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ROBERT SCHUMANN'S "CARNAVAL" AND TENNESSEE WILLIAMS'S "CAMINO REAL"

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Summary:

This article has the following theme as a subject of the research: the parallels revealed at the ideal, semantic and artistic-contents levels in the piano cycle "Carnaval" by Robert Schumann and in the theatrical play saturated by romantic tendencies, "Camino Real" by Tennessee Williams. These two opuses have common features:

- *Innovative nature: in "Carnaval," there is present an unprecedented connection with the literature, and in the Williams's play, with the music.*
- *"Carnaval" points to the radical changes in the musical thinking, and "Camino Real" is the beginning of a new stage of the American dramaturgy;*
- *The opuses have reflected the fragile psychics of the authors, inclined towards fragmentation;*
- *The virtual reality is constructed in an allegoric form, by means of symbols;*
- *There is portrayed not only the carnival as a real ritual but also 'carnivality,' too, as a method of thinking;*
- *The fight not against the past, but against the outdated ideas, as a token of the renewal of the society;*
- *In "Carnaval" the literary narrative determines the form, and in Williams's play, the music plays a dramaturgic role;*
- *"Carnaval" is a suite with a preamble and 21 pieces, and "Camino Real" is a one-act play with a prologue and 16 blocks;*
- *Reality is intertwined with phantasy;*
- *Outer looks or the psychology of the characters is represented, in somewhat exaggerated way, with the strokes characteristic for them.*

Keywords: *"Carnaval", coincidences, parallels, carnivalness, romanticism, ritual, society*

In the present article, the subject of research is represented by parallels revealed at the semantic and artistic-contentual level between Robert Schumann's piano cycle "Carnaval" and Tennessee Williams's theatrical play "Camino Real," saturated with romantic tendencies.

In general, the legacy of both artists stand out by innovative nature. Schumann has demonstrated that a vocal and instrumental cycle can be loaded with the topical social contents. He created a dramaturgic development oriented towards literature and determined by publicist ideas. If in the epoch of classicism, the narrative did not influence the internal immanent contents and structure of the musical form, later, the unprecedented connection with the literature conditioned the innovative nature of the music as well as distancing from the traditional form of the musical logic [1]. Accordingly, during the analysis of Schumann's cycles, in the first turn, we pay attention to the literary scenario and the publicistic idea, which represent the keys to the processes undergoing in the music. Williams, too, radically altered the theatrical language. Since 1944, with the play "The Glass Menagerie", he created an unprecedented plastic theatre. He assigned dramaturgical

importance not to the verbal text but to the costume, requisites, lighting, sound effects, and he put forwards plastic imaging as more important in comparison with the verbal one [2]. Hence, it is only possible to grasp the essence of the play, if one applies a complex analysis to the listed components.

Innovations of these two artists are clearly manifested in their works selected for this analysis; with his *Préambule*, Schumann has announced his own carnival as open. The sequence of the pieces is based upon the cause and effect relationships, the carnival masks are grouped using a certain principle, and the festive procession is presented as inclusions between the pieces describing the personages (Valse noble, Réplique, Aveu, Valse allemande, Reconnaissance, Promenade, Pause); in the finale, the opposition of the progressive and regressive parts of the society is symbolized by the alteration of concrete musical sections and with the respective musical theme (*Grossvater Tanz*), which has a subscribed remark: ‘theme of the 17th century.’ What is this, if not a musical novella and a complete innovation? In “*Camino Real*” plastics, requisites, lighting, and, above all, music have unprecedentedly augmented dramaturgic roles. In the play, which is full of concrete voices (the sounds of crickets, whistling of the wind, and noise of motorcars) music can be heard during all the blocks. Often, the verbal text of the characters suddenly gets interrupted and turns into music or vice versa: against the background of music, too, new characters are introduced. The sole fact that the characters get associated with a certain melody, genre or musical instrument, altogether finally turning into a certain scheme of leit-timber and leit-melody, is worth a lot of explanations (Marguerite Gautier enters the scene against the background of the waltz, lord Byron is pictured against the background of flamenco tune, Baron de Charlus is presented against the background of a light, entertaining music; the leit-timber for the Gypsy is a gong, and Byron listens to the music of silence which is the music of heart for him). Often, blocks of the play begin with the music.

“Carnaval” is a certain chrestomathy of Schumann’s creative principles, a geography of the composer’s soul. Tennessee Williams, too, believed that he expressed his own self most perfectly in “*Camino Real*.”

Both works have turned out to be inappropriate for the contemporaries. “Carnaval” was not recognized in the composer’s lifetime, his contemporaries saw only chaos and anarchy in it. Just certain pieces of the cycle used to be performed by Clara and Liszt. Chopin, who liked only the design of the title page in “*Kreisleriana*” devoted to him, never recommended his pupils to perform Schumann’s music, and did not consider “Carnaval” as music at all [3]. The premiere of Tennessee Williams’s play (1953) was also unsuccessful. It was nicknamed as “the weakest (melancholic, reflected in a black mirror, pessimistic) play” [4]. “But what the critics pointed out as his biggest flaw was in reality the source of his strength. He was fueled by the inner world of his own madness and excesses” [5]. Cannot we indeed discern certain “zones of madness” and exaggerated emotions in Schumann’s music?

The works that once the society and contemporaries perceived as anarchy, in fact, were quite clearly thought through by their authors in view of the functions of each of the details as well as in view of the whole concept. According to the subtitle of the “Carnaval” (little scenes on four notes), the pieces are built upon the principle of variation, as many pieces of the cycle are based on and are bound together intonation-wise by combinations of 3 or 4 sound motifs (sphinxes) of certain notes (A Es As C H) arranged in various sequences. Really, these motifs do not represent a theme having a certain finished musical idea, accordingly, the pieces, the thematic basis of which they constitute, are not even perceived as traditional variations. Linking of preamble and finale by means of the intonation also points to making whole of the carnival as a certain ritual or show. Thus, the idea is clear enough, at the same time, it is wistful and inventive. Schumann has showed forth an ideal society, which wishes progress and renewal of the universe, created in his imagination. Tennessee Williams, too, thought that he has managed to formulate the structure in the most logical way in this play and has yielded the result _ and he has shown forth the universe that has broken romantics as

well as digested the romantists and found the way out in the form of an escape from the mossy society. He gave the following estimation of the idea of the play: “nothing more nor less than my conception of the time and the world I live in” [6].

Both works have the features of an autobiography. The introvert Eusebius and extrovert Florestan featured in “Carnaval” represent certain auto-portraits, alter egos symbolizing mindsplitted of Schumann. Generally, Schumann did often identify himself with his own personages (Eusebius, Florestan, Maestro Raro = Clara + Robert, Johannes Kreisler) [7]. Tennessee Williams believed it to be a writer’s duty to transform one’s own experience into the fiction, so he codified his own person into the personage, Blanche DuBois [8]. Moreover, in “Camino Real” he considered Don Quixote to be the symbol of his own spiritual world.

Both authors have the inclination to the fragmentation of thinking, which is manifested in the fact that Schumann’s pieces and Williams’s blocks represent an extrapolation of one motif, for which it is less typical to be further developed. Thus, both artists were attracted by the cycle created with miniatures. “Carnaval” consists of 21 pieces, and one-act play “Camino Real” consists of a prologue and 16 blocks. In “Carnaval”, the pieces change each other with a kaleidoscope speed. In the fifth block, Kilroy says, “the blocks go fast on this street!”

Both opuses belong to the range of enigmatic creations. Schumann loved secrets, cypher symbols, he was fascinated by the correspondences of letters and notes as well as by anagrams (A.S.C.H. - S.C.H.A: Lettres Dansantes, let us also remind ourselves the Variations on the name “Abegg”). In “Camino Real,” too, there is used the pun with syllables and, apart from the traditional English alphabet, there is used also the English alphabet of transcription; it is transcribed as such: the place of action – “Town which is the end of the *Ca m̃no* Real and the beginning of the *Ca m̃no* R e al.” Mysticality of “Carnaval” is mostly conditioned by musical cryptograms. Sphinxes are depicted by medieval brevises without indication of rhythm and tempo. Range of combinations of several sounds, so called musical anagrams represent a coded puzzle. Schumann predicted that “deciphering my masked ball will be a real game for you” [9]. In Tennessee Williams’s play, too, there occurs a mystical and enigmatic hero, a character of the second world war epoch, already turned into a legend, Kilroy, who has been the object of Hitler’s and Stalin’s keen curiosity; in the play, this personage leaves three mystic inscriptions on the walls: “Kilroy is coming... is here... was here.” In addition, an encrypted letter using the Morse code is sent to Casanova.

Both works are not characterized by the tendency of demagication (Max Weber’s term): the real and fantastic heroes are considered as belonging to the same society which evens reality to the phantasy. “Humankind cannot bear very much reality,” says Williams’s character, Madrecita. His play, too, is such a mixture of reality and phantasy, where it is impossible to separate them from each other.

Both opuses stand out by idealization of the past; in “Carnaval” this is expressed through medieval brevises, adherence to the traditions of commedia dell’arte, Schumann’s neo-version of the group of musicians of the Biblical David, and with Williams, Don Quixote of the renaissance spirits, romanticist Byron, and heroes of the world literature of the 19th century.

In both opuses there were revealed the archetype signs of the carnival: monologues and repliques, which were inserted during the occurrence of the carnival; pairing of the characters, appearance of antipode characters, binding the twist, opening of the twist, background numbers, contrast scenes, inclusions. We must also mention here that, as distinct from Tennessee Williams, Schumann is consciously oriented to the Venetian commedia dell’arte as to the model for which it was typical to improvise within the framework of a certain scenario. In the 11th block of Williams’s play, the writer, too, instructs the director and choreographer to present the carnival in the form of a primeval ritual. Ever unresting Kilroy disguised as a clown in order to make people laugh, with his

nose that is lighted by a button, reminds us of Arlequin. Despite the fact that Williams's theatre is based on the language of gests and Kilroy uses stock comedic routines typical for *commedia dell'arte*, there is still present the non-conscious influence of comedy of masks. Jacques Casanova is the only personage who makes real associations with Venice. Madmen and eccentric people were necessary participants of the medieval carnivals [10]. In the characteristics of Schumann's several personages, there is clearly seen eccentricity (Paganini, Arlequin, Florestan). Often, Williams's heroes find themselves at the verge of madness; at least, the action takes place in the dreams of the most eccentric literary personage, Don Quixote. Both works stand out by the humoristic tendencies typical for carnival: "Sphinxes," "A.S.C.H. - S.C.H.A: Lettres Dansantes," "Coquette," "Réplique." With Tennessee Williams, the humoristic strokes are connected with streetcleaners, Esmeralda, scenes of the laboratory examination of cadavers, etc.

In both opuses, waltz, which is the canonic genre of the carnival processions, has been assigned the greatest importance. In Schumann's "Carnaval," apart from the concrete waltz genre, in many pieces there occurs waltzlike moments, the rhythm of waltz ("Florestan," "Estrella," "Promenade," and in Williams's play, the writer often points to the sounding of waltz).

Both artists are masters of portrait. They have turned into portraits not only the images of the characters, but also the states of their souls. Schumann classifies his characters into types with simple methods, just two or three strokes specify the individual features of the personages, which makes their outward sides even visually perceivable. The motif of Pierrot, the tearful personage of *commedia dell'arte*, is emphasized by the repeated motif symbolizing sobbing, and the uneven manner of his allure, by the sounding built upon the opposition of portamento and legato, piano and forte. Accentuation of the bar on the weak time, movements on broad intervals make the visual effect of the jumps and fall of Arlequin performing risky acrobatic numbers. Rhythmic movements on staccato are perceived as a sort of a preparation before a new jump. Paganini's image is retold by complex virtuoso passages. The personage of Florestan, vibrant, ever in quest, inclined to sudden changes of temper and mood, is narrated by means of the changes in dynamics and texture. The character of the functionally unsolved hero is symbolized by a sudden suspense of the piece at the diminished seventh. His own portrait insulted Chopin, as he has found a parody of his personality in this opus [11]. With the same logics, hereby we deal with the parody of Paganini, too. Tennessee Williams is considered the best portraitist throughout the whole American dramaturgy, describing a personage with just several strokes as well as being able to make one's parody with the same several strokes. In "Don Quixote," with the blue ribbon there is emphasized his knightly soul; Byron thrown into the garbage could be easily found as the poet shines there, too. Kilroy grabs his golden heart back from the instructor, as for him his heart is dearer than his mind; Marguerite Gautier announces in advance her planned adultery to a man. It is obvious, which states of soul are hypertrophied by the writer. Grotesque, which is a constituent part for the semantics of a carnival, is retold in the pieces "Coquette," "Réplique," and "A.S.C.H. - S.C.H.A: Lettres Dansantes" with Schumann. Williams's scene of restoration of Esmeralda's virginity and Marguerite Gautier's chronicles of an adultery foretold, both acquire the tints of grotesque.

Both opuses present antipodes (in "Carnaval," Pierrot and Arlequin, Eusebius and Florestan; in "Camino Real" with Williams, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, Byron and Casanova) and pairs (Pantolon et Colombine with Schumann, Jacques Casanova and Marguerite Gautier, Lord and Lady Mulligans with Tennessee Williams). Each new piece of Schumann's cycle is a new personage. In Williams's play, too, each new block introduces a new personage.

The artistic imagery universe of both opuses relies upon romantic tendencies; Schumann's "Carnaval" directly connects with the ideals and world outlook of this epoch. "With Robert Schumann, Romanticism came to full flower." – wrote Schonberg (Senegor). The stylistic-intonational signs of romanticism shaped out in "Carnaval" do not necessitate a separate discussion.

In this case, we shall pay attention to just one circumstance: “Carnaval” immanently holds into itself the objectivity as an archetype and connects to the deindividualized, mass celebration. What about Schumann, he has made a model of the virtual reality from his subjective prism. The carnival objectivity is substituted by the subjective position. His interludes are perceived as author’s comments between the carnival masks. Williams’s play was staged in 1950s, when the American theatrical dramaturgy was still on the initial stages of formation and was relying upon the traditional models elaborated in the theatrical dramaturgy of Europe of 18th and 19th centuries. “In comparison to other art forms however, American theatre was slow to change and it was only at the end of the Second World War that a genuine innovation took place” [12]. Correspondingly, the abundance of romantic tendencies was not unexpected in Tennessee Williams’s play. Plays of this dramaturge are classified as lyrical romantic dramas due to the unprecedented stream of lyricism. Tennessee Williams, who referred to himself as an old-fashioned romantic, emphasizes in his play the advantages of feeling against the mind, which is symbolically expressed by eating the brains of the English poet, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Kilroy’s extracted heart is compared to gold. Williams mourns for the modern civilization, which destroyed romanticism. In the play, blue color plays the function of a leit-colour. Schumann is interested by the chamber form of the theatre of masks, which is quite natural in the epoch of chamberization of genres, and with Tennessee Williams, the American drama is also moving towards chamberization, when he himself gave rise to single-act, ten-minute, really short plays. Subjectivism is expressed in both works also by the circumstances that the carnival mass is substituted by the expressly selected society of personages turned into symbolic images, which foresees the coexistence of progressively and regressively thinking personalities. Schumann’s choice falls upon the romantists and personages of the Italian mask theatre: Chopin, Paganini, Eusebius, Pierrot, Colombine, etc. Tennessee Williams, too, chooses romantists, dreamers in spirit (Lord Byron, Don Quixote, Casanova, and Kilroy). In both opuses, the society is polarized not according to the good and evil elements, but according to the snobbish-upholsterish thinking and progressively thinking people, who do not fight against the past but do fight against the outdated opinions. With Schumann, this idea is integrated into the final march, in the opposition of the members of David’s new union with Philistines. With a theme that symbolizes regress (Grossvater Tanz), Schumann’s relationship towards the underdeveloped part of the society is obvious, the more so if we take into account his publicistics, built upon the sound criticism of the modern musical life and his remarks that he expressed with the wish of a better society in his mind. By the way, Tennessee Williams, too, started his career in the role of a criticist. His characters can be divided into two camps: knights or people with a higher soul versus streetcleaners. The sentence adopted by the writer for the regressive society is much more severe; in his opinion, the people, who were detained in the past, must become undistinguished members of a collectivist state and be degraded into the chemical components in a laboratory.

Obviously, carnival, as a certain kind of a meta-language of culture, the unified picture of the universe, really occurs in both works, but both authors attempt to return to the carnival the depth it possessed as a show grown out of the ritual. The essence of the semantics of carnival was, above all, the fight and opposition between the good and the evil as well as the renewal and transformation of vital forces, when it becomes possible to transform negative spiritual states, letting the old, die and the universe, renew. This is why both of the opuses do not simply contain the carnival semantics, but also have deep conceptual meanings; members of the David’s Union fight for a better universe, which associatively reminds us of the function of Williams’s Don Quixote, to fight for the transformation of the universe. Schumann’s Grossvater Tanz equals to the function of a dried up fountain in the play, from which water flows only in the finale as a symbol of salvation.

More important than the real carnival in both works is the psychodominant meaning of carnivalness, which is elevated to the range of the method of thinking. Thus, as both of the artists had manic depression psychosis (bipolar disorder), attempts of suicide, so probably it should make a

subject of separate research, the choice of the carnivalness as a principle of thinking in the creations of the artists of this type. This must have certain links with the state of their psychics.

If we stipulate that depression inclined towards suicidal behavior is caused by non-achievement of one's share of the earthly pleasures, then the choice of carnival as a principle points to the sublimation of the self-preservation mechanism into the creative work. "A man would want, that the world should have some taste for him, should arouse and attract him, and is tormented, that this is gone and impossible for him" [13]. It is a fact that Schumann compensated his unrealized pianist and conducting career, his physical inability to appear on the stage and present a show, by means of realization of the idea of carnival in his art. The latter, carnival is the expression of the state of soul, which is totally opposite to depression, it conveys full lack of control as well as boundless joy, all that Schumann lacked so much as an artist. In Tennessee Williams's career, too, at a certain stage, there occurred an alienation with the audience, a creative fiasco and severe depression caused by the death of the beloved man, and he sublimated these feelings in the finale of the play. The violets in the mountains have broken the rocks and the alter ego of the writer, Don Quixote found in his own self the force to escape from the horrible city. Transformation is expressed symbolically as the act of choosing a new guide, Kilroy instead of retarded Sancho. As far as both opuses have tight links with the idiosyncratic personalities of their authors, modelling of motley, colorful diversity compensates the very uniformness, which is so typical for depression. Such a modelling is immanently contained in the semantics of carnival as of the most joyful show. Thus, further study of the issue formulated above, could approve the suggestion that perhaps the creative vision, based on similar psychics and similar type of thinking, might create similar models of the artistic reality, where so many parallels will not be a mere chain of occasional coincidences.

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