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SUMMARY OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS

**"THE CHURCH AND LAY MUSICAL ACTIVITY OF ALBA IULIA IN THE 20TH
CENTURY"**

PhD supervisor:

Rev. Prof. Univ. Dr. Domin Adam

PhD student:

Prof. Bogdan Laurentiu Avram

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INTRODUCTION

"Music is a feeling lived, expressed, transposed in sound form. And since musical feeling can only be incompletely translated by words, it has often been said that music is the art of expressing the inexpressible". Music is the art that has not been absent from the cult and culture of any nation. Music has expressed the feeling of beauty since ancient times. It conveys a strong sense of emotions, being considered a true treasury of human feeling and thought. Music is a gift from God.

In its tumultuous history, the Romanian people lived with intensity every moment immortalizing it in music, in songs. "Sing Romanians - it is written in a calendar printed in Lugoj in 1848 - because often a song is enough to make a man immortal and a nation happy". And the Romanian has always sung. He mostly sang of his heroes and martyrs, the deeds of undying valor. Ștefan, Mihai, Iancu, Horea, Cloșca, Crișan, Tudor found their fame over time first of all through the rich folklore created around them and then through the pen of composers from the classical eras. There is no important moment in our turbulent history that has not found its expression in this vast chronicle of the Romanian nation's becoming, which is the song.

Rich and no less representative is the folkloric creation, the ballads, the songs of bravery and those of the soldiers, which glorify the struggle of the masses against social and national injustices. Who doesn't vibrate even today listening to "Iancu's March" for example, even if its creators remained in the dark of anonymity. But not only folklore, but also cultured musical creation has constantly vibrated in harmony with the history of our nation.

The repertoires of the choral formations that have been formed over the centuries since the middle of the 19th century when the first choir appeared reflect with sensitivity and expressiveness the great epic of the Romanian nation on its way to fulfilment. The resonance that choral pieces like "Deșteaptă-te române" (music Anton Pann), "Pui de lei" (Ionel G. Brătianu), "Voința neamului" (Ion Gr. Danielescu), "Sus inima romani" (Nicolae Oancea) "Alba Iulia" (Emil Gavriș) as well as other ones whose authors remained unknown reverberate with the same force in the hearts of those who interpret and listen to them even today.

Of all the fine arts, music is the one that works directly on the heart of the human being, it alone addresses to the inner source of existence and completely changes the inner disposition and soul experiences of man. In 1942, Prof. Tudor Ciortea held the conference entitled "Ardelenii în muzică", which was later published in Transylvania magazine. He emphasizes the special role that music plays in the life of man, of the Transylvanian peasant,

and states the following: "the song is the very voice of their life hardened in the secret of the village (...) the long chorus has never dried up and will never stop flowing in Maramureş, the lively spell on Crişuri, the carols on Someşe. Because the point of these songs is as old as the country and leads far to ancient beliefs".

General purpose and objectives

The purpose of this doctoral work is to create a historiography of church and secular choral music in the city of Alba Iulia.

Two reasons guided us in the elaboration of this work: the first of a subjective nature, was that I belong to this geographical area and I studied in Alba Iulia, and the second reason, which is this time objective, was the lack of a systematic study of the ecclesiastical and lay choral musical phenomenon in the city of Marii Uniri. Choral musical activity has not been satisfactorily studied in this area because, in the opinion of researchers so far, Alba Iulia did not represent an important musical centre.

The general objectives of this research are highlighted by identifying the role of the religious element in choral singing and in promoting national identity. Another objective is to identify and draw the portraits of the conductors who led the choral formations in Alba Iulia and the discovery and exploitation of works belonging to these conductors. The present research strictly refers to the church and lay choral tradition in the city of Alba Iulia and in the 3 neighbourhoods belonging to it: Bărbant, Partoş and Pâclişa.

The reason for choosing this topic was the continuation of the research that I started as a student of the "Gheorghe Dima" Academy of Music in Cluj Napoca, where I studied Musical Pedagogy, completed with the bachelor's thesis with the topic "Three decades of a cappella choral activity in Alba Iulia ", developed under the coordination and guidance of university professor Dr. Ecaterina Banciu.

Research stage

Relatively much has been written about Alba Iulia, touching various topics: the presence of historical testimonies and vestiges, of the main historical monuments of the city, the history of various communities and ecclesiastical and school institutions. But in none of these works dedicated to the city, in general, nor in any work dedicated to the objectives, monuments or notable personalities, in particular, has the cultural life, and in particular, the

musical and choral life of this locality, been thoroughly treated. This theme, being researched very briefly, has often been ignored.

We followed the evolution of church music in Transylvania, in general, and in the area of Alba Iulia, in particular, then that of secular music in our area, starting with the 18th and 19th centuries, and we reached the beginning 20th century. We believe that the choral theme is not a subject systematically analysed in reference works. Among the only researches are the work "Church music culture from the Diocese of Alba Iulia" belonging to father professor Domin Adam, or the work "Monograph of Romanian cult music from the Sebeş-Alba area", written by father professor Dragoş-Ioan Şuşman, both teachers at the Faculty of Theology from Alba Iulia.

1. In addition to these bibliographic sources, we also mention some studies and articles by music teachers from Alba Iulia, as well as some chronicles from various choral events held in this locality, among which we mention: Domin Adam, "Monodic and choral church music in the area of Alba Iulia"; Domin Adam, "Church music education in the area of Alba Iulia up to the XIXth century"; Domin Adam, "Variants of church chants on the eight voices that are practiced in the area of Alba Iulia"; Domin Adam, "Nicolae Oancea, the first music teacher from Horea, Cloşca and Crişan High School in Alba Iulia"; Nicolae Topîrcean, "Metropolitan Simion Ştefan Orthodox Theological Seminary, from Alba Iulia (1991-2005); Nicolae Topîrcean, "The 80th anniversary of the existence of the "Holy Trinity" choir of the Cathedral of the Reunification in Alba Iulia and the annual meeting of the Romanian National Choral Association"; Nicolae Topîrcean, "115 years of singing in harmony at the "Maieri I" Church in Alba Iulia"; Florentin Crişan, "Alba Iulia - European musical centre in the 16th century".

Due to the lack of bibliographic sources in the presentation of the musical life in Alba Iulia, the attention of our research was directed towards the documents located in the parish archives, in the higher ecclesiastical institutional archives and in the secular institutional archives. I started this research being aware that the topic is a difficult one, and then I was discouraged by some people, but having the hope that any work done for the glory of God and for the benefit of the Church will be completed.

Research methodology

Regarding the methodology used in the present work, I sought to respect, under the careful care and rigorous assistance of Professor Domin Adam, the scientific criteria specific to the realization of the doctoral thesis, starting from the preparation of an adequate

bibliographic summary based on the established plan of ideas. Taking shape as a monographic research, the gathering of all the study material assumed from the beginning a complex approach, based on appropriate methodology, research and recording techniques, which highlight the scientific quality of the approach.

First of all, I conducted a thorough research of the parish archives of Alba Iulia, Centru, Alba Iulia Maieri I and II, Alba Iulia Lipoveni and Alba Iulia Partoș, trying to identify those documents that refer to the research theme. Then, I carried out a research of the documentary funds in custody at: the Archives of the Archdiocese of Alba Iulia, the Archives of the Archdiocese of Buzău and Vrancea, the Archives of the Archdiocese of Sibiu, the Archives of the Archdiocese of Vad, Feleacul and Cluj. Also, a hard and tiresome work was done by studying the existing documentary funds at the Alba County Service of the National Archives, at the Military Archives of Pitesti, at the National Museum of the Union, at the Mureș County Library, at the Alba County Library.

In order to go deeper into the musical atmosphere of a "musical centre" city, I researched the newspapers and periodicals published in this century: "Renașterea" (1923-1950), "Amicul Scoalei" (1924-1935), "Arma cuvântului" (1940-1944), "Alba Iulia" (1918-1945), "Vestea" (1922-1925), "Viitorul Albei" (1925-1935), "Drumul Socialismului" (1949-1968), "Pacea" (1930-1933), "Steaua Rosie" (1954-1964), "Scânteia" (1976-1989) and "Unirea" (1968-1989). Unfortunately, the lack of the authors' names in most cases made our research more difficult. We mention this fact here to give credibility to the sources cited throughout the work.

I also had the chance to come across people who had tangents with this field and who made available to me information, sheet music, pictures and documents related to the life of the choirs. Among them, I am grateful and thank the following: Father Professor Domin Adam, Father Professor Dumitru Vanca, Father Archpriest Teofil Slevaș, Father Professor Nicolae Topîrcean, Father Marius Popa, Professor Emil Ciobotă, Professor Adrian Solomon, Professor Iosif Fiț, Mr. Ioan Bâscă, Mrs. Maria Rusneac, Mrs. Antonina Budacu, Mrs. Lucia Banoviț, Mrs. Mariana Frîncu, Mrs. Maria Cricovean, Mrs. Elisabeta Mărginean, Mrs. Dana Zecheru, Mrs. Smaranda Cutean and all those from whom I obtained valuable information.

Another research method was recording as an investigative method. I recorded several interviews with the members of the families of former conductors from Alba Iulia, from whom I learned and recorded lesser-known things that are not in the archives or specialized bibliographies.

The descriptive method was one of the methods I used in the present research. The fact that the church choral bands carried out their activity by providing the answers to the

religious services is considered an admirable thing. But the activities outside the churches are the ones that give special value to the church choral formations, through the mission and through the testimony they address to the public present at these cultural events.

We observe a rich musical activity during the communist period, an activity with a secular character. Although during this period the church choral activity was much reduced, we still believe that many people of the Church were active in the choirs of the Houses of Culture, in those of the Trade Unions and Enterprises, and vice versa, choristers from lay choirs participated in the church choral activity.

Last but not least, I used musical analysis as a research method. I searched for the most representative and beautiful choral pieces belonging to the conductors who worked in Alba Iulia, then I wrote these pieces in the Musescor program, a program dedicated to the computerized techno-editing of pieces, after which I did a simple analysis of the songs from a harmonic point of view.

Limits of research

The limits of the research have been anticipated by the title of the paper and fall within the temporary space of the 20th century and in the area of the city of Alba Iulia. Prior to the 20th century, information about choral music in this city is rather poor. We opted for the chronological presentation of the information presented in the documents. Proceeding from the statement that "A musical phenomenon cannot be viewed only in itself, in isolation, it is necessary to approach it from the perspective of the impact it had on the community", we fully assumed the responsibility of preparing this research, being aware that regardless of the results of this approach, it will represent a step forward in the historiography of Romanian choral music from Transylvania, in general, and from Alba Iulia, in particular.

The work is structured in 5 large chapters:

Chapter 1: Churches, schools and the princely court of Alba Iulia – factors of cultivation and transmission of music. In the first chapter of our work, we made a short foray into the history of the city and the three factors in which music was created, developed and transmitted in Alba Iulia: Church, Schools and the Princely Court. We referred to mini-biographies of great musicians who carried out a rich activity in the city of Alba Iulia during the time when it was the capital of the Principality of Transylvania, such as: Johannes Henricus Alstedius, Valentin Bakfark, Giovanni Batista Mosto, Girolamo Diruta or Pietro Busto. We did not omit the essential role played by the Churches of Alba Iulia through the priests and singers who preserved a musical tradition. Likewise, the transmission of musical

notions from generation to generation was also due to schools and their teachers. In the confessional schools in the city, music was one of the main subjects, this being taught most of the time by the singers from the pews of the churches, who "took advantage" and organized choirs with the students of these schools, giving the answers to the church services.

It seemed important to us to dwell then on the church and secular musical activity in Alba Iulia in the first half of the 20th century. In chapter 2, entitled: Church musical activity in Alba Iulia in the first half of the 20th century, we sought to identify the historical and cultural premises of the appearance of the first church choir, the church choral activity of the choirs under the baton of the first teachers and leaders, the affirmation and the development of choral formations, I searched for and identified small biographies of the conductors who led these choral formations, the activity of parish choirs during the First World War and in the interwar period, such as: professor Nicolae Oancea, professor Gheorghe Oancea, conductor Alexandru Voloşin, hierodeacon Anatolie Scurtu , priest and teacher Petru Timișan, deacon and music teacher Ioan C. Popescu, teacher Marin Alexiu and many other conductors who are not part of the specialized works.

Thanks to a good collaboration between the priests of the churches and the conductors mentioned above, male and mixed choirs were formed in the churches of Alba Iulia. Also, the members of the choral formations also organized theatre teams, being coordinated by conductors or other teachers, with whom they performed choral concerts accompanied by plays.

In the same way, in **Chapter 3: Secular musical activity in the first half of the 20th century: choral meetings, school choirs, choirs of state institutions, orchestras and brass bands**, I complemented the church choral activity with the activity of secular bands that developed in schools from the city, in meetings and cultural associations. During this period, in parallel with the development of church choral music, a series of lay choirs were formed, in which the members of the choral formations of the places of worship participated. I recorded the names of conductors such as Octavian Sîntion, Gheorghe Oancea, Marin Alexiu, Letitia Contor and others, who brought added value to choral music in the city of Marii Uniri. We focused on the artistic performances achieved by these choral formations at local and national festivals and competitions. An important part I dedicated to the military music that was part of the "portable music" of this city. We have also highlighted a series of choral musical events that took place in our city, through which we want to show the cultural-musical importance that this city had in the first half of the 20th century.

On the same model, we also turned our attention to the musical and church activities of the second half of the last century, in the last two chapters. In **Chapter IV: Church**

musical activity in Alba Iulia in the second half of the 20th century, we found that during the communist period choral activity was much less. The establishment of the communist regime after 1945 represented a time when many archives and documents were destroyed or lost thus makes coherent documentation more difficult. Despite all the vicissitudes of this regime, the choral activity was quite rich, the choirs enriched their repertoires, and the conductors collected and harmonized new choral pieces. Also, some formations were formed; others changed their composition from male choirs to mixed choirs or vice versa. We have not forgotten the conductors who were active during this period, among whom we mention: Ioan Pancu, Cornel Hațegan, Petru Pancu, music teacher Letitia Contor, Ioan Munteanu, Emil Pop, Ioan Contor and others.

At the same time, I also recorded the rich activity that the music teachers and choir conductors carried out after the events of 1989, remembering Professor Iosif Fiț, Professor Moise Rusneac and father Professor Domin Adam.

Also in this chapter I dedicated part of the research to the musical and choral activity that took place since 1991 in the two theological schools in the city, the Orthodox Theological Seminary "Saint Simion Ștefan" and the Faculty of Theology. The choral formations from these educational institutions have participated in various competitions and festivals, obtaining countless prizes.

In the last chapter of the research, we focused on the secular choral activity carried out in schools, cultural centres, institutions and businesses in Alba Iulia. We scored and brought to light information about the existing formations and those that were established during this period: choirs from cultural centres, school choirs, choirs within trade unions and choirs from public institutions and local businesses. I also recorded the participation of these formations in the choral competitions and festivals that took place locally and nationally, as well as the prizes obtained. I have completed the list of conductors who stood out during this period, such as: Ioan C. Popescu, Marin Alexiu, Emil Ciobotă, Stelian Feraru, Moise Rusneac, Iosif Fiț and others.

At the end of the work we have the Conclusions that reflect the intense musical-choral activity carried out throughout the 20th century in the city of Alba Iulia. At the same time, I completed the paper with some of the documents collected during the research period, which I put in the Annex of the paper. It concludes with a Bibliography which we hope will be useful for future research.

Conclusions

Music is a language in which the psychic qualities of man, of people, are undoubtedly mirrored. Through it, the gentle and dreamy soul of the Romanians became known to the world, making foreigners exclaim: " People who sing the doina so tenderly must be noble and good at heart."

On the great musical scene of our country, a genre that prevailed in the first years of the second half of the 20th century was choral and chamber music. Given the wide possibilities of raising awareness, these artistic genres were more and more present in occasional shows, as well as in current ones.

Present in the repertoire of stand-alone formations or addressed in literary-musical montages or poetry and music recitals, choral pieces or chambers stand out for their content of broad patriotic vibes, due to the harmonious combination of text and music. Given the multiple educative values of choral and chamber music, the numerical and qualitative growth of groups of this kind is gratifying.

A lot has been written and talked about Alba Iulia, the "heart of the country", but the musical side has been little studied. The present research aimed to bring testimonies about the existence in this city of a musical life among church communities, schools and cultural institutions. In what follows, we will point out the conclusions we reached following this research carried out during the 20th century.

I started this research as a continuation of the bachelor's thesis that I developed in 2012, at the "Gheorghe Dima" Music Academy in Cluj-Napoca, a research called "Three decades of a cappella choral activity in Alba Iulia", in which I wrote about the activity of the "Codex Apulum" Choir, directed by Professor Iosif Fiț, a choir of which I was a part. I started the research with the following questions: since when did the musical-choral activity start to exist in this city? Which and how many formations have been active here? What conductors did these bands have?

Thanks to three factors: the Church, the School and the Princely Court, we found evidence that here in Alba Iulia there was choral singing since the 17th century through the use of a choral chantry in the Calvinist cathedral here during the reign of Gabriel Bethlen. In addition to the unison choral singing of psalms sung during services, the prince tried to introduce an Anglican style of choral singing, in a harmonization based on parallel thirds and sixths, called "faux-bourdon".

The real choral song enters the Romanian territories starting from the 19th century, being a new variant compared to what was sung until then, in the pew, with one voice, a song

that was monodic. From pew singing, there was an attempt to introduce joint singing, and then to accept choral singing. In Transylvania, the first choir was created in the middle of the 19th century. Unfortunately, the introduction of choral music in the church space has been slower; this is due to the lack of an adapted and proper repertoire. However, local composers and conductors "imported" some creations from Russian musical literature and then, gradually, through the contribution of the leading creators of Romanian choral music, this new musical genre crystallized. The new form of singing introduced in church worship had the role of strengthening the consciousness of our soul unity, and belonging to the ancestral faith.

Establishing and supporting choral formations involves certain physical and material efforts, costs, which most of the time cannot be borne by a person or by the members of the choir. This is how the choral formations in Alba Iulia were established and carried out their activity within ecclesiastical institutions: parishes, or associations and meetings: the ASTRA Alba Iulia Division, the Meeting of Professionals and Economists.

An essential role in the musical-choral life of Alba Iulia was played by the Orthodox confessional schools. Their teachers were most often the singers from the pews of the churches. Church music and choral ensemble classes were introduced "in the job record" and "in the discipline record" for them. So, they had the obligation to form and conduct choirs, and from this activity they received additional income. We are entitled to state that the choral activity carried out by the teachers of the confessional schools near the "Buna Vestire" Orthodox Church in the Centre and the "Holy Trinity" Orthodox Church in Maieri, established not only the school choirs made up of the students of these educational institutions, but and adult choirs for the two parish churches. Thus, there is a choral singing competition among all age groups.

So, confessional schools were the launching pad for choir members from Alba Iulia and beyond. On the school benches, the little choristers were trained by learning singing, notions of musical education, then they were active in confessional school choirs, later in primary schools, and after completing their studies they would become choristers in adult choirs. This explains the ability of these amateur choirs to sing four-voice choral pieces, some of which are of high difficulty.

The first choral formation about which we have documents is the choir of the Maieri Orthodox parish, which, as it appears from the Rationale of the Archdiocese for the year 1898, was "the first choir from the tract", that is, from the Archdiocese. So this choir is established 30 years after the establishment of the first choir in Orăștie cultural centre, 50

years after the appearance of the first choir in Sibiu, and 58 years after the formation of the first choir in Cluj-Napoca.

The documents that we went through in our research, the data about the composition of the choir are often confused, at first the ensemble was mixed, then male, then it returned to the mixed formula as it still operates today. The documents record the fact that the choral group, in addition to religious singing in the parish church, held concerts on various occasions, theatre and dance performances, participated in various events, funerals, church consecrations. In addition to the satisfactions gained from these participations, the choir members were remunerated in money, some parties were organized for them, and they made pilgrimages. All this contributed to the creation of close bonds between the members of the choir.

Each of the conductors who led this church choral formation of the Maieri I Orthodox Parish tried to enrich the choral repertoire either with pieces by famous Romanian or foreign composers, or by collecting and harmonizing some songs by themselves. Some of the choir conductors had musical knowledge, others as choristers learned and took over the art of conducting from their predecessors. The conductors remained in the memory of the choristers like luminous figures who opened the way for them in the labyrinth of choral singing.

Going further regarding the activity of the choral groups in Alba Iulia, we discover another choral group formed in the parish church "Buna Vestire" in the centre of the city. We do not know the exact date of its foundation, but also next to this church there is a confessional school, it is unimaginable that it did not have a choir made up of the children who attended its courses until 1917. Then, with the arrival of music teacher Nicolae Oancea in Alba Iulia, at the first state high school, he laid the foundations of the church choral formation, around 1920. In addition to being the conductor of the church choir, maestro Nicolae Oancea led the high school student choir "Mihai Viteazul", founded and led the "Iacob Mureşianu" Music Society from the same school and taught music at the School of Apprentices.

As in the case of the choir of the Orthodox church in Maieri, the choral formation from the "Greek church" was either mixed or male, and then returning to the mixed formula. Due to the importance of this church, being the headquarters of the Archdiocese and the Orthodox Vicariate of Alba Iulia, the parish priests, who were most of the time also Archpriests, made sure that in addition to an exemplary service, the priests were accompanied by pew and choral singing of the best quality. Thus, from the line of conductors who led the choral formation, we see that most were selected only if they had musical knowledge. The

choir was considered an ornament of the church, and therefore could not be conducted by one ignorant of choral mysteries.

The participation of the church choir in various events in the city, conferences, concerts, theatrical productions, but also in other localities brought it a visible prestige. Archpriest and parish priest Alexandru Baba requested that the choir participate in church events, as well as in other lay events, which through their beauty and interpretative sophistication brought added value to the event they participated in. The band's repertoire was diverse both in terms of religious and secular songs.

In addition to these two reference choirs from the church choral life in Alba Iulia, in the "musical laptop" I recorded data about the church choir from the Alba Iulia Partoș Parish, established in the 1940s, then I scored the information about the choir of the Coronation Cathedral and the Army Episcopate, founded we believe in 1928, and not in 1929 as some researchers claim. Also, a choir on which our research stopped was the church choir of the Pâclișă Parish, currently a neighborhood of the city of Alba Iulia. And in this community there was an Orthodox confessional school where a children's choir was formed, and from 1914 the foundations of a church choir for adults were laid.

Due to the fact that in Alba Iulia there are other religious denominations besides the Orthodox, our research also dealt with choral formations from other churches.

Thus, I researched the documents in the archives of the Maieri II Orthodox Parish, which from the 18th century until 1948 was Greek-Catholic, after which it was again assigned to the Orthodox cult. I discovered that in 1926, when the parish was taken over by Father Elie Magda, a church choir was formed. To begin with, the liturgical repertoire consisted of the Liturgy of Antoniu Sequens and other songs by different authors. Since 1932, a mixed choir has been formed in the same parish. Both choral formations, in addition to the responses to the Holy Liturgy, participated in various events and festivals, but the members of the choirs organized, together with the women's associations of the parish, concerts, dance evenings and theatrical productions, the income of which was intended for the fund of the parish church. The conductor's remuneration was made in money, but also in kind, receiving a piece of land from the parish that he worked or leased.

We emphasize an interesting aspect regarding the conductors. They "migrated" from one coral to another. This is the case of professor Gheorghe Oancea, the brother of the famous Nicolae Oancea, who conducted the choir of the Orthodox parish in the Centre, then that of the Greek-Catholic parish in Maieri. Also, former priest and conductor Petru Timișan, conducted both choirs, first the Orthodox one in the centre, then when the church in Maieri II switched to Orthodoxy, he also conducted the choir here for a short time. And the examples

can go on: Alexandru Voloşin (the Cathedral choir, the "Buna Vestire" choir and again the Orthodox Cathedral choir), Ioan Pancu (the Cathedral choir and the Maieri choir) etc. Through these "migrations" of the conductors and some members of the choral formations who "walked" from one formation to another, often destabilizing the formations, it was even reached to some cessations of the choral activity.

Another Greek-Catholic parish where there was choral activity was the church dedicated to the "Assumption of the Virgin Mary" in the Lipoveni district. And next to this church there was a school, so there was choral activity with the children. The data on church choral activity are less, but we can say that a choir was formed here as well as at the Greek-Catholic church in Maieri.

The Evangelical Community of Alba Iulia had a choral meeting certified as a legal entity registered at the Court of Alba Iulia. The purpose of this choral society was strictly cultural. Most of the songs in the choir's repertoire were in German. In addition to the church activity, the members of the evangelical choral meeting organized concerts, plays and some cultural evenings.

In the last years of the first half of the 20th century, the School of Church Singers "St. Nicholas" was established in Alba Iulia, under the authority of the Romanian Orthodox Vicariate. Even though it did not have a long existence, being active only for a period of 2 years (1943-1945), the students and church singers who attended the courses of this school got used to church singing from the pew, but also to choral church singing, evidence is given by the news written and kept in the archives of the Centre parish by two students of the school. Through the church singing and choral music taught in this school, a higher level of professional training was ensured for the students and church singers, who most of the time were part of the parish choirs or even became conductors.

Another important part of our research focused on secular choral musical activity. The local history of the city experienced an important and flourishing stage, with the establishment in the early years of the 20th century of the Reunion of Romanian Tradesmen, Merchants and Economists. The purpose of the meeting was to establish a lodge, a library and a vocal choir. The members of the meeting also promoted the interests and moral values of the community in the city. The conductor of this meeting was a priest as well as a teacher, which makes us emphasize once again the good collaboration between the church, the school and the meeting. The members of the meeting sang at public events in the city, at festive concerts, but in their repertoire there were also church choral pieces, as we see, the choir singing the funeral songs of Dimitrie Cunţan at the funeral of the military bishop Ioan Stroia of the Army.

In addition to the choir from the Tradesmen's Meeting, in our research we also scored some data about the musical activity carried out within the choir of the ASTRA Separation, the choir of the peasant guard of the National Peasant Party and the "Harmonia" Philharmonic Society.

Choral groups and school orchestras of students could not be missing from the "portable music". Both in primary schools and in the first state High School established after 1918 in Transylvania, namely at the "Mihai Viteazul" High School in the city of Marii Uniri, there was a rich and diverse musical activity. The contribution brought by the music teachers who worked here: Nicolae Oancea, Gheorghe Oancea and Marin Alexiu is undeniable. They founded school choirs, musical societies and musical orchestras. Students who were part of school choirs and orchestras participated in the events of national days, commemorative concerts, but also in some local and national competitions.

From the list of school choirs, we have valuable information about the following: the choir and orchestra of the "Mihai Viteazul" High School, the choir of the Girls' High School, the choir and orchestra of the Roman Catholic Boys' High School, the choir of the Roman Catholic Girls' High School, the choir of the "Avram Iancu" primary school and other.

Another musical presence on the Alba Iulia stage was the choir and brass band of the 91st Infantry Regiment from the this city. The regiment was established in 1919. Instrumental soldiers and those who sang in the Army choir participated in the most important events of the city. Also, the military band had collaborations with meetings and cultural associations in the city.

The establishment of the communist regime brought significant changes in all branches of Romanian society. In our research, we focused on church and secular musical-choral activity from this period. Unfortunately, the bibliographic sources, the documents kept in the parish archives, in the ecclesiastical institutional archives are not very rich in information regarding the church choral activity from this period. Choral singing was performed more in the church than outside it, so we cannot talk about a great development of church choral music in this period. In contrast, secular choral music, during the communist period acquired new values, had several periods of development.

The parish choirs remained the same, the two from the churches in the Maieri district, the choir from the church in the Centre, the choir of the Coronation Cathedral, the choir from Partoș and the one from Pâclișa. In addition to these, a church choir was formed at Bărăbant Parish, a neighborhood of our city. We would note the care that the parish priests together with the parish councils had for the preservation of the choir. They have implemented since 1953, the collection of the "third disc" intended for the conductor and choristers. From this

fund, both the leader of the choir and the choristers, who most of the time, also did voluntary work, were remunerated. They were also rewarded in other ways: the organization of festive meals and pilgrimages during the communist period.

Also during this difficult period, in addition to the Maieri I Parish, a children's choir named "Theotokos" was formed in 1987. The choir started its beautiful journey with a number of 24 young people, also directed by a talented young man, Nicolae Călin Bulac, who still directs the choir today. The choir's repertoire includes religious pieces specific to both the Orthodox faith and other Christian cults, songs from the classical and folkloric choral repertoire. Although for two years the activity was carried out under the atheist-communist regime, the children's choir had a rich mission even then, being known in the churches of the city and the country.

Another part of our research stopped at the secular choral activity in Alba Iulia. We found a special activity in the House of Culture, first in addition to the municipal one located in the central park of the city, in the building of the former "Caragiale" Theatre, and since 1976, the cultural-musical centre in the city moved to the new building of the House of union culture built in the Cetate neighborhood. The choral ensembles that have worked in the two cultural centres have won numerous awards at various regional, county, interregional, national and even international competitions. By constantly participating in events, festivals, contests, or even concerts for the city's residents, the bands from the Culture Houses have achieved a long and constant musical performance and not just an occasional one.

Also during the communist period, in Alba Iulia, many school choirs were organized by the music teachers who were active in this field of arts. The efforts and dedication of the teachers and conductors have been crowned with memorable concerts and with awards and distinctions at various competitions and festivals. Every school and high school strove to have an artistic formation such as a choir, or a theatre team, a vocal or instrumental orchestra, all of this to train students in musical activity.

Choral formations were also established within the trade unions and local businesses, with teachers from the city's schools and cultural institutions as conductors. I collected data about these choirs from the press of the time, from the documents in various funds from the National Archives, the Alba branch, as well as from former conductors and choristers of these formations. There was a good collaboration between the union and company choirs, as well as between their conductors, a fact that testifies to the unity of the choral activity. We also found that some members of these secular choral formations were also active in church choirs, this also being true for the conductors.

During the communist period, the choral formations in our county showed, in the course of their activities, a real concern for the valorisation of the Romanian musical heritage, as well as for the processing of some folklore pieces from the rich popular creation of the Apuseni Mountains, the Mureş Valley and all the ethnographic areas on the content of Alba country. The repertoire of the choirs of the cultural institutions did not lack the songs: "Imnul de Stat al Republicii Socialiste Romania", "Pui de lei", "Vitează Românie" by Dumitru Eremia, "Glorios Partid" by Mircea Neagu, "Părinte drag, Partid iubit" by Gh. Bazavan, "Republică Măreață Vatră" by I. D. Chirescu, "Partidul Meu" by Gh. Danga, "Marșul lui Tudor" by Ion Dumitrescu, "La Apulum - Alba Iulia" by Tudor Jarda and many others that brought praise to the party and the ruler in power.

However, the choral formations also had other pieces from the national and international repertoire in their repertoires: "Cântec de leăgăn" by Ion Croitoru, "Divertisment Staccato" by Ion Popescu Runcu, "Păstorița" by Augustin Bena, "Andaluza" by Ion Vidu, "Bat-te legea de naș" by I. Popescu, "Mama" by Ion Chirescu, "Două inimi nu-mi dau pace" by Gheorghe Dima etc. The enrichment of the repertoire by approaching some songs with local specifics was achieved by processing some popular songs: "Fata Ardeleană", "Du-te dor", suites of tsarines, "Noi suntem moti de granit", "Jieneasca" etc. Great attention was paid to renewing and enriching the repertoires, the weight being occupied by patriotic, revolutionary workers' songs, followed by folklore works. Along with classical and contemporary choral creations, with a great emotional-patriotic charge, they were included in the repertoires and pieces of some well-known composers from the lands of Alba ("La mijloc de codru des", "Primăvara" by Iacob Mureșianu, "La fântână", "Badea meu" by Augustin Bena, "Țarina", "Frunză verde dintre vii" by Nicodim Ganea).

In the broad context of cultural life, the treasury of choral music represents a valuable heritage, of high artistic and educational value. It is one of the great achievements of the National Festival "Cântarea României" to have restored this artistic genre. Profiling of choral formations, in a great stylistic diversity – mixed choirs on equal voices, choirs with instrumental accompaniment, female choirs, male choirs, chamber choirs, children's choirs, etc. they contributed to the enrichment of the cultural life of our county and city, bringing a touch of elevated artistic dress to the organized events. Also, the National Festival "Cântarea României" had an overwhelming role in the establishment of choral music formations and in the development of already existing ones. The shows performed in schools, businesses, cultural and economic institutions were true unleashing of ambitions in the good sense of the word, each band preparing as best as possible.

With a great success of the choral movement in the county, we then mention the inter-county music festival "Iacob Mureșianu", organized in Blaj by the county committee for culture and socialist education, and the Centre for the guidance of popular creation and the mass artistic movement, a festival that enjoyed by the participation of some elite formations from the whole country, from the county and from our city. Without discussion, significant progress was made in the promotion of Romanian choral music, classical and contemporary, but not at the level of the demands, of the potential available to society. The festival, with a beautiful tradition in the culture of these lands, contributed to the stimulation of this artistic genre with wide educational and training values. In the cultural-artistic life of the county, choral music was an increasingly powerful force for patriotic, revolutionary education of the broad masses of working people.

In the period before 1989 there was a lot of activity in all fields. The trade union leaders contributed with financial aid for the realization of cultural activities. After the revolution, when the unions were disbanded, the Houses of Culture didn't have many events either. It was a period of stagnation, because these cultural institutions no longer "educated working people", but were rather places of entertainment, of disconnection from everyday life. We observe a decrease in secular choral activity and a diversification of church choral activity, through the reorganization of some choirs and the organization of others, but also through the establishment of theological schools and the music high school in Alba Iulia.

Taking an overview of what was presented above, and following the evolutionary line of the development of church choral music in Alba Iulia, but also of secular music, we can briefly conclude that the efforts made by the conductors of the choirs, by the priests of the parishes where these choral formations have activated, and by the members of the choirs were truly unimaginable, considering the mentality of the time, the austere regime, the way music teachers and conductors were treated, and the difficult conditions in which the choral genre crystallized.

The concrete example of dedication, of deep patriotism of these choral formations in our city that still endures today, makes us believe that the love for church and secular choral music was above all else. So many moments of liturgical singing and concerts emerged from their work that gave birth, preserved and maintained the love for church and secular choral art, the Church and the ancestral homeland.

History has shown that the administrative importance of large centres did not always coincide with a cultural-artistic vigour that instead, as if by miracle, some small towns acquired and imposed on the present and the future. I believe that Alba Iulia, through the beauty of the places and, above all, through the load of history and artistic-musical culture,

was a musical centre of national and international importance. The pages written above with passion, love and sincere admiration for the fruitful and imposing choral activities carried out in Alba Iulia are a vivid and concrete example of the wide appreciation shown to the performers of the great "choral-musical ensemble of the cultural municipality of Alba Iulia", who deserve not to be forgotten.

