by Beaumarchais, which leads to catastrophic-tragic finale of the tetralogy. Yet fixed by R. Wagner timbre likening to Mozart's Figaro is symptomatic: both the first and the second are "the organizers of the World", just the first one – at the universal level, and the second one – at the level of everyday passions/passionnies. The central scene in the characterization of Wotan is

considered to be the final scene of the opera, making up "Wotan's Farewell to Brunhilde" (scene III, action III). But *it is in this very scene, "high bass" – Wotan demonstrates the importance of the low register. Including – in the touching sotto voce; in the vocal of this kind the hero tells the innermost secrets of his divine heart and hopes for the organizing the Order of the world.*

Thus, the introductory part of said big scene is resolved on Brunhilde's appeal – and Wotan's monologue is built like response to the daughter's questions. The first step of the indicated monologueness appear Wotan's lines placed in the low register of range being grouped around height E<sub>is</sub> and H ("Doch meine Weisung nahm ich zurück!" – "But the solution this I took back!").

The first phase of Wotan's monologue ("So tatest du ..." – "You did that ...") richly and diversely represents bass vocal, including dynamically variously presented high register. But final is the phrase: "... als mir, göttlicher Not nagende Galle gemischt?" – "... so that I, a suffering god, tasted bitter bile?" – in which gradually flowing move captures heights of high octave A<sub>s-G</sub>. Downward penitential sequence, here sounding with breakdown, piano, takes place in an angry and penetrating form in the next line, underlining H of high octave ("... für die Frau, noch für ihres Schoßes Frucht!" – "... alien will be both to me!").

The final scene statements of Wotan are placed in the typical of this voice-timbre quite high tessitura, while the words of the Farewell itself are resolved pathetically quietly (*pianissimo*) – comparing different register areas, but with the completion on H of high and low octaves ("... die Göttlichkeit von dir!" – "... relieves immortality from you!"). But this phrase *is that "quiet" culmination of the monologue. And such a culmination in sense is opposed to the angerly punishing pathos of the words "... göttlicher Not nagende Galle gemischt?" ("... A suffering god, tasted bitter bile?").*

Thus, Wotan's part in the climax moment of his discovering quite markedly demonstrates attention to the low register by placing the climax-essential expression into the notes of the low range. Although this interpretation is far from the *sublime* interpretation of the low register of the bass range, indicative of the Russian tradition, still here significant are the moments of *animateness* of statement, penetrating into the sphere of heights, unrepresentative to express a positive attitude in the other fragments of the part.

The opera, worthily summarizing the mysterial aspirations of R.Wagner – opera-*mystery* "Parsifal" also captures the essential idea of the composer's timbre strategy in presenting dear to him the ideas of mysterialogical action. Let us remember that of the six main characters (Amfortas, Titurel, Gurnemanz, Parsifal, Klingsor, Kundry) five are male characters, of whom only Parsifal is tenor, Amfortas – baritone and three basses (Titurel, Gurnemanz, Klingsor). The libretto contains direct parallels to the biblical motives and according to these plot figures, Amfortas is most directly compared to the martyr Jesus.

Gurnemanz, a faithful servant of the Grail, represents the order of the Service, joins the new to the Knight Brotherhood, that is, performs the functions of Pastor-preacher, who also form the inalienable aspect of the activity of the New Testament Jesus. Let us immediately note: the baritone part of Amfortas has the breadth of the range, which generally correlates with the register features of Gurnemanz's part.

Bass coloring of the voices of both these characters, correlated by their function in the story to Jesus passion, is regular in the German tradition. Bass is also the part of Titurel, Amfortas' father, guiding from Non-existence the actions of his son. Bass timbre brings these persons together, creating a kind of "trinity" of son-father-pastor, causing the association with God the Spirit and God-man of the Christian religious beliefs.

Gurnemanz has another function – telling, explaining what is happening. He is the teacher and educator of Parsifal (tenor), of the wild and homeless, but performing the feat, for which were not able the best of the best knights of the Holy Grail. This "illegitimacy" at first of the future hero makes up an analog of the biblical Samson, of the Good Samaritan, and others, recalling numerous mythological representations, according to which the imperfect and despised by limited people creature, being understood and supported, turns out to be true Perfection.

The image of Kundry, making a direct analogue of the biblical Mary Magdalene, imprinted the idea of distraught human soul (symbolized by soprano, this is the very voice demanded for the singer, performing the role of Kundry), – but let us not forget that it was soprano that symbolized the soul, confusedly clinging the body, and then to the Spirit. But most of all passion analogies excite multiple choral scenes of this opera-mystery, reminiscent of archaic religious chants.

Another character is endowed with bass part – Klingsor, the black knight-antihero trying to impose his unjust law to the world. Klingsor is "antireasoner" imprinting the values of denying the testaments of the Holy Grail. Klingsor is the destroyer of the created things, that is the basis of the world order. The mythological image of Klingsor has obvious historical analogies – Herostrat and others, implementing the destruction of what was built up over the centuries by the people and its heroes.

The Berlin staging of "Parsifal" of the 1970s, that modernized the action keeping the secret of the Grail in the cleanliness of forest wasteland, in something happening either in outer space, or in the hospital wards, where on treatment was the whole world and its suffering heroes – the blue and white tones of cleanliness and "depth" made up the specifics of the positive sphere of action characteristics. The red color of fires as a symbol of destruction, marked Klingsor's leaving the surrounding.

This principle of distributing voices-timbres with emphasizing the bass specifics of sounding in general allows to clearly distinguishing the idea of R. Wagner, for whom reasoner- reasoner constitute a single line of meaning: lead by over-personal-will solutions. They are also opposed by the images, endowed with the ability to act, in accordance with their will, and, passing through mistakes and falls, take up the Great sacrifice.

Summing up the observations of Wagner's operas from the perspective of manifestation in them of reasoner's vision of events and characters, we can note the following:

1) all significant on epoch-making creative twists works of R. Wagner possess the *timbre dynamics correlated either with passion collisions or with differentiation on reasoners and will-expressing individuals* turning the will into action-evil, or approving by passive resistance to evil, including in the personal unity of one person of type of the characters post-Tristan compositions;

2) the bass parts in the operas of R. Wagner originally from the reformative operas of the 1840s, are endowed with reasoner – "antireasoner" functions including in several works thematically and expressively-sign close to the symbols of the part of Jesus Christ in the German passion, as well as to the legendary-mythological images of the international-inter-ethnic significance;



3) the bass parts of R. Wagner, are mainly addressed to the expressive possibilities of the "high" bass, although the most semantically important images-characters are deployed to the sounding of "baritonized" tenor and baritone as such; mythologic complex in coming closer to trickster marker (the unity of the high and the ridiculous) emerges in the characterization of Wotan as embodying the general idea of the Wagnerian heritage in general;

4) the vocal expressiveness of the bass parts (basses and baritones) in the operas of R. Wagner avoids direct comparison of reasoning of bass vocal with trickster-clownish incarnation of buffo bass which was made by Wagner only once in the antithesis Sachs – Bekmesser in "Master-Singers" while the demonism of quasi-psalmody and vocality given in the unity of the hero-antihero Flying Dutchman of the first reformative Wagner's opera is realized in the fullness of personification of opposites in the bass parts of Amfortas and Klingsor in "Parsifal."

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