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**Vocal study of the church chant and the aesthetics of ministry**

**- Phd Thesis Summary -**

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## **Introduction**

Aesthetic liturgical worship is based on humble liturgical gesture, appropriate to the ritual, and on correct singing, pleasing to the ear and to the praying soul. The Church's hymnographic system, structurally built on musical sounds and tones, finds personality and expression through words, rhythm and theological content.

Christian hymnography has processed and recreated through new elements and forms the material inherited from pre-existing religions and Judaism. The words, melody and rhythm of ancient times now define their expression in different forms and content. The prayers of the Church contain a rich theology, which is nothing other than man's word with and about God. Every message, every interaction with the divine powers is a theology about God in direct speech. Melody, far from being merely a garment that beautifully dresses the word, by specific means of expression, proposes a certain state for the soul.

Song itself is a higher form of speech, in which melody and word are fused in great expressiveness and emotional force. From Creation to song, as it is defined in contemporary aesthetics, a great deal of time has passed. The art of singing became the highest form of expression of the human voice through a painstaking evolutionary process which, using the experience of oral and written tradition, selected what was of the highest quality and eliminated what did not correspond to the good taste of the various eras in the development of music in general.

In parallel with the artistic evolution of singing, scholars have been constantly concerned with the problems of phonation and a close knowledge of the vocal phenomenon, both to unravel the mysteries of an instrument unique in the perfection of its construction and because modern music is becoming increasingly difficult and competitive for performers.

Singing pedagogy aims to remedy and improve any deficiencies in vocal expression, to which it is unwise for one who is not himself an experienced singer or practising teacher. If it is difficult to achieve an artistic voice, it is much easier for situations to arise, not infrequently irreparable, under incompetent guidance. It is imperative to have a good knowledge of human voices, talent, experience, patience and the ability to identify the right working procedure with each individual, as not

everyone responds positively to the same method. It requires discernment in distinguishing beautiful sounds from dull ones, a highly educated musical ear and, last but not least, a rich musical culture. Singing is equally difficult for both teacher and apprentice, because all that is required of the teacher will have to be accumulated over time by the future singer.

The present doctoral research is prompted by the need to reestablish in a traditional, already experienced matrix the cultic manifestation in the Church of Christ. The numerous reforms and standardizations through which church worship and music have passed have brought with them a vast diversity of liturgical styles and approaches that go beyond the canonical unitary nature of service in the Church.

At the individual level, the liturgical identity and musical personality of the church minister suffers from a haphazard or in other cases even faulty approach due to a lack of adequate training from the theological education system.

This paper argues for the importance of identifying liturgical authenticity in the serving Church with the encouragement of innovative artistic expression as unity in diversity. The research proposes methods and techniques by which theoretical knowledge is not left to be applied haphazardly, but from the years of study is embraced in a fully assumed and understood liturgical aesthetic experience.

In this context, the objective is, on the one hand, to familiarize the environment of the theological musical education with the theoretical and practical norms and valences of the art of singing, including the anatomical notions of the phonatory apparatus, the emergence of language and its correct expression, as well as the diachrony of singing in the human aesthetic sense, to identify viable ways of making the study of singing compatible with the requirements of theological education and the practices of church service, including training exercises on biblical-liturgical texts, read or in recitative interpretation, for the awareness and assumption by students and ministers of an aestheticism of church worship.

In order to achieve this aim, the thesis has at its disposal an extensive bibliography covering all the stages of work mentioned above, starting with the ideas and principles initially set out in its own

publication published in Bucharest in 2007, "The vocal study of church singing and the aesthetics of service. Part I", and continuing with normative treatises in the field, such as those of Professor Dumitru Botez, Professor Nicolae Gafton, the scholar Husson Raoul and the eminent Professor Hanoch Avenary, Willi Apel and Edith Gerson-Kiwi, to the most recent studies, including the works of Professors Tatyana Gordeeva, Thomas Ciocșirescu, Carolina Bodea Hațegan, Mihaela Marinescu, Constantin Rîpă, Girolamo Garofalo, Joel Heng Hartse and William Peter Mahrt.

The novelty and the challenge of this scholarly endeavour stem from the fact that none of the latest concerns in the field are primarily concerned with the theological environment, but refer mainly to drama, opera and, not least, academic music education. The works of prestigious artists and specialists deal with the problem of aesthetic singing, with application in the aforementioned environments, with only a few passing references to the theological and ecclesiastical fields. Current research considers, among others, the work of Professor Domin Adam, "Contemporary music. Sensitive elements of the Church song", and "The Beauty is difficult. Short critical view on the actual level of the contemporary music development", published in Chișinău in 2021, as well as "Song and performance speech" by Professor Sorina Creanga, "Grai și cânt - cybernetic study" by professor and singer Ion Piso and last but not least, "Speech and song" by artist and Professor Visarion Hutu.

Using modern research methods, the work will seek to harmonize the pedagogy of beautiful singing with the ecclesiastical musical treasury, in order to obtain a didactic discourse for the education and implementation of vocal study both in theological educational institutions and in the service of church worship. Starting from the collection and analysis of sources through inductive, deductive and comparative interpretation, the statistical, analytical and comprehensive processing of all the data obtained will be carried out. The objective remains to make the vocal study of chant as compatible as possible with Byzantine musical interpretation for an aesthetic church service.

From this perspective, the personal contribution consists of applying to the person of the singer or church minister all the elements underlying the phonation and language, in order to outline the

personality with the help of self-identification benchmarks. An understanding of the symbolism and functionality of the phonic apparatus provides the performer with the boundaries within which the whole process of vocal and liturgical movement can safely take place. In the sense of this research, the many theories of phonation mirror different manifestations of the same divine creative act. Also, in a novel understanding, articulate language communication is the new post-paradisiacal relationship, and knowledge of the Romanian language and its phonetics as unity in diversity is essential in ministry and in the art of singing.

The Church is the sacred space in which God reveals Himself to His creatures, and the faithful present there share consciously and understandingly in this divine communication through the concrete forms of the ritual of worship, audible or gesture-mimetic. In this way, the ritual of worship is elevated and transposed to the high stage of a liturgical dramaturgy in which the human person is not merely a formal spectator, but an active participant in the communication of divine energy and being.

The artistic appearance and vocal qualities of the cultic minister, of higher or lower hierarchical rank, must not alter the revelation and communication between man and God. Art and virtuosity consist in the exercise of a beautiful and balanced liturgical act, aesthetic in its entirety, without inappropriate forays into theatricalism or scenic grotesqueness. Keeping a creative and artistic direction, shaped with good taste and humility, the musical interpretation, by its correctness and uniformity, facilitates and amplifies the revealing manifestation of God in His Church.

## **Chapter I - The phonatory apparatus and its role in sound propagation**

In cultic religious celebrations, music helps the sharing of pious feelings reach a level of intensity that words alone could not hope to achieve. Music does not reproduce the world outside and around us, it is in us, it is our very identity, in anatomical feature and sentient communication.

Singing pedagogy involves the acquisition of technical and

artistic notions of vocal performance in several stages, so that the learner understands the knowledge acquired and puts it into practice through constant awareness. To this end, the anatomical functioning of all the human organs that generate sound must first be clearly understood. Within the system of which they are part, they have an extremely complex structure, and it is from their collaboration that the human voice results.

The research is not confined to the mechanical act, which most people perform in a reflexive manner, but intends to examine conscious breathing, controlled and used in a judicious manner, which serves the church minister, orator, singer or instrumentalist effectively. In the approach to vocal emission, not only valuable inborn voices or those that have become superior in artistry are considered, but also ordinary human voices with vocal music concerns, on a path of perfection through work and perseverance. For the professional cultivation of these voices, it is necessary to use another kind of breath, the one we call artistic.

The church minister, by the nature of the worship service, must conform to particular ritual gestures and movements while singing or reciting specific texts and compositions. Kneeling, bowing before icons, incense walking among the faithful and other liturgical gestures involving movement of the body should influence as little as possible the fullness of breath and the quality of vocal delivery.

Modern tools of medical investigation and the experience accumulated over the centuries open up new horizons for specialist research into the phenomenon of speech. Nevertheless, the exceptional manifestations in the art of singing, both on stage and in the ecclesiastical environment, which astonish by their artistic perfection, show that the vocal apparatus and the phenomenon of phonation, in their complexity and divine uniqueness, remain one step ahead of any new discovery.

The diversity of the physiological and artistic aspects of the phenomenon of phonation in humans is due first of all to the originality of God's creation and secondly to the particularities imprinted by the way of life or working environment. Vocal improvement through education is concerned only with the professional development of the person inclined towards service or the art of singing, and in no way

questions their social position or the quality of God's creation.

The conclusions of all the theories that have studied the vocal phenomenon must be approached in an inclusive, theological way, i.e. as unified as possible, despite their diversity. In the end, research and experimentation have only highlighted the endless variety of God's creative capacity, which man artistically externalizes in so many ways.

Every person who sings already has a set acquired at birth. This can be very good, but it can also be wrong, which is easy to tell from the qualities and faults of the voice. In the case of voices with very good native pitch, the air column is efficiently directed musically to the most important resonators without awareness of this process. In such cases, it is only necessary to train the voice, learn correct pronunciation, learn vowel colouring and understand how to avoid setting errors.

Throughout the evolution of the singing voice, there has been a constant tendency towards symbiosis between words and music. One of the sources on the origin of music provides information on the imitation of the inflections of the human voice.

Having gone through a long process of transformation from a faithful reproduction of the intonation of verbal language, music has become a transfiguration of this intonation, with the aim of synthesising and symbolising as faithfully as possible the expression and meaning of feelings and states of mind. The interweaving of the act of speaking with that of singing is a constant preoccupation of creators in ancient monody, Greek declamation, Byzantine chant, Gregorian chant, polyphonic style, operatic performance, as well as the other branches of the vocal genre.

The beauty of the sound of the voice can only be reached by going through the steps of the correct vocal delivery. Native vocal qualities will only be brought to their true value if they are passed through the school of beautiful singing. Pronunciation of the sung word under the conditions of a set voice allows spontaneous, timbred, full, elastic and sunny sounds to be made over the whole range of the voice. The full value of the melody and the definition of its meaning can only be truly achieved by choosing those colours and nuances of sound which are appropriate to the mood of the soul, since there is no euphonic sound unless it meets the diversified demands of expressiveness.



## **Chapter II - An introduction to Romanian linguistics and phonetics. Norms and applications of diction**

Humans benefit by creation from a vocal tract flexible enough to produce a wide range of distinct sounds, the ability to perceive the differences between these sounds, and the ability to use these sounds in intelligible and expressive communication systems.

Language, as a sound way of human communication, is constantly changing as a consequence of the permanent change of reality and thought. Despite the fact that language stimulates thought, the sound of speech is slower to evolve than that of lexis and grammar.

In the educational process of learning the art of singing, it can be seen that, in most cases, the physiological factor cannot naturally condition the morphological factor in an orthophonic sense without study. Speaking and singing are not as natural as movement, breathing, hearing or sight. The very structure of the vocal chords is insufficiently endowed for the purpose of speech, compared with the other attributes of the human being.

Those who have mastered the natural sound of speech, either by birth or through study, will certainly be an example for others to follow, who will gradually become convinced that the sounds of the human voice are entitled to a higher level of expression. At the same time, meeting the demand for the aesthetics of the sound of speech must today be considered an ethical and social necessity. It is also said that to educate a voice is to educate a person. Others will be able to achieve the same result, all the more so since there is living proof that a voice placed where it belongs is also a good conductor of feelings, and therefore a means of shaping sensitivity.

Each language has its own phonetic system, characterized by certain structural aspects in the use of the sounds it uses, which requires a conscious study of the constituent features of the language in which we sing.

The correct understanding of spoken and sung language is absolutely necessary, not only for the intelligible expression of thought, but also because it lays the foundations for the knowledge of the articular sound complex of words, which in turn is a condition for understanding the text to be interpreted and the phenomenon of singing

in general.

The sound cannot reach its full beauty as long as the pronunciation of words remains an unsolved or partially solved problem. Without good diction, the listener will only hear sounds that are shrouded and indistinguishable. Artistic speech, unlike everyday speech, is clearer, more vigorous, vibrant, penetrating, with intonations and modulations that impress. In everyday speech, syllables and words flow normally, with no stops other than punctuation.

Each language has its own phonetic system, distinguished by certain structural aspects in the use of its sounds. We need to take into account the phonetic peculiarities of the language in which we sing.

The Romanian religious language requires at least as much perfect unity in pronunciation, being richer in terms from Greek and Slavonic, but adapted to the welcoming canons of the Romanian language, of Latin origin.

It therefore remains the responsibility of those who officiate at holy services to facilitate the flow of the Romanian language in its melodious composition. The musical recitative line absorbing a text must be less encumbered by melisma, preserving the style and at the same time preserving the expressive phonetic character of the Romanian language.

### **Chapter III - Interpretative developments from the Greek tragedians to the 14th century poet-musicians**

History shows us that it is not institutional religious music in its various forms that has been influenced by the popular style; on the contrary, it can be said that the influence on secular music comes from the musical experience of the sanctifying liturgical setting, no matter what cult, religion or period we are talking about. Christian Church song has always been in a close relationship with the secular experience of music, more specifically, of conditioning it.

Whether vocal or instrumental, in primitive societies music is linked to religious practices, personal life or tribal ceremonies. Sculptures and bas-reliefs of ancient Egyptian, Assyrian, Hindu or Chinese monuments always depict groups of singers and instrumentalists marching to the sound of flutes, pipes, lyres, drums or

other instruments. Although the system of musical notation is unknown, it is certain that harmony was unknown.

Pentatonic or five-step scale cannot be regarded as a distinguishing mark for the music of any one people or culture, its forms showing specific features in different geographical areas or among certain ethnic groups.

If the compositions of these ancient peoples are only relatively known, the same cannot be said of the Jews. They seem to have shown the greatest taste and enthusiasm for music. As with other peoples, through music, the Jews honoured God, enhanced the glitter of public celebrations and strengthened themselves in battle.

The Greeks regard music as an educational art, capable of developing a person's inclination towards various virtues. Although few fragments of early Greek music remain, it is clear that it was very varied and comprised several distinct ranges. From the 4th century BC onwards, the musical movement slowed down, despite the large number of artists and the establishment of schools to train singers and musicians. Greek cities that are still artistic centres, such as Syracuse and especially Alexandria, begin to turn towards Rome, passing on genres of the most diverse music. In 167 BC, Greek musicians were heard for the first time in Rome, and it was not long before music assimilated into the new cultural environment.

Towards the end of the Roman Empire, musicians return to the genres and techniques of classical music, which ceases to be an independent art. Music becomes associated with the sciences rather than art, especially arithmetic, while retaining its moral and religious purpose. The cultural decline of the Roman Empire, followed by the invasion of the barbarians, led to the collapse of all the arts. Music therefore found a refuge in the Christian Church, which was flourishing after three centuries of persecution, and finally gave its due splendour to the outward manifestation of culture.

The Christian Church is a bridge between ancient and modern song, largely drawing on Jewish culture and religion. The first Christian songs originated in the psalms, using Greek modes and notation for interpretation. Musical education was only oral and only antiphonal singing in octaves was known. Later, the antiphon also took on the role of introducing or concluding a psalm, this musical phrase becoming a

hymn. Early Christian music is purely vocal, but accepts the psaltery and the zither as accompaniment.

In the 7th century we see a liturgical reform thanks to Pope Gregory the Great (590-604) who, in addition to the free rhythm of chant used until then, also admits the measured or rhythmic music of hymns composed of equal verses. He reorganised the Schola Cantorum, at which the exclusively oral teaching continued for another nine years. St. Gregory added to the old authentic modes the four plagal modes of St. Ambrose, a combination from which modern Gregorian chant results. Free rhythm is abandoned to make way for measured rhythm, and the hymns, tropes and hallelujahs of the 11th century are joined over the next two centuries by the chants of poet-musicians, minstrels, troubadours and trouvères.

Italy invents a musical form that will immediately become popular, namely the madrigal, derived from troubadour songs and sung on a secular, pastoral or sentimental subject. Written for two or three voices without accompaniment, the madrigal uses learned counterpoint and was popular in 16th-century Italy, France and England.

Gregorian chant gradually declined under the unfortunate influence of polyphony on its rhythm. In the 16th and 17th centuries it became the preserve of the Galicians and Jansenists, undergoing profound changes. Gregorian simplicity gave way to the declamatory style. In short, in the last two centuries of the Middle Ages, a polyphony of many sounds and voices was created in Europe under the inspiration of the Church. The unvoiced chant is lost, but counterpoint opens the era of the great Renaissance in the 15th century.

Although the human voice had not lost its role as a guiding force in Western music, still dominating the principles of phrasing even in a single line, despite the vindictive role it took on in the turmoil of the Reformation, dissonance emerged as one of the remarkable contributions that the West made to the art of music, and its practical realization did not require dependence on the voice, which is why instruments were to become the main source of energy for the masterpieces of Western music for the next three hundred years.

In the liturgical service, but also in religious performance, the element of voice is essential for both the church server and the singer or group of singers forming the choral ensemble. The singer adds to the

service the beauty of his voice, with the characteristics that define it, while the vocal ensemble must highlight a sonorous, homogeneous and qualitative whole in a secure and plastic manner. If the singer decides on the musical aesthetics of the service through the quality of his voice and his interpretative talent, the ensemble decides through the beauty of its vocal interventions, through the most varied timbral colouring obtained through the hard work of rehearsals.

#### **Chapter IV - Church chant in the Christian liturgical context and the practical approach to Byzantine liturgical recitative**

The current research examines the concept of "national folk song" and its applicability to the Old Synagogue musical tradition, as well as the position of musicologists on the subject of Jewish influence on early church music.

After the end of the Temple, the legislative and democratic institution of the Synagogue turned to secular performers and popular music accessible to the faithful. On the one hand, it is considered that all folk songs are the residue of degraded or decaying art, which has descended to the level of popular imitation, but on the other hand it is known that most musical art has its roots in folk music.

The alternating top-down and bottom-up process of a structural concept in music, science and folklore, as defined above, can also be applied in the present research on common elements in multiple traditions, which put the musical transition between Synagogue and Church in a new light.

Research on the Dead Sea Scrolls confirms that the origins of the modal system can increasingly be traced back to antiquity. Babylonian priests and astronomers were familiar with the modal system and it may even have preceded them, being the well-kept secret of esoteric scholars and priests. However, in the biblical period it was not only priests who were familiar with this system, and as far as the psalms were concerned, the shift had already been made to the more or less familiar patterns of folklore.

There is a downward process in the involution of the modal system from the sphere of priestly mystery to common folk concepts. The bottom-up phenomenon is identified in the way in which the

Octoechos assumed the title of an important hymnbook in the Church, especially when composers of musical art deliberately made use of the characteristic modulations of different melodic voices. Starting from the ascendancy of the eight modes from the Gnostic negation into the light of ecclesiastical musical interpretation, the study arrives at the problem of the transfer of musical information between the Synagogue and early Christianity.

To attempt to reconstruct the history of music to the exclusion of all references to the Bible or Judaism would create an enormous gap, destroying all historical continuity. From Egypt and Babylon, from Greek and Roman testimonies, one should go straight to Christianity and the documents on music, to statements, quotations, allusions and discussions on musical subjects, referring only to ambiguous and unknown sources. Thus the whole beginning of modern music would become incomprehensible.

In the journey of music from East to West, the civilization of Jewish Palestine simply cannot be ignored. The first prerequisite for the transition of customs and ideas seems to have been fulfilled where early Christians and Jews lived in close proximity and within well-defined communities of Judeo-Christian proselytes.

The melodious reading of scriptural texts was an integral part of both Christian and Jewish religious services, as well as Jewish religious instruction. In the Syrian provinces of the Byzantine Empire or the Neo-Persian empires with a predominantly Semitic population, the object was the same, the public proclamation of the Bible, using for the written forms a common system of graphic symbols or accents placed between the lines of the text.

The earliest manuscripts with accented introductions and treatises explaining accentuation come from the Syrian church and date from the 5th century AD. However, Jewish sources with a well-defined chronology also contain evidence pointing to an earlier stage of melodic Bible reading based exclusively on oral tradition.

The earliest traces of reading marks are sporadic dots found in Hebrew fragments of the Psalter and appear to have served as warning signs wherever the usual course of reading would have had meaningless phrases. Thus, it can be argued that the melodic intonation of the Hebrew Bible was a well-established custom as early as the 2nd century

AD, with the assumption that it even predated the Christian period.

The method of dividing a sentence into groups of words is notable in the Byzantine way of liturgical recitation. Each section is closed by a pair of accents, most often two identical signs, or by a fixed sequence of accents. In this way, both the beginning and the end of a phrase are clearly marked.

The study of accents and their applications revealed three types of reading of the Bible, namely the Byzantine rhetorical, prosaic and sober conception, then the Syriac dramatic tendency and the impersonal, lucid and syntactic-stylistic reproduction of the text through Hebrew accentuation. The strict principles of biblical Hebrew accentuation do not implicitly prevent its musical interpretation. In the case of the Syriac mode of dramatic reading, the interpretation is of course highly suggestive, unlike the Samaritan accents of expression which provoke very tense, sometimes atonal bursts of voice. The distinction between simple and solemn variations in biblical singing is due to extra-musical factors, but the basic melodic structure remains unaffected.

The recitative style of Hebrew psalmody may become the key to understanding the formal structure of the melodic punctuation style. This musical form is an immediate result of the construction of biblical verses, in which most verses in the psalms are composed of two halves, almost equal, with a caesura between them. The melodic declamation of such a verse is constructed in the same pattern and consists of two imperfect cadences ending in different final cadences.

In the grouped style, single, detached accents become non-existent when the melodic line of Hebrew accents is transcribed into music. With few exceptions, they are merely constituents of fixed groups made up of two or more accents in some variable regulation. The typical association of accents in the fully developed Tiberian system gave each word its own accent. In this way, stress dominated the whole range of main and secondary words, especially since in any sentence of normal speech words must be spoken in coherent groups according to their syntactic and logical relationship.

The idea of transforming normal speech into melodic cadences is foreign to the European mind, and even if it was adopted for church recitation, it failed to develop further, unlike its evolution in Eastern accent systems. Following the example of Hebrew biblical chant,

liturgical recitation was reshaped into chains of melodic motifs, and this became a preferred technique of composition in the East. In the course of this evolution, cadences were stripped of their original functional significance to form a free mosaic of motifs. The melodies of Byzantine hymns are formed in identical ways, and this demonstrates that the above-mentioned sequence of forms is a universal feature of sacred music in the Eastern world.

## **Chapter V - Aesthetics of sacred music, between the ineffable and symbolic expressiveness**

In the context of an aesthetic analysis of religious music, current research proposes experiential aesthetics, which emphasizes real-time experience over post-factum experience, thus avoiding intellectual approaches to aesthetics that prioritize rational artistic evaluations. In a momentary encounter with music or the boundless divinity, spiritual knowledge, which is a non-rational, intuitive and unarticulable state, excludes understanding, which is based on a rational, approximate and intellectual interpretation. In other words, holiness is in some sense perceived through conscious reasoning that processes stimuli in such a way that it cannot be adequately expressed in words. The body has its own means of non-rational perception, which often escapes cognitive evaluation.

The notion that music is first experienced and then rationalised, remaining inconsistent with the attributes attributed to it, concerns all music, secular or religious. Music and the sacred are profoundly experiential and mysterious, in perfect homology, signifying nothing but their meaning. If music is meant to be primarily experienced, being subject only secondarily to aesthetic evaluation, then experiential aesthetics, which values perceptual and intuitive musical responses in real time as a source of truth, should be considered the wellspring from which all others are derived.

Experiential aesthetics, as addressed in the present research, reiterates that all discussions of music start from basic experiences that occur before the act itself and that lie outside linguistic reasoning, however inspired.

Underlining the experiential nature of *niggunim* singing in the



Hasidic practice of some Eastern European synagogues, devotion takes precedence over aesthetic values, and melodic features and vocal quality remain of little importance. Aesthetic success is assured only by the ecstasy of the moment, since the performance of the songs is not intended to have any effect on the listener, nor does it aspire to exalted beauty.

The *Missale Romanum* sequences, which appeared in the flourishing era of Western monasticism, were commentaries sung at Mass, serving both as embellishments and introductions to liturgical texts. They extended the original liturgical melody with an ample melisma, without the incorporation of additional words. The melismatic ending of the sequence is the unspoken expression of the joy by which the praying soul is carried to the blissful state of the saints.

In the Byzantine music of the 13th and 14th centuries, the virtuosity of certain singers led to the emergence of ecstatic, non-textual compositions known as *kratimata*, through a complex development of melismas, which can also be related to ascetic methods of intense prayer using few or no words. These communicate layers of non-verbal meaning that can help cultivate a more direct and intimate relationship with God than mere words ever could.

By their inclusive and permissive use of melodies and their assumption that aesthetic judgments are essentially superfluous, the Hasidic *niggunim*, Romanic sequences, and Byzantine *kratimata* illustrate a general principle: music exists in its experience, remains ineffable, and is used to communion with God.

With the emergence of the first more complex and melismatic chants in the second half of the 13th century, at the end of a period of about three hundred years of development of hymnography, the Octoechos, the sticheron and heirmos melodies and the first phase of their notation, composers overcame the concept that melody was merely a useful addition to the words of prayer and resorted to prolonged melodic expansions and variations, to the interpolation and modification of individual formulas or even whole patterns, to the repetition of the text, of one or more verses, of one or more words or whole phrases.

Music takes us back to the origin of language, because it touches the previous state of various words, phenomena, scenes and gestures, which it can inspire or inspire. The rhythm of music, as a principle of

presence in space and time, is never metrical in essence, despite appearances, but cadential in nature. It consists of a dynamic and qualitative balance achieved between overlapping beats that refer to two different depths, one material, htonic, under the influence of the world, and the other spiritual and interior, open to the heart and soul.

Aesthetic symbolism and liturgical symbolism are inseparable, supporting each other towards a common summit, like a guiding beacon for the believer in search of his or her self and Creator. Because of their mystagogical, angelic origin, their theological content and their musical structure, cultic hymns have a sensitizing and determining role for the soul, mind, heart and body of the faithful in the Church, making them sharers in the service of God, together with the saints and all the heavenly powers.

## **Chapter VI - Aesthetics of liturgical worship through orality, writing and ritual**

The fact that the transmission of musical information took place before any notational system was organised makes the phenomenon of orality of particular interest for understanding the processes by which music was harmonised with the rules of worship and the related texts.

In the synagogues of Ashkenazi Jews in Eastern Europe, liturgical music was not transmitted with the same precision as the text because it was not notated, hence the tendency to vary, improvise and rearrange it. The flexibility of the music facilitated its oral transmission, while allowing for multiple expressive possibilities in prayer. The cantor is free to improvise his own melodic version or to choose any other traditional musical style, thus changing the melody, tempo, rhythm, form, articulation of the text, and the overall emotional effect of the performance, while keeping to the tradition of the community. Orality is not merely the absence of writing, but a communal, religious mode of expression, providing the framework within which the complex and abstract concept of prayer in the synagogal community was articulated.

In the Western Church, oral and written music worked together to create an optimal form of musical practice during the 10th century. Even though the invention of the notation on the staff brought about radical changes in musical literacy and the possibility of spreading it far and

wide, it did not eliminate the use of the oral tradition. In the increasingly noticeable absence of a preexisting oral tradition since the 15th century, the Western Church felt a pressing need to codify, put into writing, and *repair* the liturgy, under threat from the false philosophies and dubious theologies that were spreading at the time. As a predictable consequence, when the meaning of the liturgy is no longer understood, attempts are made to save the form by resorting to a strict ritualism, which for a time maintains the illusion.

The Albanians who arrived in Italy at the end of the 15th and beginning of the 16th century, driven out by the Ottoman conquests in the Balkans, contributed to the revival of the Orthodox life of Greek monasticism around the monasteries under Roman administration. These communities, coming from isolated mountain settlements with specific spiritual and cultural traditions, settled near the ancient Greek fortresses, taking the name of *arbëreshë* (Italo-Albanians). It is even possible that in many of the settlements where they settled, they encountered a continuous tradition of liturgical monody from Byzantine Italy before the Normand conquest, which was never influenced by Ottoman culture. The openness of the *Arbëreshë* ethnic group to new musical influences gave rise to a body of songs transmitted orally, dynamic, susceptible to change and evolution even after five centuries, in the absence of an original source, or perhaps precisely because of this.

The oral perpetuation of Ethiopian liturgical traditions is partly verbalized in the written codification of the Ethiopian Church, which takes many forms, appearing to be both a practitioner's reflective discourse on his or her own music and a need to protect the repertoire from unwelcome indigenous performers. This safeguarding takes place through institutional writing, but also through an individual, ethnographic approach.

Beyond writing, the history of this music and the construction of the specific heritage are made through actual encounters within the church, since the very spiritual and musical human interactions are at the origin of new pieces in a tradition that, at first glance, could be considered rather fixed or defined as immemorial since its revelation. There are four schools of chant, similar to the four major centres of teaching, each of which is linked to a founding master. Depending on

the school in which the singer was trained, the vocal line and rhythmic accompaniment will be somewhat different. As a consequence, quite a number of constraints distinctly shape Ethiopian liturgical singing, causing singers to draw on a large number of memory references, which intersect and network on multiple levels.

Theoretical works strive to explain the complexity of liturgical music, while musical notation is effective in its own right, which is why writing only partially fulfils its preservation role. The improvisational procedures used to date allow us to understand how singers integrate contemporary liturgical events into their heritage, developing a true memory of liturgical communion.

The living musical experience, communicable exclusively orally, goes beyond the technical aspects of ornamentation or melodic choice, as well as timbre or sound in general. From the practice of the Byzantine psalms, the iphos appears to be more than a style of melodic interpretation, representing a characteristic of the singer's personality, which is translated into the musical manifestation of the moment and through constant practice is passed on to the disciples as a distinctive sign of the authenticity of the information received in the traditional line. Even if a professional can almost immediately recognise any iphos by the sound of a person's voice, this has little to do with actual timbre. Psalms associate iphos with the processes that take place during the performance of sheet music, from which it follows that iphos has manifested itself as an oral phenomenon ever since the expression in song of the written word.

The aesthetic experience of the sung, spoken and written word, as it has been radiographed in the various liturgical traditions, leads us to the understanding that liturgical aesthetics is not achieved through the act of service itself, as in a dramatic performance painstakingly prepared in advance, but is already present in the liturgy or the cultic ritual in question. Aesthetics is alive in every divine manifestation. The ministry of the clergyman or the church singer, through the personal, conscious and congruent choices of the moment, in accordance with the Church's teaching on ritual and vocal expression, introduces the person of the minister into the already prepared setting of the presence of God, who communicates Himself in an inspiring way to the whole participating church.

The reality of the social life of the Church's faithful today requires more than ever their committed and spiritually fruitful involvement in the liturgical ritual. It is important to return church singing to that interactive and involving state it should have and has had in the past, reiterating in people's understanding the notion that the singing together of the parish is the norm and choral singing is only a substitute for it.

Restoring communal singing, more than conforming to a canonical standard or following a historical precedent, must be seen as a move that would give the liturgy the life, joy and power that are inherent in its purpose, content, form and message: the manifestation of the beauty and joy of the Kingdom of God.

### **Conclusions**

By its approaches, this thesis aims to contribute in the most original way possible to opening up new perspectives on the development of theological music education. Comparative studies of different musical styles, exhaustive analysis of the compositional and interpretative aspects of church song, with original interdenominational and interreligious associations, as well as the presentation in a new theological light of the fundamental aspects of vocal emission and the utterance of the word, but also of the theological and pastoral values of an aesthetic service, with concrete indications of its use in liturgical worship, are all arguments for deepening all these notions in pastoral theological education.

The present research hopes to pave the way for other academic initiatives to address this innovative educational challenge for the aesthetic and not only theoretical musical perfection of future church ministers.

The responsibility of Church workers for the authenticity and effectiveness of the musical message is overwhelming, which requires well-trained clergy in theological educational institutions, ready to adapt to any musical, spiritual or administrative situation in the life of their own Church, as well as singers and choirs qualified both technically and spiritually, demonstrating a true devotion to their work, always clothed in the garb of humility.

Singing with mindfulness and inner attention means not only

knowing and understanding musical theory and technique, melody and dynamics, but also deciphering the words and the meaning behind them. To the striving to express a hymn as well as musically possible must be added the care to bring out its meaning, and this must be done without ostentation or any other appropriation of secular music.

Thus, strict attention should be paid to every aspect of the musical service in the church, this service requiring absolute and total commitment. A correct understanding of all the elements that constitute liturgical music begins with a good knowledge of the Orthodox faith, which is attained by a sober, devout personal life, with daily spiritual reading, including the Holy Scriptures, with frequent confession and communion, with fasting and charity, and with regular participation in the liturgical life of the parish.

Worship of the Church through chant has an important educational role, which imposes on ministers the task of not performing only for themselves, inaudibly, as if their office were a personal privilege or a private act. The texts of Church services are astonishingly rich in their theological, spiritual and didactic content. By approaching their task with adequate prior preparation, cantors become pedagogical assistants to the Church and the clergy. Considering that they are not reading or singing only for themselves, but also for all the faithful present, in this learning process the cantors must understand the need to be adequately familiar not only with the formulation of the texts, but also with their correct execution.

The practice of participation in liturgical singing by the whole people is essential in the Orthodox Church and should be used whenever possible. Without suggesting that the role of the cantor should be abandoned or that church choirs should be replaced, it is nevertheless worth emphasizing the possibility that Church music has in introducing the faithful who actively participate in it to a fuller and deeper spiritual experience in prayer.

The music of the Church is meant to increase in people the grace of God, received through the Holy Sacraments, so that it is not enough merely to understand it, but to participate symphonically in the whole content, letting the divine work penetrate the heart, so that from there one's own contribution to the general singing may spring, as part of a whole.

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