

# Bohdana Filts's vocal chamber works of the late-life period: artistic design and performance implementation

## Камерно-вокальні твори Богдани Фільц пізнього етапу: художній задум і виконавське втілення

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**Abstract.** The article considers the features of artistic and imaginative thinking of Bohdana Filts (1932-2021) in the vocal chamber work of late-life creativity. The author highlights the performing features of the solos chosen for analysis based on poetic texts by L. Ukrainka, I. Franko, L. Kostenko, and H. Kanych. An attentive and careful attitude to the requirements of performing practice, skilful use of all the possibilities of the voice, and its timbre-expressive palette are prominent in Filts's solos. The composer masterfully creates the piano accompaniment's part, which always plays an essential figurative and semantic role. In the analyzed works of the late-life period, there is a direct connection with the vocal chamber compositions of earlier stages of the artist's work through the ideological and aesthetic orientation of the idea, features of intonation thinking of the composer, her harmonic language, and unique style of vocal writing with characteristic genre preferences.

**Keywords:** solo singing, romance, Bohdana Filts, vocal chamber work, late-life creativity, performing aspect.

**Problem statement.** As you know, Bohdana Filts worked in the vocal music field. Her thoughtful attitude to the synthesis of words and music, the desire to penetrate the essence of poetic images, her neo-romantic manner of expression, and extraordinary intonation attractiveness contributed to the wide popularity of vocal compositions of the artist among singers and connoisseurs of vocal art. The analysis of the artistic and expressive content of her instrumental chamber works of late-life creativity and the features of their performing implementation make up the **relevance** of this article.

**Analysis of recent sources and publications.** V. Bielikova [3; 4], M. Zahaikevych [6; 7], V. Kuzyk [8; 9] studied the genre and species field of B. Filts's compositional heritage, whereas V. Antoniuk [1; 2] outlined the performing features of Ukrainian vocal chamber music.

The tasks of the work include:

- to analyze the artistic and expressive components of B. Filts's vocal chamber creativity of the late-life period;
- to outline the vocal and performing features of the composer's solos.

**Main part.** The figurative and thematic range of chamber and vocal works is indicative, which expresses the main aesthetic inclinations of the composer and covers such her favorite topics as the spiritual life of the Ukrainian people and their tragic history, romantic admiration for the nature of their native land, philosophical reflections on the meaning of human existence, the eternal theme of love. At the same time, the dominant place is occupied by poems with great lyrical potential, distinguished by their philosophic nature, combining the purely personal with the universal, humanistic principle.

In the late period of her work, Filts wrote solo songs based on poetic texts of Ukrainian classical and contemporary poets. The article will analyze romances of the late-life period based on poems by L. Ukrainka, I. Franko, L. Kostenko, and H. Kanych.

*"There are little green ravines," text by L. Ukrainka (2004)*

The poetess uses the understated forms of words (green, tiny, little ravines, paths, ribbons, river) as an attempt to look at the world through children's eyes. They seem to express a woman's desire to return to that great state of childhood, when you can admire the surrounding life, not yet knowing about its indispensable other, dark side — pain and suffering, injustice, serious illnesses, fear of being deprived of your freedom and Homeland. Therefore, the solo singing "There are little green ravines" is full of a bright, even playful mood, combined with the simplicity and spontaneity of the musical expression. From the very beginning, this is declared in the moderately lively tempo of the work — *Allegretto*, its four-pole size (except for a few bars), equal to the rhythmic pulsation of the vocal part mainly by the eighth three shafts. A small piano introduction sets the dancing character of the solo. The simple diatonic melody of the first part of this solo consists of small singing songs of a dance nature. The vocal part begins with an upward quarter jump ( $D-T$ ), which, by the way, is very characteristic of singing in folk songs, especially when there are exclamations like "hey," "ouch," or, as in our case, "there."

To create a coloristic effect, the composer uses, from time to time, the technique of adding tones to the chords of the accompaniment (for example, a tonic chord with the addition of sexta — *gis*). However, the accompaniment acquires a particular "program" imagery when the poetic text refers to a river. So the first holding on to the words "the river flows, tearing the bank..." is indicated by increasing the tempo (*Allegro*). After the phrase "...over down the hills", the piano accompaniment is scattered with an ascending sparkling chromatic arpeggiated movement of the sixteenth durations (accompanied by the *poco a poco stringendo* label). After such an instrumental

connection, the conditional second part of the song opens with a repetition of the poetic refrain, "There are little green ravines." From time to time, "interrupting" the dance accompaniment of the chorus, piano passages from the final construction of the first part accompany the vocal part, depicting the river's playful flow, and acting as an instrumental completion of the work.

The second part, designed in the key of *G-dur*, is the culminating zone of the solo, reflected by a significant increase in dynamics (*ff*), an octave jump in the soloist's part, a short stop in the piano accompaniment, and a smooth descending chant in the vocal part. Interesting from the point of view of the harmony used is the completion of the solo. The chord of a double dominant in the piano accompaniment, against which the climactic chant of the vocal part sounds, allegedly requires a sequence of cadence, dominant, and tonic. However, instead of a solution in *G-dur*, there is a contradiction in the classical canons of a key in *C-dur*, symbolizing internal expansion. The dynamics of the accompaniment at this time sharply decrease to *pianissimo*.

The final descending chant in the vocal part (located as the tessitura below the first one) reaches the *g* tonic sound. However, the piano accompaniment does not stop, and its rapid upward movement, expressed in the mentioned Lydian fret, symbolizes the unstoppable flow of annual waters. The intonation-fret simplicity of the vocal melody, the relatively moderate theme, and reasonably convenient tessitura conditions indicate the possibility of using this work at the singer's initial state of preparation and training. This solo's light figurative, and thematic mood allows the student to concentrate on reproducing its vocal and technical features. Separately, we consider it necessary to note the predominant dynamic nuance of this work — *mf*, which provides mixed voice formation. According to V. Antoniuk, "*mf* should prevail, especially at the first stage of vocal training, based on the fact that *mf* is a relative concept for different voices, so the strength of the voice should be measured with the individual

capabilities of the Student" [1, p. 25]. At the same time, the apparent ease of singing "There are little green ravines" hides some difficulties. It is necessary to warn the novice singer against involuntary "jumping" along with the accompaniment, which by beating off the dance rhythm, can easily provoke the student to such actions. The sound should be open and light but not lose its vocal, singing basis.

*"Hello to you, my faithful friend grove" text by I. Franko (2006)*

Based on Ivan Franko's lyrics, this solo *штангити* is like a thematic continuation of the previous work. Just like L. Ukrainka, the artist appeals to his native space. However, in contrast to the previous poetic source, Frank's hero is set up for a dialogue with his "loyal friend." He greets grove as if after a long separation. Remembering the young years, the hero in his thoughts seems to return to the young years. His words and thoughts are full of deep gratitude for nature. It was the grove to which he could entrust his pains and experiences, and in its secluded glades, he "lost his sadness." Romantic admiration for the beauty of the native land in its subtext contains the same contrast between the ideal world of nature and the imperfect, sometimes alienated, world of people.

In solo singing, B. Filts tried to create a multi-faceted image that impressed the listeners with its brightness and insight. The romance begins with a piano introduction, where the soft arpeggiated chords, laid out in a three-meter meter, symbolize the power and peace of the majestic grove. The background sound of a small Minor quintessential chord is incredibly colorful. The melody of the piano introduction intonationally "prepares" the soloist's opening.

The broad, free melodic vocal line of the first part of the solo song "Hello to you, my faithful friend grove..." is in a moderate tempo, defined by the composer (*Moderato espressivo*). The vocal line combines folk-song intonations with refined turns of a typically romantic style: the theme begins with a calling quart, but in its development, it passes to a soft lyrical chanting of the supporting stages of the system. Frequent meter changes, a complex dotted

rhythmic pattern of the vocal part, often interrupted by short eighth pauses, ascending and descending sixtes, and quarter jumps in the melody, give the soloist's part a trembling, excited character of enjoying an idyllic picture of nature, the figurative embodiment of which is deepened by piano accompaniment. The textured part of the piano is presented in the form of a harmonic accompaniment, traditional for the romance style of B. Filts. The composer embodies the majestic image of the grove with the help of harmonic constructs. Using "soft" plugin transitions from Major to Minor and vice versa (*G-dur — h-moll — a-moll — G-dur*), Filts depicts an ideal picture of nature.

The second part of the solo singing, "In your meadows..." (*Dolce misterioso teneramente*), is associated with the hero's reflections on the past. A state of embarrassment replaces the trembling mood of the vocal part and anxiety, reflected in the gusty melodic line and its improvisational intonation presentation. Short, restless intonation turns, outlined by "anxious" sixteenth and eighth durations, alternate with long healed notes. The accompaniment part is no longer opposed to the hero, but on the contrary, it strengthens his restless state. First, this is reflected in the harmonic content of the usual piano accompaniment — dissonant consonances of the non-tertiary structure, disturbing "flickering" of several quarts in the presentation of the sixteenth, split tones (for example, simultaneous sound in the vertical *c♯* and *cis*).

The next episode, "In your smells, as if in paradise, a young mind was inspired," is perceived as enlightened memories, full of warmth and inspiration, memories of the first steps to discovering the beautiful world of poetry. At its beginning, the vocal part retains the last part's characteristic rhythmic and intonation features. There is a hint of imagery in the improvisational nature of the melody. Despite this, the accompaniment is already clearly palpable, belonging to *c-dur*. The piano accompaniment has lost the vertical's sharp textured density and has become more transparent. Laid out by the disturbing sixteenth, it no longer has the discordant sound of the beginning.

The following change in mood of the solo is preceded by a vocal stop, "...in paradise", accompanied by a Minor sound of accompaniment, fading on a small Minor seventh chord with its inherent transparent sound, dreamy imagery, and fervent dance rhythm of piano accompaniment. Subsequently, the piano part returns to the world of lyrical contemplation (as at the beginning of the work). Musical development is characterized by slowing down and weakening dynamics — the hero again plunges into the natural world, and his thoughts seem balanced. Along with the accompaniment, the melodic line of the vocal part transforms intonationally: instead of the ascending invocation quart of the first Part (*d–g*), the contemplative Quints (*g–d*) appear. The end of the vocal part on the fifth tone of G-dur (*d*), accompanied by a tonic seventh chord in piano accompaniment, gives the sound a contemplative character.

Behind the beauty and expressiveness of the song's musical expression, there are, however, corresponding difficulties in its performance. First, this is a developed vocal part in a tessitura way, a variable melody complicated by a characteristic rhythmic pattern. Frequent changes in the meter, dynamics, subtle tempo nuances, and constant complex ladi-tonal reincarnations form the basis for embodying the diverse imagery of the work. Performing the second part of the romance requires the singer to have the skills of pure intonation because both harmonic and textured accompaniment does not "support" the vocal part. Clearly defined dynamic shades (from *pp* to *f*) and regular size changes require experience and considerable skill in performing such tasks. In tessitura, understanding the vocal part is quite convenient. However, creating a vivid image of this work, based on the reproduction of all its musical and expressive components, requires a thoughtful re-reading of the lyrical text of the romance. Compared to the previous romance based on the words of L. Ukrainka, this work requires considerable vocal skills from the performer. Therefore, it is advisable to include it in the educational repertoire of an already well-trained student with experience in concert performance.

*"In Przemyśl, where Sian is flowing" by I. Franko (2006)*

B. Filts repeatedly turned to the romantically inspired poetic images of I. Franko and his intimate lyrics. The singing of Frank's poetic stanzas became Filts's peculiarity, the affirmation of her compositional style. The dominant parts of her style were broad melodicism, frankness and spontaneity of expression, and skilful dynamization of musical development.

This is a continuation of the composer's work in the genre of lyrical romance, dedicated to the eternal theme of love. The indicative melodic line of the vocal part — "In Przemyśl, where Siang is flowing" (*Moderato*) — has its drama of development: a typically romantic sextus with filling, further motivational sequential growth, and a climactic accent (emphasis on the word "Siang floats...") and a dynamic and dramatic decline built on vibrational intonations. There is no reprise of this intonation material in the vocal part of the romance, but its climax will be held in an instrumental ending at the end of the work.

Instrumental accompaniment, as in other мцфд chamber compositions by B. Filts, which we have considered, does not have a tonic mouth at the beginning, starting with the harmonies of the subdominant sphere. Its further development leads to a dominant triad in the main key of the work — *g-moll*, followed by a solution to the tonic triad at the time of the introduction of the vocal part. Already the first two bars of the piano accompaniment contain a characteristic rhythm formula that permeates almost the entire texture of the accompaniment — the continuous movement of a rapid river, embodied in the overflows of the sixteenth durations. It is prominent that there are no clear boundaries between the first and second development sections. It may be since when the vocal part reaches its confident completion on the tonic (*g*), the movement and development of the musical material of the piano accompaniment don't stop but continues to move in the direction of harmonic complication and dynamic growth.

The second section of the work (repetition of the lines "where Siang is flowing...") is marked by the "sudden" appearance of the Major sphere

*B-dur* on the harmonies of which further musical development is built. These shifts are primarily due to the gradual dramatization of the poetic image. Against the background of slowing down the tempo (*Meno mosso*), the melodic line of the vocal part is "I was standing on the bridge in heavy thought..." it loses its hum: a pulsating "nervous" dotted rhythmic pattern. These short durations are constantly interrupted by pauses, giving the intonation of the humming melody a certain declamation. The variety of dissonant harmonic plexuses of the piano accompaniment, the descending chromatic movement of the bass — all this enhances the reproduction of the dramatic characteristics of the lyrical Hero, which is transmitted in the instrumental bundle to the third section of the work through the sequence of dissonant consonances in the descending chromatic movement already in both layers of the piano texture of the chord presentation.

The melodic line of the vocal part of the third and final section (*Tempo I dolce*) is "I was thinking about you..." — also has its dramatic development. The cantilevered type of melody returns, which, against the background of a powerful harmonic development of the accompaniment, together with the jump of the sounds of a reduced seventh chord to the highest sound of the vocal part (*es*), reaches the extreme point of dramatic tension. In this rise, you can see all the pain of lost love. The downward movement of the final phrases of the vocal part, "appeared, smiled and disappeared..." is full of the mood of doom and as if accompanied by the constant and indifferent flow of time, reproduced by piano accompaniment, which completes the tragic monologue.

Performing this piece requires the vocalist to have the mobility of the vocal apparatus (short durations). The second development section of the romance has some intonation difficulties, where the piano accompaniment is saturated with complex altered harmonies.

"Not the time passes...", text by L. Kostenko (2002)

The authors' philosophical reflections on the fluidity of human life reflect the general nature of the modern passage of time. Every person, for L. Kostenko, is a macrocosm of the human world, whereas our

thoughts and feelings are full of desire for the infinite and grandiose. That desire corresponds to the scale of the movements of the human soul. Admiring the world around you, enjoying communicating with people, and moving towards fate with an open heart is confirmed in the musical interpretation of this poetry.

The vocal introduction is preceded by "empty" bass fifths of the piano accompaniment, symbolizing a stop, a sense of timelessness. "Let urgent matters wait..." (*Moderato espressivo*) — this chant with an uncharacteristic dissonant, unstable movement in quarters (*h-e-a*) sounds in a Minor. The piano accompaniment, which reproduces the rolling hutsul playing, contrasts with the initial chant and seems to prepare the appearance of another intonation sphere in the vocal part — a light, close to the folk Major melody. Even before the beginning of the middle section of the work, the vocal part has a characteristic intonation of the fluctuation of thirds in the stanza "Not the time passes...", which will later become crucial for reproducing the image of the continuous and inexorable movement of time.

A sharp change in the texture of the piano accompaniment (chord composition), "indifferent" Quintas in nature, acceleration of tempo (*Piu mosso. Allegretto*), and a dissonant harmonic sound is introduced into the figurative sphere of the middle section. All means of expression are involved in reproducing non-stop movement. Further, the texture is dramatized by the octave unison of bass, a significant increase in dynamics (*ff*), and a general increase in the scale of presentation in conditions of slowing down the tempo (*Meno mosso. Pesante*).

Deeply philosophical from the point of view of musical interpretation, the composer of a poetic text is a reprise of this solo. After all, in the last lines, L. Kostenko is increasingly immersed in thoughts about the inevitability of fate, the finiteness of human life, and the incredible power of time over everything in this world. However, B. Filts fills the reprise with the light of hope and faith, where the bright hutsul intonations of the accompaniment seem to light up the sad, poetic motifs in which the opening lines of the solo song are heard: "... I'll see enough of the sun



and the grass...". Again there is a return to the quiet sound in the last bars of the work of empty as if doomed Quintas.

This romance's complex psychological figurative content doesn't require the singer's concert and performance practice, the ability to convey a deep emotional state, or the most subtle nuances. Complex dynamics, constant changes in the meter, rhythmic and agogic complexity of the vocal melody, and complex harmonies require high-performance skills.

*"Heron songs," text by H. Kanych (2007)*

The poetic story about the free flight of a beautiful bird, about the spills of its magical songs, embodies not only the beauty of his native land but also the image of a person in love with his native land. The solo song "Heron songs" is based on the melody of the song composition. Due to its songfulness, the figurative specifics of poetic lines are significantly sharpened.

The first part of the solo (*Andante cantabile*) is designed in the key of *A-dur*. The composer goes "beyond" triads, using complex seventh chords, ninth chords, and chords while adding other tones. So, a tonic ninth chord is already used in a small instrumental introduction. The middle part of the solo (*Espressivo*) is marked by the cancellation of key characters and a change of Key (*a-moll*). Further, poetic stanzas are accompanied by characteristic consonances of the non-tertiary structure in the piano Part (*d-e-f-a-h*), in the arpeggiated iridescences of which a voice is heard ("the purring of cranes"). A reverse descending chain of seventh chords leads to the middle part's key (*a-moll*).

The meter rhythmic conditions for presenting musical material also change along with fret changes. Shredded size-for the next ten bars, there is an alternation of 6/8 and 3/8. This episode is "in each voice of the Earth..." it is developmental, both in harmonic and textured, meter rhythmic terms. The development is based on transformations in the harmonic sphere: tonal comparisons — elliptical turns of Minor Major seventh chords without resolution (as opposed to the previous smooth transition from one key to another), chordal triads *h-moll*, and *C-dur* are used.

Against the background of the robust dynamized musical development of piano accompaniment, the range of vocal parts is gradually expanding. They are accompanied by a significant increase in the dynamic voltage level (*p-mp-mf-f*). At the climax of the development, the musical development comes to light *E-dur*. However, in the same beat, the chromatic downward movement in the entire layer of texture is perceived at the level of figurative allusions as a kind of hero's fall into the abyss, even when there is a return to the more restrained meter 4/4, 2/4, accompanied by a continuous movement of the sixteenth durations with the use of Triol pulsation (introduction of triplet), reproducing a state of anxiety and embarrassment. Before the reprise begins, this movement does not change. At the end of the middle section, it even accelerates metro rhythmically — the musical material of a kind of afterword "each time before takeoff is different..." again taught in alternating sizes 3/8 and 6/8. Harmonious development is preserved at the beginning of the action, and Major-minor triads are also compared. The textured development of the accompaniment part at the end reduces to the octave unison of the c sound, a single note duplicated in the vocal part.

The reprise (*Tempo I*) begins with an instrumental introduction. Musical development returns to the key of *A-dur*; however, there is a significant simplification of the texture of the accompaniment. The imagery inherent in the first part disappears from the piano accompaniment, which transforms into a simple unanimous arpeggiated accompaniment of the "guitar" type.

The work ends with the sound of a tonic ninth chord in the same textured layout. Approaching the final chord, the composer uses a bright coloristic technique, going to it through the second inversion of the seventh chord with a diminished fifth tone (that is, the sixth lowered step, which is a characteristic feature of harmonic Major). Plagal cadence (no dominant at the end) gives the harmonious language a nostalgic simplicity. In combination with the sound of the vocal part (third stage c), this harmony embodies the image of flight and infinity.

The performance of this romance requires a masterful command of breathing and exceptional vocal endurance in singing tessitura uncomfortable long phrases. Particular difficulties lie in performing high-pitched sounds on “uncomfortable” vowels (“e”). The work requires the skill of cantilevered singing. As in the previously considered compositions of B. Filts, performance difficulties are associated with changes in meter, rhythm, and dynamics. Nevertheless, due to its emotionality and difficulty in breathing, this work is an excellent material for the formation of the physical endurance of the singer.

**Conclusions.** Based on theoretical and performing analyses of the solos of B. Filts's late-life creativity, the determination of the individual musical style features of her vocal works arises. These features are inextricably linked with the aesthetic and philosophical platform of her worldview and the elements of the vocal style of these opuses. What we have done has shown that the composer worked in lyrical, lyrical-contemplative, and lyrical-dramatic romance

in her works. Usually implemented through images of nature, her creative method reflected late romantic and neofolklore ideas in the Ukrainian musical culture of the second half of the XX — early XXI centuries.

Reproducing complex, psychologically sharpened images, revealing the philosophical truths of being, B. Filts masterfully embodied in her romance work all the various human feelings and emotions. Attention to the word and its actual musical reading can be traced to frequent changes in metro rhythm and fine intonation of the slightest semantic nuance at the melody, harmony, and texture level. A broad genre range, varying degrees of complexity of vocal and performing character, brightness, and variety of images give B. Filts's solos values in forming singing skills. At first glance, B. Filts's musical speech, simplified in comparison with the examples of modern compositional creativity, can truly convey to the listener the ideological nature of the author's idea due to the very democracy of her musical utterance.

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**Чжан Цзицзін . Камерно-вокальні твори Богдани Фільц пізнього етапу:  
художній задум і виконавське втілення**

**Анотація.** У статті розглянуто особливості художньо-образного мислення Богдани Фільц (1932–2021) у полі камерно-вокальної творчості пізнього етапу. Поряд з цим виокремлено виконавські особливості обраних для аналітики солоспівів на поетичні тексти Лесі Українки, І. Франка, Л. Костенко і Г. Канич. Для її солоспівів характерно уважне і дбайливе ставлення до вимог виконавської практики, майстерне використання усіх можливостей голосу, його темброво-виражальної палітри. Поряд з цим, композиторка майстерно вибудовує партію фортепіанного супроводу, що завжди відіграє важливу образно-семантичну роль. У проаналізованих творах пізнього етапу простежується безпосередній зв'язок із камерно-вокальними композиціями більш ранніх етапів творчості мисткині через ідейно-естетичну спрямованість задуму, особливості інтонаційного мислення композиторки, її індивідуальну гармонічну мову й неповторний стиль вокального письма з характерними жанровими уподобаннями.

*Ключові слова:* солоспів, романс, Богдана Фільц, камерно-вокальна творчість, пізній етап творчості, виконавський аспект.