

The “*Author's Word*” in the Maurice Ravel’s Lyric Fantasy

The Child and the Spells

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Abstract—This article reviews Maurice Ravel's lyric fantasy *The Child and the Spells* as a frank and at the same time encrypted “diary” of the personal and creative composer’s life. Different layers of European culture and own works of the composer are reflected in the opera. So it sets a challenge before researches to distinguish the “author's word” (Mikhail Bakhtin) behind the mosaic of styles. The “author's word” becomes a code that allows us to understand the principle of organization of the opera. The first scene, the scene with the Princess, the scenes using the “Apaches’ letters” and the monologue of the Squirrel can be considered as the “author's word” in the opera.

Keywords—Maurice Ravel; *The Child and the Spells*; the “author's word”; lyric fantasy; “Apaches’ letters”; the “diary” of the creative composer’s life

I. INTRODUCTION

The Child and the Spells by Maurice Ravel is the mirror in which we can see the most significant reflections of the composer’s spiritual life. Sincere confessions, fragile reminiscences, incontrovertible sensuous experience of the author come to life on stage. Once Ravel said that for him “the greatest pleasure was to get as close as possible to perfection, to feel as completely as possible the secret waves of life” [1]. It seems that *The Child and the Spells* brought veritable pleasure and genuine joy to his author as a really perfect art structure.

The premiere took place in Monte Carlo on March, 21 1925 under the baton of Victor de Sabata. According to Ravel, “he had never met a better one in his life” [2]¹. The director of the play was Raoul Gunsbourg. The performance choreographed by the young Georges Balanchine. The opera had a stunning success. Satisfied with the premiere was the author himself, who said, “Staging the *The Child and the Spells* requires the Monte Carlo theater and a director like Gunsbourg, because this work requires an *extraordinary* production” [4].

¹ Ravel told a journalist that 12 hours after the conductor received the score he knew it all by heart [3].

Defining *The Child and the Spells* as a “lyric fantasy”, Ravel opened up infinite possibilities for ingenuity of the performers. However, he certainly wanted “*extraordinary*” understanding of musical allusions in the composition with such a strange choice of characters for European opera, among which were Frogs, Dragonflies, Cats, Ashes, a Mathematics handbook... It would seem that the plot was more suitable not for “serious” opera, but for a brilliant show in the music hall.

The Child and the Spells can mystify the viewer with the brilliant shell of a multi-tiered art structure, but the life of Maurice Ravel as of a true dandy, selflessly serving the highest principles of Beauty, resolutely rejects any randomness of expression and emptiness of content. So we need to double research efforts to find a way behind a visible glossy layer and to see piercing confessions of the composer.

Possessing an unmistakable sense of taste, remaining always extremely honest with himself in matters of the craft, Maurice Ravel was able to realize the most ephemeral hopes and regrets of his era. François Porcile even calls the composer “the common denominator of his era” [5]. Really, Ravel's works reflect one of the main directions of the renewal of the artistic expression methods of his time. The composer said, “Do not be afraid to imitate. If you have nothing to say you cannot do anything better ... than retell what has already been said well, if you have something to say, it will never be clearer than in your involuntary infidelity of the model” [6]. Indeed, Ravel often used recognizable musical clichés. He apparently addressed to the listener with an extraordinary memory, who could see a unique spiritual resonance that emerges from the depth of consciousness.

So, Ravel created a beautiful unique world in which all the elements (genuine and illusory, known and unknown) were included in the endless game. Therefore, it was sufficiently difficult for contemporaries to imagine the “real” Ravel. He was hidden by numerous deceptions. In this regard, Vladimir Yankelevich rightly noted that Ravel was hidden under masques [7]. Such characteristic of the composer's thinking sets before researches a challenge to hear the

“author's voice” and to distinguish the “author's word” behind all the mystifications.

The concept of the “author's word” was suggested by Mikhail Bakhtin for the study of the artistic texts, in which the polyphony of the own and the others' voices determines the main parameters of the composition. The outstanding scientist directed attention to the specific organization of texts when “there are two intentions, two voices in one word”, so “either the ‘author's word’ itself pretends to be somebody else’s, or somebody else’s word pretends to act like the own one” [8]. The arising duality of the word manifests itself in the intonation and in the syntactic construction, and therefore influences different levels of the text. Without understanding of this ambivalent meanings “the whole structure of speech would seem completely different” [9].

The presence in *The Child and the Spells* of the content layer that holds the “author's word” can be confirmed not only by an obvious autobiographical aspect. *The Child and the Spells* doesn't have any dedication, like almost all the other works by Ravel². It's also indicative that the composer was writing this work for a long time (1918-1925), although he usually worked quickly enough³. In the initial libretto by Gabrielle Colette Ravel has made many corrections and the final version for the most part was a new text. Ravel also gave the new title *The Child and the Spells*. The modern German researcher Matthias Schilmöller considers this new title to be “a hidden aesthetic program” and he distinguishes the topic of childhood as a “key idea” for understanding Ravel's music “[10].

However, the numerous strands (citations, allusions, tonal correspondences, timbre analogies) connect *The Child and the Spells* to the other works of Ravel. It seems that just the “correspondences” (Charles Baudelaire) arising between the various texts and addressed to the listener as the “author's message”, the “author's word”, are the “key” for understanding Ravel's creative credo. It is symptomatic that the text of the Squirrel's monologue was published in *La Revue musicale* prepared in March 1925 on the occasion of the composer's anniversary. It's impossible to understand this manifestation of creative principles through the words of operatic character if we look at *The Child and the Spells* only as at “a fantastical opera with singing objects and animals” [11]. Certainly, Ravel told about himself in his “lyric fantasy” but many things he carefully encrypted in the score. What is the “author's word” coming through the motley scenes of this masterpiece? In search of answer to this question, let's turn directly to the text of the opera.

² Note that among the late works of the composer only an intimate miniature *Dreams* (the words of a close friend of Ravel, Léon-Paul Fargue, 1927) also had no initiation.

³ In comparison, the opera *The Spanish Hour* was composed for half a year (April-October 1907), making orchestration in 1911 for the production in Opera Comedien. The ballet *Daphnis and Chloe* Ravel began composing in June 1909 and the piano version was presented already in May 1910.

II. RAVEL'S “AUTHOR'S WORD” ABOUT THE MUSICAL CHILDHOOD IN THE FIRST SCENE

The author's definition of the genre as “lyric fantasy” points to the peculiarities of the opera organization. The word “lyric” here suggests presence of the subtle allusions to his own works and musical styles of his favorite authors. Everything in the opera revolves around Ravel himself. This is convincingly manifested in the first scene⁴.

The composer carefully describes the details of the interior. He indicates that the action takes place in a country Norman house, in a room with a very low ceiling and massive antique furniture, decorated with pastoral drawings on the wall, warmed by the heat of the burning fireplace and overlooking the garden. A round cage with a Squirrel hangs by the window of the room. A cat is mumbling. These remarks by Ravel, who remained alone for many months composing the opera in *his house in Montfort-l'Amaury*, bring to mind the image of his own bedroom, located on the ground floor facing the garden, with a low ceiling, massive furniture and idyllic antique columns painted on walls by him. The cat's purring reminds of the composer's favorite two Siamese cats living in his house. Presence of the round cage with the Squirrel refers to a round cage with a miniature mechanical bird that was the favorite toy of Ravel because of its virtuous singing.

It seems that precise details of the interior were extremely important for Ravel. From the first page of the opera, he revealed his desire to be highly frank with himself. Perhaps that's why the composer doesn't give any name to the protagonist of the work. This is a child... Obviously to call his name would be too straightforward, but to change it would mean to destroy the ephemerality of the correlation between the truth and fiction in the artistic text.

According to Colette's plan, the scene had only to represent the obstinate child, but Ravel used it to show the own musical world and create the *musical metaphor of the path* just once in the opera in “Fig. 1”. Uniform flow of the eighth notes with shifts of meter accents performing by two oboes, connected by the acoustically volumetric intervals of the perfect fourth and the perfect fifth, generates almost graphic effect of movement in space:

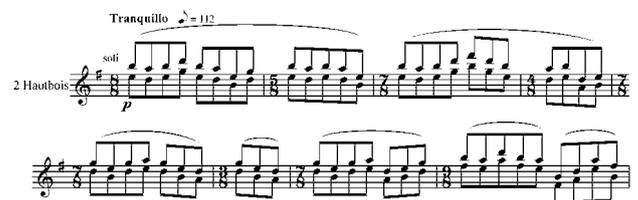


Fig. 1. The music score of *the musical metaphor of the path*.

⁴ Although there is no formal division into the scenes in the score, the composer very definitely separates them from each other by contrasting musical techniques, as well as by pauses. The first scene is from the beginning to rehearsal 7.

The monotonous movement of parallel intervals can also be perceived as reference to the image of a “musical childhood” with a ban on “empty” fifths⁵ known to all pupils. Another allusion that can arise here is the allusion to Ravel’s early compositions in which the sonority of the parallel fifths has been often used⁶. We name this theme of oboes the theme of the Child.

In the first scene Ravel demonstrates the *division of the texture into the self-contained lines*. This principle reflects the *polyphony of the consciousness* of the Child. Polytonality arising from the imposition of strata is perceived as a protest against the unambiguity of the “adult world”⁷. A fragile melodic line striving for liberation from harmonic and meter restrictions becomes a sign of dream, manifestation of the most personal composer thoughts in the opera (we can recall *Dreams* as an incredible silent confession created by Ravel two years later).

Among the most secret thoughts of the composer there are memories of his mother. The death of mother became the most tragic and irreparable event in the Ravel’s life. That’s why a chain of magical events in the opera isn’t a fairy tale for the composer, but is a story that conveys the emotional tension of the profound personal drama. Even the “happy end” does not violate the sad autobiographical layer of the opera: not a single scene presents a direct dialogue of the Child with the Mother (despite of the fact that at the beginning of the work during 28 measures the Mother is presented on the stage as a real character). Ravel creates all the Child’s appeals to the Mother by purely musical means of expression in an illusory world of fantasy.

The Mother’s invisible presence in the lyric and nostalgic scenes of the opera is felt thanks to the return of her theme and her timbres as shown in "Fig. 2" (the trio: clarinet, bass clarinet, bassoon):



Fig. 2. The theme of Mother (2 measures before rehearsal 6).

⁵ Such commentary on the parallel intervals of oboes is given by M. Schillmöller [12].

⁶ In particular, in *Ballad of the queen dead to love*, *Antique menuet*, *Two epigrams of Clément Marot*.

⁷ For example, the second scene of the rage of the Child (rehearsal 7-17) manifests the "screaming" repetitions of the triads B flat major / A major as a protest against rules. In the opera all the culminations represent different versions of the polytonality. Polytonality in the opera is analyzed in the study by Benjaming Manning as a harmonic technique [13]. However, the researcher does not analyze the content of this technique. Meanwhile, the fragments with clear tonality have a special meaning in this harmonic context (like the sublime diatonic sonority of the Child's theme and the Mother's theme in G major in the finale of the opera).

Non-physical aspect of perception of the Mother's image defines the wordless (instrumental) nature of sounding of her theme. Only in the finale of the opera the forth H-F sharp of her theme⁸ is filled with the word. The Child exclaims “Maman!”. Thus, the “path to mother” finds in the opera a vector of movement towards the ultimate clarity and manifestation (in the literal meaning) of all parameters of Ravel’s secret thoughts.

In contrast to the Mother that periodically invisibly arises, the Child is always present on the stage. His solo remarks have an important function as the “author’s words”. They appear in post-culmination zones when brilliant, spectacular orchestral episodes suddenly “fall through” into the nudity of the melodic line in the vocal party of the Child in "Fig. 3". Such moments are emphasized in the score by flageolet of the contrabass.



Fig. 3. The melodic line in the vocal party of *The Child*.

Phantom sonority of the melodic line of the solo contrabass playing by flageolets, accompanying the theme of the Child, will mark all the important moments of the opera as a *sign of the intimate and personal sphere*⁹.

In the mesmerizing sound fluidity of the first scene the idea of returning to oneself is being crystallized as an important art idea of the opera. On the way to himself Ravel selects *Pavane for a Dead Infanta*, a composition that brought him the greatest popularity. This is indicated by almost complete coincidence of tempo and tonality correlation (soft oscillation of G major / E minor in the first section of the scene, dominance of H minor in the second section) and the proximity of the harmonic turnover in the theme of the Mother to the cadence in *Pavane for a Dead Infanta* (measures 6-7 in *Pavane*).

The musical space of the scene is filled with memories about the piece *Little Tom Thumb* from *Mother Goose* (smooth melodic line with an upward move from E to G in *Little Tom Thumb*, equal rhythm of the eighth notes, timbre of oboe in an orchestral version)¹⁰. The beginning of the opera also brings associations with *Pavane of Sleeping Beauty* from *Mother Goose*. The connection between works

⁸ Roger Nichols notes that “the falling forth in this cadence can be called the generating interval behind the whole opera” [14].

⁹ The middle of the scene with the Clock (at rehearsal 25), the episode of fear of the Child (at rehearsal 38 and beyond), the culmination of the pastoral scene with Shepherdess and Shepherdess (7 measure before rehearsal 61), the scene with the Princess (rehearsal 62 and beyond), the scene with the Cats (rehearsal 95 and beyond), the “Waltz of Dragonflies” in the second act (2 measure before rehearsal 108, 2 measure before rehearsal 111).

¹⁰ We can hear also in *Petit poucet* a melodic figure that reminiscences of the main theme of *Pavane for a Dead Infanta* (mes.1-2 in *Pavane*, mes.6-8 in *Little Tom Thumb*, party of the oboe).

is manifested through common sounds, and also through the sonority of flageolets of contrabass (in the extreme sections of *Pavane of Sleeping Beauty*).

So, the first scene with its strange, at first sight, mismatch of the contemplative quiet character of music with the rebellious exclamations of the Child (“I do not want to do homework!”) is a kind of commentary on the works created earlier. It presents the most touching and sincere memories of the composer. Ravel's “musical childhood” is included in the artistic space of the opera and determines the main points of interaction of musical spheres of the Child and the Mother. Their musical characteristics, conditioned by the whole previous context of the composer's heritage, show clarity, laconism, emotional restraint, desire to “look into the past” and potentially contains the idea of fatal repetition that will reach its triumphal and tragic turn in Bolero after three years.

III. RAVEL'S “AUTHOR'S WORD” ABOUT HIS SOUL AND DREAMS

The eighth scene of the opera (from rehearsal 62) plays the special role in opera. Mysterious Princess becomes here a kind of crystallization of the intimate desires of the Child. The text of this scene contains allusions to the events and artistic impressions that were especially significant for the composer.

The agitated dialogue of the Child and the Princess, speaking the language of memories, gives rise to associations with the symbolist theater of Maurice Maeterlinck (the Child, “Tell me... Where is the tree on which the Bluebird was singing?”). There are also links with the Claude Debussy theater and his opera *Pelléas and Mélisande*. The mentions of the torn magic necklace, the crown of the Princess, her deadly sleep are reminiscent of the objects-symbols lost by Mélisande (the crown, the ring) and loosing of her life forces in the finale of the opera. The names of Debussy's famous compositions appear in the Child's aria (rehearsal 73), when he tells us that the Princess disappeared as “moonlight”, leaving him only a “hair of gold”. Appeals to the heritage of Debussy are not limited to the verbal level of the text. The easily recognizable fanfare motive of the pipes from Debussy's *Holidays* (from *Three Nocturnes*)¹¹ passes twice in the culmination zone (4 measure after rehearsal 68 and 2 measure before rehearsal 70) and the characteristic sound of the low flute accompanying the monologue of the Princess, gives rise to associations with *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*.

In this scene the composer consistently uses the counterpoint of the solo voices presented by the parties of the Princess, the Child and the low flute. Thus, the scene with the Princess builds a semantic arch to the first scene, in which the idea of a counterpoint was represented as a sign marking the most personal sphere of Ravel's thoughts.

The composer's view on his own unfulfilled desires and unforgettable dreams, illuminates another artistic universe important to him, the Richard Wagner theater. Enthusiasm

of the young Ravel in attitudes towards the operas of Wagner can be traced in the climax of the scene (rehearsal 68-70; rehearsal 71 before Tempo I). The mysterious atmosphere of the medieval chivalric culture, the shadows of his mysterious and noble heroes (Parsifal, Lohengrin) and the mystical action of the dark forces (Sleep and Night) are reflected in the scene. The bitter words of the Princess, “Alas, my little friend is too weak, what can you do for me? Who knows *duration of a dream?*” are perceived as a genuine author revelation (rehearsal 70).

Transparent allusions to the famous works of Claude Debussy and Richard Wagner are supplemented by references to the music of Giacomo Puccini and Jules Massenet. At the same time the rich, colorful orchestral texture reminds the lyrical scenes of the ballet *Daphnis and Chloe* by Ravel, greatly widening the field of musical associations with the images of *Love, Dream and Beauty*. In his aria (reh.73) “freezing” on the same sound (B flat) as bewitched the Child is saying goodbye to his Dream.

The special author signs of the farewell to dream appear in other opera scenes. The composer uses the “Apaches’ letter” z for it. As is well known Ravel was a member of *The Apaches* group, which united musicians, writers and artists in Paris around 1900. According the M. Marnat, *The Apaches* created a kind of their own encrypted language [15]. They arbitrarily were inserted additional letters in the words and phrases, giving them some unusual sounding.

Ravel only once used the “Apaches’ letter” in his music before *The Child and the Spells*. He did it in *Three songs for unaccompanied mixed choir*. This composition based on the verses by Ravel himself was created during the tragic war years (December 1914-February 1915). In the second chanson *Three beautiful birds of paradise* Ravel used the line “My friend is at war” (in the last verse “Your friend is at war”) as the refrain and added the letter z: *Mon ami z-il est à la guerre...* Only one time and only in this musical work the composer directly mentions the terrible historical cataclysm, the witness and participant of which he became. However, all his upheavals and traumas are hidden behind the distant tone of the parable about the three birds. In this context the “Apaches’ letter” z is a reflection of the most precious sphere of the composer's life, connected with his friends. It seems that through this letter Ravel's crystal clear ideas about honor and friendship appears in this composition and become open for an attentive listener.

Ten years later the «Apaches’ letter» z sounds again in the most personal scenes of *The Child and the Spells*. Additional letter z appears in the third scene “Minuet of the Armchairs and the Sofa” (from rehearsal 17). The last minuet written by Ravel has the personal tone despite the ironic plot. This is evidenced by the choice of the favorite composer's things: the genre, the tonality with the center of G, the timbre of the piano. Ravel adds the letter z into a very ceremonious old-fashioned expression of the Sofa “*Vous m'envoyez, vous m'envoyez z'aise!*” (2 measure before rehearsal 18) as if connecting himself with the beautiful era of *the order* that has gone. That scene has the symbolic meaning of a farewell to this perfect past.

¹¹ In the Holidays 9 measure after rehearsal 10.

The “Apaches’ letter” z is used in the scene with the Shepherds (from rehearsal 50). A large pastoral scene attracts attention by the “strange” letter for choral accompaniment: z. The shade of this sonority is peculiarly verbalized in the words of the cowherds, “Our loves seemed eternal, our flutes” (the party of tenors in mes. 6-1 before reh. 56).

Comparison of loves with flutes gives rise to associations with a whole layer of European culture (from the flute of the ancient Faun to the magical flute by Mozart). These associations fall away like spalls (the word “loves” written in the unused plural!). So the scene has the symbolic meaning of farewell to love¹².

The reflection of *The Apaches’* years appears in the scene with the Arithmetic. Incorrect examples sound here as a spoiled echo (“four and four ... eighteen”, “eleven and sixty-five!”). The Arithmetic sums up this mathematical insanity and whispers menacingly with the “Apaches letter’s” z, “Z’huit” (3 measure after reh. 94). We also note the “Apaches’ letter” t in the phrase *s’en va-t’au marché* (before reh.87).

“Apaches’ phonemes” internalize the action. Violation of mathematical rules leads to the Child’s dizziness in the culmination of the scene where the mathematical phantasmagoria recalls infernal episodes of the symphonic works of Hector Berlioz and Franz Liszt. Thus, the ideal world of Dream of the previous scene is facing the soullessly-mechanistic world. This scene completes the topics of animated objects and the living beings start the dialogue with the Child.

IV. THE “AUTHOR’S WORD” ABOUT THE CREATIVE CREDO OF THE MASTER

The interaction of themes of the Child, the Mother, the Princess in the opera indicates its complex organization. In fact, the author’s genre definition “lyrical *fantasy*” brings to minds the thought by Jean Cocteau, “The only thing that needs to be understood is that the extravaganza does not fit with the wave, and that the mystery is only in the *exact things*” [17]. Ravel was exclusively sensitive to this kind of magic. It seems that the composer’s known love for amusing mechanical devices and mechanical toys was a part of his fidelity to “perfect things”. It is not surprising that the Clock appears in the fourth scene of the opera.

With some humor Ravel talked about the clock in his opera *The Spanish Hour*. In *The Child and the Spells* the clock comes to life (scene from reh.21). In the middle section of the fourth scene the mechanical tokata turns into the sentimental arioso.

There is almost no irony of the author in this metamorphosis of the Clock from *the Servant of Time* to *the Poet* that recalls the days of former happiness. The beautiful lyric arioso reveals the secrets of Ravel’s inner world and his

¹² We do not agree with the thought by O. Gagarina that treats the use of the letter z in this scene simply as a pictorial means transmitting a mechanical buzzing [16].

magical ability to subtly feel the semantic and emotional tension contained in the regular repetition. That’s why Ravel gently but insistently uses the signs of the lyric sphere in the scene. The culmination is connected with the theme of the Mother through using of low woodwind instruments. The word *Les Heures* (“The Hours”, 5 mes. before reh.27) is written with a capital letter and reveals the important layer of Ravel’s soul. Moreover the tonality E major (as tonality of the main moments in the opera) appears here, staining the key words, “Time to fall asleep, time to wake up, Time that brings to you one who is waited” (reh.24)¹³.

The most apparent manifestation of the hidden content of the composer’s spiritual life reveals in the monologue of the Squirrel in the dialogue of the Frog and the Squirrels (from reh.129). All the main topics of the opera are directed to this culmination point. The Squirrel’s monologue becomes a declaration of the composer’s creative principles.

As noted in the score, the Garden is filled with couples of dragonflies, butterflies, insects, all sorts of animals and turns into “a gentle and joyful paradise of animals”. The flight theme of the “Waltz of Dragonflies” becomes the basis of the Monologue of the Squirrel. The Squirrel articulates the key ideas of the whole opera, “*Free sky, free wind, my free brothers in an exact free flight ... So look, what is reflected in my beautiful eyes, full of tears!*”. Ravel creates a genuine anthem to freedom as an opportunity to look at everything with your own eyes. This is why Ravel’s appeal to various musical styles in the scenes of the opera as to “somebody’s word” (including the creation of allusions to his own compositions as the “author’s word”) is perceived as the highest expression of creative *fantasy*. The craftsmanship and true enchantment are an opportunity to look at what already exists in a new light. Only a really great artist could make it.

In the beautiful world where everyone finds its couple the Squirrel is alone like the Child. The figures of the theme of the Princess sound at the highest climax (reh.133-134, Piano) the last time in the opera and the theme of the Waltz reaches the maximal sounding (the vocal part of the Squirrel is duplicated by the instruments of all orchestral groups).

In this shining world there is no place for the Child and the bright image of the beautiful Princess weakens as an image of a failed and unattainable dream, which is disappearing. The ball of magical revelations is “unwound”. Therefore, the recognizable means of the main characters of opera appear here, including the theme of the Cats’ duet (mes. 6 after reh.134), the timbres of the Mother (Cl, Cl.b build a triad of A flat major), a wavy chromatic passage from the pastoral scene with the Shepherds (reh. 135, the bassoon). Against this background, the Child says, “They love each other... They forgot me... I’m alone...” And the image of the Mother hovers above this sad recognition.

¹³ Later in the construction of the scene of animal rage (3 mes. before reh. 136 - reh. 140) the sudden tonal shift in E major notes the highest climax (reh.139). Such a logic of the tonal movement not only refers to the scene with the Princess (reh.72), but to Bolero (an unexpected shift in E major in the final climax).

V. CONCLUSION

The spiritual life of Ravel determines the artistic text of the opera. The path indicated by the composer towards his childhood, to his own secret desires and dreams became the result of all his life, in a literal sense. The performance of *The Child and the Spells* traced the last feature in the composer's life (M. Rosenthal) in the evening of December 28, 1937, the tragic day of Ravel's death.

Despite the obvious autobiographical layer, the composer left us a hidden author's recognition, the "author's word" about himself and his work. He was strikingly frank in *The Child and the Spells* with the listener although he never told anybody the secrets of his personal life. Only genuine Master could insert the almost unbearable sincerity of confessions in the bright shell of a brilliant show.

The words of the famous philosopher Merab Mamardashvili are brought to mind in this context, "It is empirically impossible to collect millions of pieces of our life because we are finite beings, they can be collected only through the invented structure that generates, induces understanding and sense in our head" [18]. Mamardashvili wrote it about the famous novel by Marcel Proust. However, it is possible to speak in this way about *The Child and the Spells*. We are not talking about the musical implementation of an autobiographical story, but about "collecting" of all life fragments into an artistic structure. Exclusively tying together all the strings of the past and present, a man can understand what is the most essential and so difficult to explain, i.e. his *own desires*.

In this process the "author's word" becomes a code that allows us to understand the principle of organization of the opera. The first scene, the scene with the Princess, the scenes using the "Apaches' letters" and the monologue of the Squirrel perform this function. It is symptomatic that the opera begins with the repeated phrase of the Child, "I have a *desire...*" that receives different ending (walk, eat all the cakes, pull the cat by the tail, etc.). Actually following his desires, the Child falls into the world of Magic.

Perhaps, the magic of the theatre is precisely the ability to clarify the person's most secret desires, to revive and spiritualize the things storing the imprint of Time, to recount the everyday situations in a different way and to start a game with the past. Such reflections are brought by the "author's word" in the opera *The Child and the Spells* that opens the way to the world of *fantasies* and mysterious *desires* of its author.

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