

**“LUCIAN BLAGA” UNIVERSITY OF SIBIU  
FACULTY OF ORTHODOX THEOLOGY  
“SAINT ANDREI ŞAGUNA”**

**ACADEMY OF RELIGIOUS MUSIC  
OF BUCHAREST**

**- ABSTRACT -**

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**KEYWORDS:**

• The Academy of Religious Music • Bucharest • musical religious education • church songs • church singers • The Patriarch Miron Cristea • law • headquarter • professors • graduates • accreditation • reestablishment • University of Music • present organization •

The present document entitled *Academy of Religious Music of Bucharest*, presented as doctorate thesis at Theology, at the discipline *Religious Music and Rules for the Religious Service* of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology “Saint Andrei Şaguna” of the “Lucian Blaga” University of Sibiu, under the scientific coordination of Rev. Ph. D. VASILE GRĂJDIAN, reveals elements of novelties based on the approached subject and on the effort for emphasizing as exact as possible the activity performed by this institution of religious education concerning the religious music of Byzantine tradition, by presenting the generations of graduates which sustained the accomplishing of a national desiderate: the evenness of the religious song.

The importance and the timeliness of the subject resides from the fact that at the moment, as it is confirmed by His Beatitude Daniel himself, the Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, we assist at a tendency of revival of psaltic music, according to the model initiated by Patriarch Miron Cristea who set up the Academy of Religious Music of Bucharest, the appreciation of the traditional religious music representing a strong message with a special impact especially for the young people. The discrete and succinct approaching of the didactical – pedagogical activity of this musical establishment – performed by His Grace Reverend Archdeacon Ph. D. Sebastian Barbu-Bucur in the article “The Academy of Religious Music in the past and today”, in *Religious Almanac*, concerning the Saint Archiepiscopate of Bucharest, 1999, pp. 192-197, but also by Alexie Buzera in “Constantin Brăiloiu and the Academy of Religious Music“, as cited by Vasile Tomescu, Michaela Roşu, *Centenary Constantin Brăiloiu*, Musical Publisher of the Union of Compositors and Musicologists of Romania, Bucharest, 1994, pp. 191-198 – these 2 studies dedicated exclusively to the existence of the Academy of Religious Music of Bucharest determined me to deepen the research of an ecclesiastical organism which followed up the rebalancing of the statute of the psaltichie (religious vocal music specific to the Orthodox rite), but also its relation with the choral music, in the context of inter-war transformations that occurred in almost all the fields of activity.

Taking into consideration the different evolution of the religious song in our country from historical and geographical point of view, the present document emphasize the main

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aspects which led to the uniformity of singing in our territory, thanks to the artistic and scientific work performed in the Academy of Religious Music by erudite professors and rewarding graduates.

From scientific point of view, this approach emphasizes the importance of the high institution, unique in all the Eastern Orthodoxy of that times, both due to the benefits brought to the Byzantine research and by rising up the singers in the choir at another academic level, this fact opening new flattering skylines to this category of people which work for the Romanian Orthodox Church.

All these premises consist in a real base for research and the present document tries to use it in order to emphasize the necessity and utility of this Academy, not only for Bucharest, but also for the entire Romanian Orthodox Church. Therefore, the objectives of the Academy for Religious Music – which at that time were considered as being examples to follow also by some other educational forms of the country - have an applicability even nowadays: the cultivation of the Byzantine religious music both in its pure form and in its form influenced by the Romanian specific genius, the identification of those elements of religious music which are common to all the Romanian provinces, providing musical unity and evenness, but also the training of the best professors, Protopsaltis and conductors of religious chorus, which preach the beauty and the correctness of the religious song, these experiences being gained for a certain period of time only in the “laboratory” of the Academy of Religious Music of Bucharest. But the situation changed after the re-organization of the Faculties of Theology during the Patriarch Justinian.

During the drawing up of the work we chose a clear, realistic presentment of the historical facts, bringing arguments in an explicitly manner for the historical context and for the vision of the Patriarch Miron Cristea upon an ecclesiastical institution of religious education, which is inedited form the perspective of the scientific approach of the religious music, emphasizing like this also the effects of the setting up of such a school in the entire Romanian Orthodox Church.

The consistently analyze in order to research and for the approached issues of the present work led to the revealing of new dimensions which, even they are individually appreciated, harmonize two theological disciplines: Religious Music and the History of Romanian Orthodox Church, in their interdisciplinary hypostasis. The presented document consists in a monograph of the Academy of Religious Music of Bucharest, due to the attempt of emphasizing the advantages brought both to the image of the Romanian Orthodox Church – based on the uniqueness of the inauguration of a “temple” of the religious song - and to the

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generations of the graduates, which put into practice and forwarded the affection for the classical religious music, especially during the period in which in the Faculties of Theology was not studied at all the religious music.

Being structured in five big chapters divided in more subchapters for the proper understanding of the chronology of the information, the content of the present thesis is structured so that to expose as well as possible the approached thematic.

The introductive part was drawn up to provide a short historical presentation of the evolution of the religious musical education in Romanian Country, offering like this an image of ensemble of the field of activity performed by the Academy of Religious Music of Bucharest.

The religious song accompanied the public divine worship even since the first Christian centuries, facilitating like this the pastoral mission and the inserting of the truths of saving faith. Along time the religious music passed through different transformations in those concerning the notation, melodic line and influences, the religious music was regulated by the human endeavor of those which contributed to the development of the Romanian culture and spirituality, meaning to the discovering of national identity. Thus it was naturally arrived at the “Romanian influence” upon the religious song, to the harmonization of the religious song with the specific of Romanian speech, process which is accomplished once the initiation of the action of evenness of religious song.

The new reign’s rules of the centuries XVIII-XIX impede the evolution of the psaltic music due to the insertion into the worship of the music of harmonic- polyphonic nature, fact which conferred new valences of expression of the religious sentiment, in spite of the tensions manifested by the two musical forms. The development of the musical phenomenon was subordinated to the reliability of the religious musical education represented by the great number of schools dedicated to the study of psaltic music. The concern of the church for the religious music was extended over time upon its practitioners – the singers of the church- by the creation of an environment conducive to intellectual and spiritual progress of them.

The beauty and expressivity of the Byzantine melody determined the Romanian reigning to invest in the worthy youth, trained at “Athos” mountain and placed ahead the first schools opened nearby monasteries, Bishops, Metropolitans and other cultural centers.

Up to the XVIII<sup>th</sup> century, when the Romanian Language imposes definitively to the detriment of the Greek and Slavonic language, the Byzantine music follows up the process of ethnogenesis of Romanian nation. The next stage after the “Romanian influence” upon the song, initiated by Hieromonk Filothei sin Agăi Jipei, was the stage of organizing the religious

and public education. All the initiations of Romanian school contain among other disciplines the religious music, fact which is attested from documentary point of view even since the XVI<sup>th</sup> century.

In the Romanian Country the process of “nationalization” of the religious song was continued in masterly by Macarie the Hieromonk and by Anton Pann, which received also the responsibility to open and to supervise a great number of schools for religious singers- forms of education which promoted Byzantine music in its pure form. The reforms of the reigning Alexandru Ioan Cuza imposing the forced renouncement of the exclusive practice of this type Byzantine music place in opposition for a long period of time the monadic song and the polyphonic song. The reconciliation of these two ones will be performed by the carefulness of the Academy of Religious Music of Bucharest; this Academy will prove – by his professors and graduates – the appreciation for the music – generally speaking – and especially for the religious music. These two forms of singing: choral and monadic did not disappear ever from the churches, they coexist nowadays.

Once defined the circumstances for the appearance and developing of the religious singing and for the first school of music, I thought fit to mention also the circumstances that led to the setting up of the Academy of Religious Music of Bucharest.

Thus the first chapter of the thesis “*The context of the foundation of the Academy of Religious Music of Bucharest - the first year of activity*” offers important data upon the historical and social situation around the Great Union the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 1918, presenting also the prophetic vision of the Patriarch Miron Cristea about the new institution of education presented by the desiderate of the patriarchal mandate. In this respect the approaches of the Primate of the Church were received with a special enthusiasm by the contemporary society, especially by the Romanian singers, to whom the Academy brought an unexpected recognition. The soul of the servants of lectern: professor Ion Popescu-Pasărea together with other singers, knowing the state of decadence of music at the end of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, had already initiated a campaign of organizing some special schools nearby monasteries in order to study the traditional religious music. The merit of the Patriarch Miron is that of gathering all the echoes of these desiderates, setting up based on them an Academy of Religious Music. The organizational difficulties, inherent in any beginning, were rapidly compensated by the enthusiasm and perceptiveness of the most distinguished masters of the Romanian music, who replied with abnegation to the request launched from deep of the soul of Patriarch Miron and sloe by the great number of candidates incorporated for the perfection of the musical studies. This chapter will explain the framing of the first year of study as a trial year, according to the



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model set into practice by the royal Academy of Music and Dramatic Art of Bucharest; also it was followed up the development of the pedagogic activity under the attentive supervising of the authorities of the church, as a proof of continuous communication between the members of the Academy and the Romanian Patriarchy.

As a real spiritual parent of the Academy of Religious Music, the Patriarch Miron guided its existence even from the beginning and was implied in an affectionate manner in its organization and the proof is the great volume of correspondence with the direction of the Academy. The guidance offered to it consisted the landmark and objectives followed up by all the people who connected their names by the Academy of Religious Music of Bucharest, either professors or graduates. It is noticeable the mission offered for the institution not only for Bucharest or for Muntenia Region, but for the whole country whose religious music evaluated depending on the geographical and ethnical received influences. In this respect the solution proposed by the Primate of the Church in cooperation with the Academy consisted in the attempt to obtain the evenness of the religious song, by the implication of some musical personalities of all the Romanian provinces, which to bring the same musical tendency, result of the proper education of the singing.

The completion of the first year of activity of the Academy of Religious Music will mean the confronting with a harsh reality offered by a more and more impoverished country, led by value systems insensitive to the values and rights of a high institution of education.

The second chapter, “*The Academy of Religious Music of Bucharest up to the inclusion into the Royal Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts of Bucharest*” illustrates the most exactly the torment of survival of an institution dedicated to the art of religious music and in this sense it is presented the didactical – educational activity of the Academy per each year of study.

The Academy of Religious Music of Bucharest developed its activity under the stigmata of the statute of a lessee during in all its existence in different headquarters, which proved to be improper for its needs. Therefore, the first host was the *Hostel of the Priests and Ecclesiastical Singers* set up by Patriarch Miron, where the school functioned during its first year of activity (1928-1929). From this place it was moved to the *Central Theological Seminary*, also for one year (1929-1930).

The third headquarter of 21 “Maria” Boulevard, a small monastery subordinated to “Ciorogârla-Samurcășești” Monastery, will host the Academy of Religious Music for the longest period of time from 1930-1937.

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In the period 1937-1939, the Academy develops its activity in a small monastery subordinated to “Cernica“ Monastery placed in 7 “Cernica” street; from this location the Academy will be moved to “Antim“ Monastery (1939 -1941).

The last headquarter of the Academy of Religious Music placed in 8 and 12 “Piața Amzei” Street was in fact the headquarters of the Royal Academy of Music and Dramatic Art of Bucharest, which undertakes the institution of religious musical education as “ Section of Religious Music” (1941-1948).

The reasons of the malfunction and of the premature disestablishment of this musical settlement will be widely presented in this chapter, among them I remind only the global financial crisis, the problem of the wages of the professors, the lack of possibility to employ the graduates, the shortcomings of changing six headquarters, the empty promises and the unpaid debts by the state, the excessive bureaucracy – following up to the lack of its own financial service- the school absenteeism and the lack of stimulation of the students’ performances (scholarships, diplomas, competition), all these being placed on the army conflict generated by the triggering of the Second World War. The presented difficulties of functioning are pale in front of the success of the Academy of Religious Music, materialized in a rich pedagogical and cultural activity: articles in the newspapers of the time, religious concerts, religious musical audition, contests, musical compositions, international recognizing, outstanding graduates.

Even the hardships of functioning of the Academy of Religious Music were not sufficiently realized by the state authorities – which undertook the responsibility of the financial support – spiritually the Academy enjoyed the support of some great personalities of the Romanian music which trusted it and appreciated the values promoted by it. This fact reveals the special efforts of the church staff, conducted by the Patriarch Miron Cristea, by attracting and implying in the sustaining of the school of the great composer and conductor of international recognition: George Enescu. The people of the Academy of Religious Music: professors and graduates were not only such exponents of the history on an elite institution, but they were real models of behavior and of success.

I insisted deeply upon each of these aspects just to emphasize the efforts of all the parties involved in the good functioning of the institution for its subsistence and for attracting of new students desiring the perfecting.

The third chapter, *The Academy of Religious Music of Bucharest as a Department of the Royal Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts of Bucharest*, presents the last years of existence of the Academy of Religious Music of Bucharest, saved from its dissolution by its taking-over

by the Royal Academy of Music and Dramatic Art of Bucharest, as a Department of Religious Music. Its destiny is here combined with that of the host institution, under of management of exception which will take special care of the undertaken professors and students, up to the moment of imposing a forced ideology of a new atheistic political system, which disfigured the entire confessional education.

The fourth chapter, *Academy of Religious Music of Bucharest after its reestablishment*, emphasize the efforts adopted after half a century by a group of persons devoted to the traditional religious music which, being led by the Grace Reverend Archdeacon Ph. D. Sebastian Barbu-Bucur, will succeed to awake consciousness and to re-set up the Department of Religious Music of the National University of Music of Bucharest.

The fifth chapter, *Professors and graduates of the Academy of Religious Music of Bucharest*, proves to be an homage brought to the personalities of the Academy of Religious Music – professors and graduates: P.S. Tit Simedrea, Ion Popescu-Pasărea, Constantin Brăiloiu, Rev. I.D. Petrescu, Rev. Paraschiv Angelescu, Mihail Jora, George Breazul, Gheorghe Cucu, Ion Croitoru, Ioan D. Chirescu, Gheorghe Folescu, Ioan Livescu, Paul Constantinescu, Vasile Popovici, Dimitrie Cutava, Ștefan Popescu, Mihail Vulpescu, Mihail Rădescu, Archdeacon Ph. D. Sebastian Barbu-Bucur, Vasile Vasile, Nicolae Gheorghită, Archdeacon Gabriel Oprea, Costin Moisil, Gheorghe Comișel, Archimandrite Victor Ojog, Chiril Popescu, Rev. Anton Uncu, Marin Predescu, Ion Cristescu, Ion Bănescu, Ilie Căltuș, Rev. Stelian Ionașcu, Rev. Nicolae Giolu, Rev. Zaharia Matei, Rev. Alexandru Dumitrescu, Rev. Constantin Ștefan, Sorina Goia, Ph. D. Pavel Lungu, Rev. Ph. D. Gheorghe Drăghici, Rev. Ph. D. Petru Stanciu , the existence of this institution of religious music is connected by the names of all these personalities.

I also insist in this chapter upon the valorization of the heritage left by Academy by the results of the work performed by the graduates in different regions of the country.

Concerning the objectives of drawing up this thesis I tried to unravel a theme which had little approach up to now, emphasizing the role of the Academy of Religious Music of Bucharest played for the education of the believers from musical point of view – through the knowledge of the conductor of lectern trained at the academic level – in order to obtain the long awaited evenness of the ecclesiastical music.

Based on the same idea I followed up the exposure of the benefits brought to the religious music, both by the exceptional works issued by the professors during the period of didactical activity at the Academy of Religious Music and by the actions in the same field performed by the graduates.

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Each aspect of the ecclesiastical music – historical or scientific – was analyzed so that from the ensemble of the thesis to result the importance of this musical institution of the history of Romanian Orthodox Church.

As a conclusion the Academy of Religious Music of Bucharest succeeded to accomplish desires which are always actual, defining the specific of any Orthodox Church and which followed the reinstatement of the psaltic traditional music, the cancellation of the antagonism between the monadic and harmonic music, the scientific research of the singing and coming back to the Byzantine origins, preparing the most worthy professors of music, of the most able conductors for the great choruses nearby Metropolises, bishops, cathedrals, but also worthy Protopsaltis – worthy descendants of the given names. All these led in a natural manner to the beginning of another desiderate launched by the professor Ion Popescu-Pasărea even since the setting up of the Academy – the evenness of the ecclesiastical singing: “ After so much unrest and controversy on the theme of our psaltic religious music, its situation is clarified today by the setting up of the Academy of Religious Music, due to the solicitude of His Holiness Patriarch Miron. In this institution we believe that it could be studied the psaltic music in its authentic Byzantine form, as well as in its different adaptations made by our Church to the Romanian musical genius. Here, as in a laboratory, it will be melt the material of ecclesiastical musical folklore existent in all the Romanian regions, in order to be able to arrive to the creation of one single type of ecclesiastical singing, own to the Romanian Orthodox Church”.<sup>1</sup>

In the last two decades it is noticed a revival of the Byzantine music due to the valuable activity of the theological schools of the field – Seminaries and Faculties of Theology – but also of the laic institutions of education- National University of Music- as well as by the implication of some specialists of the compositional, didactical, historiography and interpretative of the religious music. This fact could lead to a possible re- interpretation of the Academy of Religious Music of Bucharest – under the conditions and means of the XXI<sup>st</sup> century, much more offering, according to the model of one institution “not only of the singers but of the entire nation and maybe of all the Orthodox Christians”.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I. POPESCU-PASĂREA, “Religious Music”, citing from George Breazul (and others), *Romanian Music of today – The book of the trade Union of the Instrumental Artists of Romania*, edited by professor P. Nițulescu, Bucharest, 1939, p. 602.

<sup>2</sup> \*\*\* “Answers to the Letters”, in *Culture*, year XV (1926), number 10-11, October-November, p. 2.

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