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*"The Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom within the
Romanian choral composition"*

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SUMMARY

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The liturgical song represents for the life of the Church a constitutive element of the ecclesial mission, present in all periods of history, through which the people of God take part in the liturgical and sacramental act, which takes place within the communion of faith. Church music has expressed, over time, evangelical truths, messages and exhortations to the preservation of Orthodox tradition and doctrine (in the sense of true faith), being a pastoral-missionary means of strengthening the bonds of communion between people, and as regards the horizon of divine worship, it is the very prayer raised to God. Since Orthodox worship is governed by the centrality of the Divine Liturgy, as an expression of the plenary community prayer, I have tried to highlight in this work, the evolution of the way of playing the songs contained in the Divine Liturgy in the Romanian Orthodox space, in the choral version, starting from the beginning of the harmonized singing in the Romanian Orthodox Church (the first half of the nineteenth century) and until the end of the twentieth century.

The transition from the psaltic monodia, from "melismatic horizontality"¹ to the harmonized choral singing, for the beginning during the Divine Liturgy and especially to the major cathedrals and churches in the country, it meant a new stage not only for the church music literature, but also for the Romanian culture, as it imposed "search" and "pre-doings" in the world of art people. They often offered choral literature, representative pages for the Romanian School of Composition, which are still found today in the repertoire of many religious choral bands. In this regard, I sought to research representative works for

¹ Pr. Stelian Ionașcu, *Cultura corală bisericească la români. Documente din arhiva Mitropoliei Ungrovlahiei 1876-1897*, Ed. Basilica, București, 2019, p. 18

each stage of the path of sacred music harmonized with Romanians, and, trying to highlight features that individualize the liturgical musical creation in the era and highlight aspects of the musicological syntax, through which one can analyze the evolution of the songs of the Divine Liturgy in the history of Romanian music.

The theme proposed for research captures the process of socio-cultural, artistic and emancipation transformations starting from the middle of the nineteenth century, in which the emergence and development of harmonized music in the church cult space represents an important stage of the metamorphoses occurred in the Romanian church music. Titled the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom within the Romanian choral creation, the work follows the evolution of the harmonized songs of the Divine Liturgy, this process representing an artistic and missionary path, which will prove prolific for the Romanian sacred music literature.

The profile works, both those in the section of theological research regarding the Romanian liturgical choral creations, but also those in the field of musicology research, of the history of cult music in Romania, as well as those in the field of music research, they did not express in an analytical way the richness and complexity of the sacred musical heritage, which is a valuable contribution to the treasury of the national culture. The liturgical compositions, especially the Songs of the Divine Liturgy, harmonized either under the influence of some Western currents, especially in the beginning period, or in their own style, by capitalizing on the Byzantine theme, the pew singing, the, they will represent for the research process, a main object of study, trying to argue by researching manuscripts, choral scores as well as by means of musical auditions and analyzes, the belonging of liturgical creations to the European artistic patrimony, presenting at the same time their native specificity. Whereas, the current state of scientific research regarding the Romanian harmonization of the Songs of the Divine Liturgy does not fully and in an analytical manner reveal the importance of the liturgical repertoire for the Romanian musical treasury, this project aims to use historical, artistic and cultural arguments to demonstrate the importance of ecclesial choral music in the mission of the Church, as a factor of culture and human cohesion.

As a working methodology, for a better systematization of the choral creations of the Romanian composers, highlighted in this study, we chose that their presentation in each chapter to be done in chronological order having as a reference the year of birth of each. As an exception, the Greek Catholic musician Celestine Cherebetiu, author of two harmonized liturgies, is recalled at the end of the third chapter, given that his repertoire, although it largely respects the pattern of Orthodox liturgy, it is intended for church services of Greek-catholic rite.

Both in theological writings and in musical literature, either ecclesiastical or in the history of Romanian music, I did not find any research covering the evolutionary path of the harmonized songs of the Divine Liturgy, from the beginning until the end of the twentieth century, with contextualization, the repertory or presentation of the premises for the development of this composition corridor of church music. This aspect is particularly important for this study, which attempts – as much as possible – to highlight in an academic, critical and comparative manner the evolution of the creation of songs intended for the Orthodox Liturgy, revealing specific aspects determining the composition of each musical opus presented. As on the territory of present-day Romania and even beyond the borders, there is a wide panoply of liturgical creations, more or less inspired/original, we have selected, in this work, only the creations that have illustrated either local specificities, which individualize them in the general ecclesiastical repertoire, or the representative compositions for the ecclesial choral movement of each age.

This work is the result of the research of both the religious choral literature in the coffins of some cathedrals that we visited in search of new sacred music scores (Archbishopric and Metropolitan Cathedral of Targoviste and Timisoara, the Archdiocesan Cathedrals of Galati and Constanta, the Balasa Church of Bucharest, Sinaia Monastery, etc.), as well as the music archives of several institutions in the country (UCMR Libraries, National University of Music – Bucharest, National Library of Romania, Casa Muresenilor – Brasov Philharmonic, etc.). During this process, we came into contact with both the repertoire of Sundays and holidays, interpreted by some church choirs, which, courtesy of

the leaders of the choir bands, we were able to discover and note, but I also learned and noticed some lesser known and interpreted musical writings in church services. Some of these old scores we have exhibited for example and analysis in this approach, to capture the evolution of the choral liturgy genre, which recorded mutations, diversifications and dynamizations of the compositional processes, so if at the time of the appearance of liturgical choral singing it was in the stage “stylistic imports” or some mimetic musical creations, towards the end of the twentieth century, it crystallizes a repertoire with a pronounced national character, having structural and semantic complexities, which will build a real Romanian school of composition of religious choral music.

The novelty presented by this work consists in the presentation, development and historical contextualization of the songs of the Divine Liturgy in the harmonico-polyphonic dressing (they are easily identified in the research), trying to highlight not only the course of the coral-liturgical genre, with all the mutations that have occurred over time, but also to emphasize the characteristics that define the composition writing of each opposite. The activity I have been doing in the Coral of the Metropolitan Cathedral of Targoviste for over two decades involves deciphering and interpreting numerous choral pages dedicated to the service of the Divine Liturgy, in which we have discovered various creations in form and style, each with its sonority, which expresses not only states and feelings, but outlines a framework conducive to meditation and prayer. In this regard, I have sought to observe in my research the different stages of the Orthodox choral song, thus discovering an evolutionary path not only in terms of the complexity of harmonizations, but also in terms of, but also the crystallization of some currents that will influence the compositional pattern of the songs of the Divine Liturgy.

Another aspect that presents actuality for the church musical landscape is the rediscovery and reaffirmation of the national style of harmonized psaltic singing, so proper to our Church, in which choral compositions of Romanian musicians who have explored psaltic monodia can be more emphasized in church coffees, if it is accepted the idea that this music promotes the legacy of the traditional pew song in our Church and implicitly,

the Romanian identity. The progress in researching the vast area of church singing has revealed to me a multitude of choral compositions, some of which are known only in limited areas of the country, others being only in manuscript or incomplete editions, this fact led me to follow only those songs of the Liturgy that show originality from the point of view of the evolution of gender, which are found – according to the degree of maturity composition-processes and elements of the European musical language. Thus one can easily notice that starting from the first attempts to harmonize sacred songs, a process that is largely under the sign of limited works as artistic expressiveness, in the twentieth century the compositions of church music have an increasingly complex character, by using dense polyphonies and harmonies, sometimes intensely chromatinized.

Ecclesial music, an integral part of Romanian spirituality and of the national artistic heritage, is a valuable element of identity for the Romanian people, and the research on the evolution of Romanian liturgical songs, especially of the Songs of the Divine Liturgy, it offers the possibility to discover and evaluate important musical works, as well as to promote them in the artistic and ecclesiastical environment, to enrich the repertoire of choral bands. On the other hand, this approach aims to bring to light important figures of musicians, close and faithful to the ancestral Church, who have entered an unjust shadow cone. Thus, in addition to the scientific analysis of the "classic" compositions of choral church creations, extensive works that are partially found in the coffins of our cathedrals, the, the work will also expose the work of composers and creators of church music, contextualized in the era.

Since the beginning of choral creations, the two existing musical syntaxes, monodic and harmonic-polyphonic, have entered an antagonistic process, fueled by the desire of some to eliminate byzantine music from the cult of the Church and its replacement with vocal-harmonized music. Thus, by the decrees issued by Cuza that aimed at the removal from the oriental culture, assimilated to the Phanariote inheritance in the Romanian territories,, the ecclesiastical music literature has mutated in the chants of the Divine Liturgy and in the manner of their interpretation. In this respect, the proper repertoire of the liturgical ceremony meant for the beginning the publication of liturgies in three or four

voices, in which the „outside” stylistic element is felt, especially from Russian choral creations. These harmonized opus, interpreted by the church choirs in formation, although foreign to the tradition of crystallized singing in our Church, impressed by the sonic dynamism, which contrasted with the ancient and monotonous byzantine monody. Even the press of the time synthetically confirms these aspects: “It is known by all that the purpose of these church choirs was to replace the monotonous oriental music, singing with the hoarse and nasal voices of the singers made the heart of the righteous believers, instead of being pious during the divine service, on the contrary, be removed with some disgust from the holy habitation.”²

From the point of view of stylistic unity, the conclusion on the stage of introducing the songs of the Holy Mass in a harmonized version, highlights a period of searching and consolidations of the directions to be followed, with the inevitable mimicry regarding the coral repertoire. The enthusiasm of supporting a phenomenon that was wanted generalized caused the emergence of new and varied harmonic creations. This composition diversity also meant the lack of a stylistic unity, the attraction for harmonic-polyphonic music, making many of the composers consider the psaltic melody to be part of the past of the Church, which the pro-European vision of the society assessed as outdated. Therefore, the representatives of this period, whose songs were exposed in this study, will eliminate the legacy of the ancient pew chant and, tributaries to foreign currents, will, they will compose liturgies and church chants in an original manner, of their own invention, under the influence of external influences, foreign to the native religious sounds.

In the first part of the twentieth century, the choral creation records a vitalization of the repertoire of the songs of the Divine Liturgy, which becomes more varied and more complex, as the new generations of composers, but also the appearance of choral formations that improve. The specialized educational schools generate graduates who use compositional procedures and techniques that will capitalize on new ways of expressing the sacred melos, continuing to explore and present in the holy services, more elaborate

² Lyra Română I, (1880), 18, pp. 137-138

harmonic-polyphonic compositions, in step with the Western artistic language. The composers who developed this current, broadening the horizon of the composition procedures, promoted the current known as classical-romantic, sometimes with dense harmony and sometimes intensely chromatinized, where polyphony is one of the commonly used elements of musical language. Pages of the harmonized choral liturgies of these composers (Gheorghe Dima, Eusebie Mandiveschi, Ed. Wachmann, etc.) are still found today in the repertoires of church bands, some of which are also presented at religious concerts. The contribution of the current for the richness of the songs of the Divine Liturgy consists in the multitude of works composed in this style, from which one can filter the religious opposites worthy of the rigor and dignity of the ecclesiastical space, especially for the Divine Liturgy. Compatibility with these requirements has made that over time, only some of these to pass the test of time, being used today to officiate church services.

The evolution of the songs of the Holy Mass records remarkable stages in short periods, so in the beginning period of the introduction of the harmonized creation into worship, the priority was the establishment of choral formations, able to sing on several voices, to the detriment of the repertoire, which was mostly imported or mimetically built, over time, it records a varied development, following several directions or component currents. In the twentieth century, the Choral Masses printed a pronounced aesthetic character, articulated either by melodic formulas reminiscent of Byzantine monodia, but framed in expressive polyphonic structures (Gheorghe Cucu, Cucu, Ion Popescu Runcu, Ioan. D. Chirescu, etc.), either in original melodic constructions of composers, which express their creativity and mastery (Ioan Cr. Danielescu, Liviu Tempea, Gavriil Galinescu, Trifon Lugojan). Songs keep the scroll wide, structured mostly by gradual walking, sometimes with medium interval jumps, integrating melodic embroideries that, when quoting formulas from traditional pew chant, create musical opus “in a byzantine manner”.

Another aspect that will give specificity to the liturgical songs of this period is rendered by the search for novelties in language and composition technique, which

synthesize the local style of melos, the counterpoint rigor and at times the influences of the folk song. The leading exponent of this current, Gheorghe Cucu will seek in the sacred creations to insert inflections of folk melos, filtered and reformulated, which fit into the typology of church singing. Also, in songs intended for liturgical service, composers such as Trifon Lugojan, Liviu Tempea or Cornel Givulescu will outline sonorities in which the musical ethos is developed, the area, thus marking a new stage in the evolution of the Romanian repertoire of the songs of the Divine Liturgy. As a source of inspiration, the homophone chants of the Transylvanian and Banat Orthodox Church are the ancient Byzantine church chants, transformed under the multi-secular influence of the Romanian folk song. “More chosen doina printed pew chants a popular character as we find in exapostilaria, troparion and polyeleion. The Romanian sings about whatever occupation he has, for every occupation has its own song. He sings at the work of the field, but sings with the same heart in the Church.”³

Eminently vocal, church singing is a first-rate missionary element in priestly activity, having the power to sensitize and attract man to the universe of faith and manifestations of communion and prayer of believers. It represents an inheritance that defines our identity in the Orthodox space. The church song, with the byzantine basis of the melos, imprinted by the ethos of popular song, is meant to make known, in an original sound organization, the beauty of the truths of faith, of the commandments and evangelical counsels, for the fruitfulness of the word of God in the life of the Church.

“The church song is endowed with life power and can contribute to the clarification, strengthening and defense of the right faith, and, as well as strengthening the unity of the Orthodox Church and is a wonderful means of curbing the tendencies of departure from the traditional music style”⁴. The Romanian composers who worked in the missionary field of the Church understood that although the harmonic-polyphonic language represents

³ Pr. Nicodim Belea, *Funcțiunea comunitară și soteriologică a cântării în comun în biserică în Mitropolia Ardealului*, XXXI, nr. 2, martie-aprilie, Sibiu, 1986, p. 167

⁴ Domin Adam, *Trecut, prezent și viitor în muzica bisericească românească în Altarul Reîntregirii*, XVIII, nr. 3, Alba Iulia, 2013, p. 19

a novelty in the cult and its singing, it is unnatural to renounce the tradition of Byzantine melody, which has crystallized for centuries in the holy services. That is why the compositions that process the monodic byzantine , although they were published and received many decades ago (some over a century), are still found today in the religious repertoire of many choir bands of sacred music, which present in an attractive dynamic, modern and especially interpretive form, archaic melodic sonorities that have been our church songs for many centuries.

As regards liturgical choral compositions in the twentieth century, the revival of singing in the Romanian Orthodox Church was a process that emphasized the musical heritage that has been established for centuries in the services. A large part of the composers manage, therefore, during this period to build harmonized - style chants, which do not abolish the fragrance of oriental music, but on the contrary, give it the brilliance and charm of Byzantine melody in a European manner. The preference for counterpoint and polyphony expresses the innovative vision of the need for the renewal of music, which proved to be a powerful missionary factor in the work of the Church in society.