

**UNIVERSITY „BABEȘ-BOLYAI”
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FACULTY OF ORTHODOX THEOLOGY
ORTHODOX SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY „ISIDOR TODORAN”**

PhD THESIS

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**THE RELEVANCE OF THE CONDUCTING TRADITION IN THE
CHURCH MUSIC IN ROMANIAN SPACE**

**Methodologic, vocational and spiritual exigencies of the church choir
conductor**

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Key words: Word and sound, logos and melos, theological-dogmatic aspect, church hymn, conducting art.

Introduction

Word and sound, logos and melos, are merging in a perfect harmony by the compositions of human voice, where music brings profoundness to the word, and the word borrows meaningfulness to this. Beethoven said that “the art and music raise humans to God”.

In human, creation of God, are merging the sound and word in music. The music expresses, in a seraphic language, the connection between man and his Creator, in a liturgical solemnity. The liturgical music and the entire evolution of the worship are imitating the Cherubic Hymn. That’s why, in Holy Liturgy “Let us, who mystically represent the Cherubim and who sing the thrice-holy hymn”, we ennoble the musical message.

The development of the Church cult in history, especially of the church music was found in these harmonic valences. Harmony was born in the West, if we think at renaissance poliphony, following after her course in every musical century.

The Church understood that for a word in a continue changeing, is necessary a variety and suggested to the clergy two kinds of expressing of the feelings and the religious feelings: the monodic (pew) and harmonic (choral) music.

1. Motivation and choosing the subject of the thesis.

This work wants to be one with a bivalent character, in music and theology. The church music expresses and highlighted always a theology of love, a theology of salvation. Christ, the Embodied, the Crucified and Rised, represents the confession of people in His Church, through the Church singing

In the proposed thesis we will approach a full palet of what means the ecclesiastic chanting and his theology, from his starting point through psalms chants and after with the progressive stages in the entire history.

Monody and choral singing, harmonic represents two different themes of real interest for those who are preoccupied by the study of the singing.

As a proponent of these two musical directions, I stopped especially on the second one , the development of the choral chanting, of the conducting art, which represents for me the most prolific way in which I can express my feelings and my spiritual experiences.

This is a personal motivation through this work because nowadays is an imperative need of improvement in the spiritual life of the Christians. We live in a world of secularisation, in which people are going more and more far away of God, their relation with our Creator is dying without even knowing of it, and the sin as the perfect instrument to the fallen man, living in the chaos without Christ. The spiritual message of the services from the divine cult, should enter in the heart of man to reconnect the relation between him and God, which was defeated by the sins. We considered the Church music as one which can reconnect this broken relation, under all his aspects and forms.

Loving the music of the Church and of course the services were the main reasons of writing this particular work, because I became what I am today only inside and with the church music. I raised in the pew of my church, and after I was formed in the Holy Autel of Theology and Music, and I realized and believe strongly in the values and realities which the music of the Church offers to everyone.

My experience as a spiritual son of Father Archbishop PhD Timotei of Arad, and as teacher of music at the Theological Orthodox Seminary of Arad, in 9 years, than as an University assistant at the „Ilarion V. Felea” Orthodox Theology Faculty from Arad, made me choose this particular theme, and trying to develop maybe I can open new directions of scientific research regarding the ecclesiastic singing.

2. Goals, limits and originality of the thesis

The chosen themes as guideline in this study are vaste and we considered unspended in this particular approach..

Even from the title of the thesis could be observed the directions ready to be traveled by the one who wants to became conductor but not any conductor, but one in the specific field of the music. The music conductor is one who jumps on the ineffable field of art, unvoiced of music, but in the same time, very difficult to go on.

This work I want to be as a guideline, landmark, a help for the youngest music conductors of Church choirs. The conductor of ecclesiastic choir, liturgical, aside the methodological and vocational exigences learned and gathered from the musical schools, they should cultivate the exigences and the spiritual requirements. The dialogue between the choir and the priests should be understood even in the minimal theological level, not only musical.

Regarding the limits of the above thesis, I consider that isn't treated exhaustively. The treaties of Dogmatic and Liturgical Theology, but the Musical ones and conducting, that formes the bibliographic basis of the study presents us the origins of the church music, and of course the divine worship, their evolution in the history and time and the perspectives that music and the entire worship opens in general for the reinstatement of the relationship between man and God.

Is very hard to talk about limits when the main purpose is the musical interpretation. Music has no limits, is limitless. Music and interpretation is creative, every time discovers and rediscovers new meanings of the existence of the human life. The limits of interpretation are found in the Universe of Creation.

Originality and novelty of the proposed subject is framed in two segments. One is of printing in the conscience of the youngest musical conductors of liturgical choirs, the development of the spiritual aspect of his conductive personality. The second fragment is represented by the fact that the above study is of theological-musical facture.

3. The methodology of thesis approaching

Approaching of the subject will be first of all one of theological, musical and historical facture. The all four chapters have a unitary structure, because are keeping a logical exposure. For the historical research we will use the expository method, through we keep the origins and the sources of the church singing, her evolution, the musical centuries and the way of receiving by the community of Christians. Than, we will use the analitical method, when in the relationship between the conductor and the choir creates a dialogue of analysis of the repertoire which will be studied to interpret this one. This research discovered new challenges and perspectives in the musical dialogical relation between the Autel of Holy Sacrifice (Holy Altar) and the Autel of sounds service (Church Cafasse)

4. Structure of the thesis

From the point of view of the composition, the thesis is structured in four big chapters, and every one of them has multiple subchapters, but the work has in her meaning two parts well definite. In the first part, respectively in the first two chapters we underline the theology of the ecclesial chanting under some essentials aspects, after the stages of the evolution of the church music, the challenges and the perspectives in the basis and the context of the Church Tradition.

In the second part of the study, designed of the last two chapters we show on one hand which are the directions that the conductor should follow in his becoming, and on the other hand we emphasis the perspectives of the role of choir conductor, in the development of the church choral singing, with all implications, tendencies and the existing challenges.

5. The actual stage of the the research

Trying to develop such a study was a test for me, especially because I tried to offer a practical character, using the case study, through the special analyse of some scores.

After I got a short look on the musical bibliography, I found a special interest on this subject under the communist regime. In that period were wroted a series of valuable works all over the country, and a series of masters of the choral singing were remarked in the Music Conservatories from the country. The Music Academies from Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca and Iasi have made themselves famous in the national and international most representatives musicians, and they made works of extensive research regarding the monodic and harmonic singing.

With regard to the guide of the formation of a church choir, the guide for the formation of a conductor of choir, the bibliography is very poor, because the preoccupations in such directions are not so intense. But is nothing to blame, because they knew the repercussions and punishments they received if they were preoccupied of forming a choir in that time. Dragoş Alexandrescu is representative for the before Decembrist period, because he gave us a guide of the Church choir conductor.

Nevertheless, nowadays is a need of new challenges in the formation of the youngest conductors of church choirs, because they need to realize that the effort and the music they made is eternal.

The divine cult and the church music are two complementary realities. The feeling and the religious states of the man are expressed in the public divine worship through the religious music. The man, had always aspirations, he was leaning toward art, toward beauty. The sounds, the singing always gave sensibility to the human being who was leaning toward art, toward beauty, gave him emotions, creativity, especially the religious singing. This is Religious; the creation of God is expressed by singing. Humans, through the religious singing confess the Embodied Christ, and are close to all the important moments of the life of Christians, from the Baptism to the Death.

The fundament of the religious music is the Holy Scripture and Patristics. The psalms are the first form of singing.

After the passing of the time, the religious music developed even more and received many valances and different characteristics.

The main century of the religious music is the Byzance, the Byzantin Empire which developed the singing, giving to this different directions. The byzantine music, monodical at the base of the psaltic music of now a days for all the intra and extracarpathic areas.

Chapter I

Music or the religious chanting is very related with Theology, with the Embodied Word. The beauty of the liturgical texts, dogmatical is emphasized by the church singing, choirs or pews, monodic or harmonic. This complex system is related in the workship, in Holy Church. Church never made abstraction of music, as a spiritual manifestation of believers.

The theological aspect of the religious music gives this the power to tie up the man of God, releasing his soul to the contemplation. The artistical liturgical moment involves the soul in a kind of emotion, of searching new existentials ways, of kneading, but in the same time, of spiritual fullishment, in the proximity of eternity.

In the meantime, the religious singing in even more developed, reaching even peaks of art and mastery, but the peak being the Byzantine Empire. The Byzance said his word and made his mark on the evolution of the religious music. Starting even from Saint Efreim Sirul, then Roman Melodul, Cosma Melodul, Saint Ioan Damaschinul. The byzantine religious music will become self-contained and will impress, will be a character shaper, and will impulse even the Christianization of some peoples.”

In history are recorded names of psalters and protopsalters very well known as Ioan Kukuzel. The byzantine music put his mark in all the orthodox countries. The church byzantine music becomes a title of glory and praise, one of genius and that is because the greater teachers of the romanian old psaltichie as: Filotei from Cozia, Filotei sin Agăi Jipei, Ioan sin Radului Duma Braşoveanul, he coriphaeus from the school of Putna, then the newest: Macarie Ieromonahul, Anton Pann, Dimitrie Suceveanul, Ion Popescu-Pasărea, Ştefanache Popescu.

After a historical presentation of he religious music, I showed the fact that the entire religious singing is based on the Holy Scripture and on the Holy Fathers. In this work I showed

the fact that the old-testamentary, new-testamentary and patristic which express the theological aspect of the religious singing. „through singing, said our Father Dumitru Stăniloae the heart is more strengthened deeply into the faith and in the love of God, being fulfilled of the sweetness of that feelings, made that all his believe to be communicated in an convictive way to other souls, or to make then who confess in the common singing, to unite even more in his confession, in the deepest way of the heart.” The religious singing has the role of transfigure man, he interiorizes, he fulfills through the religious music.

So, the theological-dogmatical aspect of the Church is in part understood by the prayers, singing and the hymns that structures the mysteries of the Church.

The religious music, raported at the place and the space of where is interpreted, is suporting an ecclesiastic, doxological and eucharistic aspect. Even the term of churchly, ecclesial shows us the fact that is a music, a song destined to a sacred place, with profound theological valences and with a saviour message, which go to the soul of man and made himself closer to God.

The ecclesiastic music under all his formes presents many stages, which humans to experiment. It is very related by the periods of the church year; from the repentence to Ressurrection, from joy to penitence again. The human soul is passing to many stages in his spiritual ascent, and the ecclesiastic singing is his support.

We said that the texts and the ecclesial songs from the liturgical periods as Triod and Pentecostarion, relieves and shows the character and the ecclesial aspect of the music. These liturgical songs have the role of resuming the whole work of salvation.

Whether we are talking about liturgical acts, whether we talk about singing or the liturgical music, the center of these statements is the Holy Liturgy. Here we don't refer at the Holy Liturgy as a service, but to the Holy Liturgy as the Mystery of Mysteries, as a supreme service, which thrones and governs the entire worship. The liturgical singings express the beliefs truths reveled in a spiritual form that's the Christian is experimenting in every single Holy Liturgy. The true divine cult is nothing else but the savior acts of Christ: the life, death and resurrection. All this savior acts are focusing and are revealed in the texts of the Holy Liturgy.

The liturgical-sacramental aspect of church music is found in the liturgical texts of the Church's services, but especially in the Divine Liturgy, where the adornment of the Word

receives the harmonious wealth of singing, both mirroring the invincible beauty of Christ, the Savior of the world.

Our Orthodox Faith is anchored in a personal relationship with God. God is not a machine, but a person with whom we can establish an incessant personal relationship. This is a relationship that draws on itself and feeds on our belonging to the Body of Christ, the Church.

It isn't a relationship cultivated by a single man, but a relationship that is developed by our contact with Christ with his Body, the Church and through the gift we receive from prayers and mysteries, especially through the Holy Eucharist.

We are speaking about a personal, communitary meaning. Only in Church we can ever find the real communitary structure of the human existence. Only the Church can give answers to the actual preoccupations of a clear doctrine about humans and the necessary means of the update, or in other words only through her the man can cross the abnormal states which are in the actual life of the society. The Church offers the way you can be closer to God, with your intimates, but is not depersonalized. The liturgical music is a part of this frame. The even constant relative, through ages and generations, of the characteristics of the religious music, mentioned until now, is still a favorizing element of the interpersonal liturgical communion.

The catechetical aspect of church music is liturgical in its character. The Divine Liturgy is a perfect catechesis. At the center of Orthodox worship is the Divine Liturgy which is a sacrifice and a sacrament.

Man has so many opportunities to work on his salvation, with a liturgical, theological, historical, and musical character. We chose to compare from the theologically-musical point of view the acquisition of salvation with the constant wakefulness of keeping the accompaniment.

Accompaniment in music represents, the weapon of the liturgical beauty, we can say that the accompaniment is always connected to the Melos, as Christ is bound by the weapon against the devil, the Cross, both together are a unity. There is no Melos without an accompaniment, and Melos lacks something when the accompaniment is not present. Accompaniment is imposed by the modal nature of the melody. We can say that church music is really saving; its participatory-soteriological aspect is very well defined in relation to the Persons of the Holy Trinity. In Byzantine music, accompaniment plays a very important role; it is the center of gravity, on which the monody is built. He is the cornerstone, like Christ, who is the Head of the Church, in which church music becomes an instrument of human soteriology.

Chapter II

For a correct understanding of the emergence and development of church music, of Byzantine origin, on the territory of Romania, it is imperative to evoke two great historical entities: Greece and Byzantium. We speak of Greece because the Greek songs have been sent to us from the beginning. We then speak of Byzantium and its history, which continued the Greek and Oriental tradition, developing here and at the same time crystallizing all the religious arts. However, we must look into the history of Christianity showing its role in the penetration and spread of the teaching of the Christ Savior on the Romanian territories.

Byzantine music is less related to the names of world-class creative personalities, on the one hand, because it has remained to forms of monody, and from another angle, because its strong tradition has not allowed spectacular evolutions, but it defines its styles through the three major stylistic periods of its development, namely: Paleo-Byzantine style including old-time Byzantine chants (4th-12th centuries); Medio-Byzantine style that includes Middle Byzantine songs (XII-XVIII centuries); Neo-Byzantine style that includes new Byzantine songs (19th-20th centuries).

Also in this chapter I have presented the statements of some professors over the centuries belonging to the local church music, the origin of the Byzantine music; influences, tendencies, perspectives. Church music in the West of the country has been a complex subject from several points of view. The coexistence of the Romanians with the Hungarians, Germans and Serbs was a reality that forced them to take into account in the appreciation of the religious music. Another important point of view in Banat music in its relationship with other areas is the exchange of priests. Another reason for the interconnection of music from the west of the country to that of other areas, especially with Wallachia, is supported by the circulation of cult books.

I then presented some biographical pieces, activities and musical works of the three kings of local church music in the Arad area, as an interference area between Banat and Crișana: Trifon Lugojan, Atanasie Lipovan and Ioan Lipovan.

Chapter III

In this chapter I have shown the role of the church conductor in preserving and transmitting the orthodox musical ethos, a role that can be detached from the three directions of exigency.

1. The metodological exigencies of the conductor

The working method of each conductor is very important. How to put it into practice helps or hinders the formation of a choir. The first step in this methodological point is the composition of the choral repertoire, with everything that this means: analyzing the scores, disseminating the melodic discourse, understanding the text of the musical pieces, choosing the tonalities according to the musical possibilities of the choir.

Another stage is the vocal technique, the choral singing, then two methods related to the methodological requirements of the conductor we presented through: the harmonization of the choral ensemble with the liturgical space and the crystallization of an interpretative concept.

2. The vocational exigencies of the conductor.

We divided these vocational requirements into four categories, and we started from the evolutionary stages of conducting art, from Renaissance to modernism and even post-modernism.

The professional training of the conductor is *sine qua non*, in terms of the formation of a choir. All the constitutive elements in this stage of conductor formation are mandatory, such as: the multi-cultural development of the choir conductor, the conductor's individual study and the elements of aesthetics and conducting stylistics. The knowledge of musical psycho-pedagogy is obligatory for any conductor, because they lead the conductor to the highest heights of interpretation; the relationship of communication with the choir represents a very large percentage in terms of success.

3. The spiritual exigencies of the conductor

The choir conductor is part of the Church's community. Its main object is liturgical music. The way in which the conductor integrates into the musical tradition of the Church is the way in which he interprets the liturgical music. The form and style of interpretation of church choral music gives the conductor its place as an integral part of the Orthodox musical tradition.

When speaking of style in musical interpretation, it is imperative to establish the subject of artistic interpretation, this being the musical work. For a conductor, most often his musical work is the Divine Liturgy.

The liturgical integration is the very participation at the Divine Liturgy and not a passive one, but an active participation, through prayer, singing and culminating in sharing with the Holy Communion.

The sacred characterizes the subject of religious experience and is revealed within the bounds of this experience. The sacred is regarded either as the presence of the Ineffable, as a manifestation of Him, or as a special expression of human consciousness.

In the vision of the monk Nicholas Steinhardt, the sacred is a divine attribute, and the saints are those people who have become aware of the sacramental grace, becoming great men of action. Their actions overturn the measure of purely human acts: they are powerful actions, spiritual actions, and deified actions.

Chapter IV

Christianity is not an ideology, a system of ideas to which we may or may not adhere, but is life, the true life in communion with the source of life, God, communion, which man has lost because of original sin. Through His Incarnation, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension the Savior Jesus Christ restored the human nature and delivered us from the domination of sin and death by giving us the everlasting life of the Kingdom of Heaven.

At the Divine Liturgy, the Holy Spirit introduces the eschatological realm of the Kingdom into history, changing the linear historicity of present. Past and future are thus united in a unique and indivisible reality, making a synthesis of history and eschatology.

The spiritual message of the services must reach to the soul of man. I thought of a case study, a musical-theological analysis, through which I attempted an exegesis at Gheorghe Mandicevski's Oratory, "And it was at six o'clock." This message, once understood by the faithful, will surely be received with joy, and interpretation of the chorus may be an exceptional one.

The term "harmonization" has not a use of music, the harmony of a score, but simply the correlation of the liturgical dialogue: the priest and the choir, the most important persons, the "tone-giving" in the dialogue of the liturgical service is the priest. He is the one who makes the ministry, the religious service he is doing, to take roots and bring forth into the souls of believers, the participants in worship.

The services of the Church, especially the Holy Liturgy, are not theatric acts, here referring to the pejorative meaning of expression, but are liturgical realities that take place in the lives of the believers with aim at their salvation.

Christ is actually present in church services and does not come as a Christ-Person who would symbolize something. Christ does not symbolize, He is. Every liturgical act the priest does have a real reference, it does not symbolize certain aspects of the life of the Savior Christ, but in fact they are real.

In any type of vocal music, we come across two constituent elements that underlie it: text and melody. The biggest role in voice music is the text. We are never allowed to make more of the melody, to the detriment of the text, however valuable and beautiful it is. A melody becomes beautiful when the text gives it life. It is very important to understand that the text can be easily understood on a beautiful and well-performed song, but the candor of the song does not have to shade the confession of the text.

The choral repertoire is the base for the musical expression of a choir, whether it is a church choir or not.

When analyzing the repertoire of a church choir, we must take into account at least two very important aspects: the place and the time when the repertoire of choir is presented.

These two aspects of spatiality, or temporality, are dependent or not one to another. When the repertoire of a choir is presented in the church, the liturgical time we are in must be taken into account. If it is not presented in worship, then the liturgical time of Christianity should not be taken into account, with the exception of the period of the carols related to the Nativity and the New Year. This repertoire can be approached only in the time it is devoted to, regardless of the place, either in the church or in a concert hall.

Conclusion

The present work is a bunch of inner quests, feelings of joy for what church music means to me as a servant of the altar in the stage of deaconry, at the same time as choir conductor at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology "Ilarion V. Felea" from Arad. Theology and Church Music have enriched me spiritually, opening up new directions of both musical and spiritual interpretation. I would not have understood many meanings of interpretation if I didn't have as support the Theology. These two great aspirations, Ecclesiastical Music and Theology, are the most beautiful forms and expressions for every Christian who seeks God and who lets God dwell in his heart.