

DUMITRU GEORGESCU KIRIAC AND IOAN D. CHIRESCU'S - CHORAL SACRED COMPOSITIONS

-Summary-

Key Words: monody, byzantine music, ison, liturgical composition, modal plan, tonal plan, polyphony, harmony, liturgy, tonality, byzantine melos, music composition techniques, musical discourse, choral composition, religious literature.

During the late nineteenth century some changes and important events occurred and transformed the mental horizon of Romanian culture and society and marked the history of the Romanian people, with effects in all domains. In this context, the coordinates of the spiritual life were defined in the spirit of knowledge, of the awareness of the importance and uniqueness of historical processes and national behaviour¹, which were anticipating fundamental rights, including the primordial right of independence and sovereignty.

Enclosing the harmonized chants in the liturgical life of the Church gradually evolved into a new stage of the emancipation of Romanian sacred compositions. This brought the unicity to Romanian choral religious music in the universal Orthodox place. The originality of the church artistic heritage has a strong influence from Byzantine music which in the terms of technique and language of European art, especially polyphony and harmonization, added force and authenticity.

In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century the European musical life was defined by the expressiveness and richness of modes, with great power of renewal defining religious music. A large number of scholars and musicologists, grouped in the Cantorum School in Paris, brought back to the attention of musical elite, based on their work, the gregorian chant and folk one inside and outside the borders of Europe.² The new influence in the European culture stimulated Romanian music and simultaneously with the restoration of

¹ "Națiunea Română" by Alexandru D. XENOPOL, Ed. Albatros, București, 1999, pp. 5-6

² *Axionul Învierii armonizat de D.G. Kiriac*, by Lect. Sebastian BARBU-BUCUR, Magazine *Glusul Bisericii*, 7-8, București, 1975, p. 696

Gregorian chant, is founded *the movement for the restoration of Byzantine ecclesiastical music in its first and authentic beauty.*³

One of the key aspects of singing in the church, is the compatibility of the religious music sonority with liturgical text which it inspires, and *the word (s) is (are) integrated during the Orthodox Divine Service, being the essential part of it - no religious service without word - it shines it, while revealing itself,*⁴ *because the meaning of the religious choral music, as well as the melodic one influenced by Byzantine tradition, is to be sung in church, accompanying the deployment of the most beautiful dramatic religious event: Divine Lyurgy.*⁵

The composer Dumitru Georgescu Kiriatic dedicating his whole life to the research of folk and religious composition, wanted the Romanian Orthodox Church and Romanian people to enherite remarkable pages of choral music, composed with the touch of a modern approach learned in Western Europe, a well defined style called ***kiriatic style***. Although Dumitru Georgescu Kiriatic did not avoid to use modern methods of composition like harmony, polyphony and others, and he remained faithful to the inherited psaltic chant.

Considered to be the most representative work from the collection of his compositions, the Psaltic Liturgy is a large work, which emphasises the Byzantine theme of traditional chant " *revealing a sonor universe articulated in modal echoes from the archaic times*".⁶ It was very appreciated by the composer George Enescu who described it as scale model for the choral creation.⁷

The trajectory that the whole Romanian religious choral creation had since its the first complete harmonization ends the nineteenth century and begins in the twentieth century. Psaltic Liturgy by Dumitru Georgescu Kiriatic, the one by Paul Constantinescu and the third by Nicolae Lungu are outstanding and fully portray the

³ *D. G. Kiriatic*, by George BREAZUL, ediție îngrijită de Titus MOISESCU, Editura muzicală a Uniunii Compozitorilor din Republica Socialistă România, București, 1966, p. 19

⁴ *Teologia cântării liturgice în Biserica Ortodoxă (aspecte de identitate a cântării liturgice ortodoxe)*, by Pr. Vasile GRĂJDIAN, Ed. Universității "Lucian Blaga", Sibiu, 2000, p. 26

⁵ *Ghidul dirijorului de cor bisericesc*, by Diac. Prof. Dragoș ALEXANDRESCU, Ed. Sfântul Gheorghe-Vechi, București, 1998, p. 10

⁶ *Hronicul muzicii românești*, by Octavian Lazăr COSMA, Vol. VII, Editura Muzicală, București, 1976, pp. 296-297

⁷ *Interdependențe structurale și stilistice între folclorul românesc și muzica bizantină în Preludiul la unison de George Enescu*, by Vlad Gheorghită STROE, *Muzica* magazine, nr. 2/2012, p. 41

sense that prevails the harmonic and polyphonic elaboration. The techniques used in the oldest religious choral (*ison, antiphony, pedal point*) find their a prominent place in the new approach of liturgical chant.

Synthesis of the spiritual and original vision on Romanian psaltic music and on music and on the harmonic and polyphonic language, Psaltic Liturgy represents an unique paradigm for the era in which it was presented. The need for authenticity leads the author to shape sounds that resonate with Romanian melos, where the traditional Byzantine music, which has carved over the centuries souls of Romanian musicians and simple believers, must be founded in a modern musical architecture, inviting also to discover the sublimity of Christian liturgy. Once that it steps forward, it will serve as a prototype for other liturgical compositions, many musicians using formal or structural matrix of the Psaltic Liturgy, which they will later develop into their own expressive style.

The similarity of the two great traditions of interpretation and chanting Byzantine melodic and palestinian music, leads to conjugated efforts in the creative process in order to have a genuine synthesis between psaltic ethos and European language. The originality of this composition it will be a characteristic for the composer's own style, called *the Kiriatic style*, also recognized for the ingenuity exposure of Byzantine themes during the polyphonic interchanges, a Romanian expressive musical score. From this perspective, Dumitru Georgescu Kiriatic opens a new path in the Romanian school of choral composition, that will be conceived as a paradigm for his followers.

One of the basic characteristics regarding the the way in which the music was transformed, used by Dumitru Georgescu-Kiriatic for the psaltic monody is the good coexistence between modal and tonal, the balance achieved between these two ways of sonorous, deep-toned perspective and structure.

The composer uses mainly plagal relations between accords, modal cadences based on the overthrows of the accords in a real concatenation of the ones which are in authentic harmony, in order to diminish the role of the tonality's center of gravity. The main stylistic feature of the liturgical creations of the composer is the harnessing of the Byzantine psaltic melodicity as a quote, slightly modified in terms

of the melodic-ornamental, or as creations in having the same style. Both modalities clothed in a harmonical and polyphonic garment where the counterpoint and the modal factor play a primordial role.

Among *the stylistic parameters* that Dumitru Georgescu Kiriac used in order to reach a compositional apogee, revealing the technique and the great expressiveness of the elements, we can find:

- traditional Byzantine melos framed in the eight chants' modes/tones;
- correspondence with the Byzantine melodic stylistic;
- the use of choral technique joining simple rhythmic with a *palestrina style* outline.

No doubt the Byzantine tradition, the way it is included in the music of Christian orthodoxy and the folklore of the Eastern Europe countries, was an eternal source that always fueled the desire of musicological research based both on Byzantine tradition, and the development of religious choral art. Dumitru Georgescu Kiriac and his disciples (one of them - *Ioan D. Chirescu*) followed the technique inspiring also this love for local choral composition that represent us and to reconfirm our musical identity *an authentic style of expressing used in liturgical choral composition dedicated to Romanian Orthodox Church, this is the purpose for which Kiriac dedicated his life-this stylistical patent will cross the centuries to come through his disciples.*⁸

The very valuable asset of Ioan D. Chirescu's musical creation is the religious music- both the sacred choral miniatures and the monumental Liturgies and Religious Concerts. Referring to religious music the composer Ioan D. Chirescu can be considered the follower of Dumitru Georgescu-Kiriac for taking over from his predecessor his way to express the combination between the harmony and polyphony. Along with Gheorghe Cucu, Nicolae Lungu, Sabin Dragoi, Theodor Teodorescu, Ioana Ghica Comănești, Paul Constantinescu, Ioan D. Chirescu represents the most prolific generation of composers, succeeding Dumitru

⁸ *Liturgia corală de tradiție bizantină pe drumul clasic al desăvârșirii* (doctoral thesis), by Valentin GRUESCU, București, 2003, pg. 145

Georgescu Kiriac. They distinguished themselves in the religious music due to the quality and the large amount of their work that represents, today, a musical heritage.

Regarding the compositional style, Ioan D. Chirescu is distinguished by his ingenious methods of composing- the use of various approaches in his liturgies, such as antiphony or the dialogue between voices, melody distribution to the four voices by its fragmentation, the metro-rhythmic changing of the main theme, the augmentation and its compressing using melodic ranges in order to get monumental sound effects, imitations at different melodic intervals and at different distances, stretti; all these used to increase the dynamic of the musical discourse.

Among all these compositional effects is remarkable the one of the ison (or the pedal effect); the composer uses it in all his works – a profound, sonorous modal mechanism that emphasizes and fulfils the best, the modal psaltic melos.

The *neo-modal style* of the Romanian religious music links byzantine tradition to the Western technique of the composition in an organic unity. The premises for this synthesis are related, in Romania, especially to the geographical position of our country, the language, the culture and religion. There is a reference point between East and West because on one hand the Romanians are the only ones in the Slavic territory, a people belonging to the family of Roman languages, and on the other hand only Latin people of Latin who confesses Orthodox faith. Neo-modal style aims to update the connection between Romanian music with the Western European cultural community, without losing its affiliation to the Byzantine cultural space.

The music review of the epoch or in the historiography the composer Dumitru Georgescu Kiriac is mentioned as a genuine reformer of choral liturgical music, which provided in that the ecclesiastic space a new interpretation of sacred music, the essence of that to be expressed formally through a modern language. His creative act can be considered a missionary manifesto of Christianity, an important milestone of the modernization and emancipation of Romanian sacred space where music is an integral part of it.

Benefiting from the experience of living in the Western Europe, knowing very well the culture and Western spirituality, Dumitru Georgescu Kiriac initiated a

major artistic process, materialized into the choral creation for the Romanian Orthodox Church. The authenticity of his approach was also highlighted not only by the lectern choral compositions, but mostly by the disciples who cultivated and promoted it. This was a way to support young people who, later, confirmed fulfilling the artistic creation of the Maestro.

Dumitru Georgescu Kiriac is an ambassador of Romanian choral music whether is about the religious, folk or patriotic one, a morning star on the constellation of musical history. Although with no declared intention he managed to write a page in the history of Romanian choral composition and the most wonderful and important achievement, was the was he synchronized the unicity and the originality of his work with the one of Western part of Europe.

In addition, besides the legacy represented by the choral compositions that Dumitru Georgescu Kiriac left to all Romanians passionate about this kind of musical creation, he also imprinted his disciples with the love for the real national treasure - the choral creation, engraved in the consciousness of the Romanian people and of those who wrote history (*either with their blood or cultural weapons of art*), he left his will (as he wrote to his disciple Ioan D. Chirescu) „*it is you my followers, to go forward along the path that I walked on before, because I have confidence that this is the only way we can also leave... a trace*”.⁹

⁹ D. G. KIRIAC (*Spicuri din scrisorile sale*), by Ioan D. CHIRESCU, Ed. Bucovina, București, 1932, p. 14