

***Our Father*, music by Anton Pann. A sacred concerto work, from composer Viorel Munteanu's viewpoint**

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Abstract: *Another orthodox version of the Lord's Prayer and based on a melodic line by Anton Pann (1790-1854) belongs to composer Viorel Munteanu. The maestro's viewpoint is one that combines liturgical elements with sacred-concerto elements, by harmonization of the psalmic line for 3 choirs and vocalists. Among the choral ensembles, the distinctive one is the mixed choir, with the children choir having occasional interventions, each time almost doubling, in one voice, the melodic line sung by another voice – of the vocalist or of a fraction of the mixed choir. Mention should be made that the byzantine choir makes its presence known, like the children choir, in one voice (with one exception, i.e. at bars 17-19). While not specified by text, it was intended for male voices only to underline the byzantine origin of the prayer.*

Keywords: *Musical analysis, mixed choir, male choir, soloists, children's choir*

1. Introduction: Viorel Munteanu

Born on 2 May 1944 in Reuseni, Suceava county, **Viorel Munteanu** studied at the *George Enescu* Conservatory of Music in Iaşi where he successively graduated the pedagogy section and the music writing section as a student of professor Vasile Spătăreanu; he took a number of composition courses with Ştefan Niculescu, Aurel Stroe and Anatol Vieru, in Piatra Neamţ (1972-1980); at the proposal of the Union of Romanian Composers and Musicologists (*Uniunea Compozitorilor și Muzicologilor din România*), he received a scholarship of studies and research at the *Santa Cecilia* Academy in Rome (1980) awarded by the Italian Government; he studied composition and polyphony at length with Roman Vlad; it was then he became interested in the work of Roman Vlad, which it constantly promoted in Romania, in its doctoral dissertation as well as by the translation and supervision of the musical writings of this Italian musician of Romanian origin. Viorel Munteanu worked for Radio Iaşi until 1977 and simultaneously began his teaching career at the Conservatory. He became professor on 1991 and doctoral advisor since 2001. He filled the position of dean (2000-2004) and then president of

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the *George Enescu* University of Arts in Iași (2004–2008 and 2008–2012). He is a member of the Managing Board of the Union of Romanian Composers and Musicologists (since 1990) and manager of the Iași Subsidiary of UCMR. His work comprises the genres: symphonic and vocal-symphonic, vocal and instrumental chamber music, choirs. His works were interpreted in over 450 international concerts and festivals in Romania, South Africa, England, Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Canada, Switzerland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Japan, Republic of Moldova, Macedonia, Norway, Russia, Slovakia, Spain, Turkey, USA. Distinctions (selectively): the Romanian Academy Award (1981, *Glasurele Putnei*); 1st place certificate at the International Composition Competition – Ancona, Italy (1986); a UCMR Creation prize (in 2001, 2006 and 2013); the *Opera Omnia Prize* awarded by Fundația Culturală a Bucovinei (2003), Education Awards Gala – Professor of 2009 (3rd prize), *Dinu Patriciu* Foundation; Medal of Honor awarded by the National University of Music, Bucharest (2011); *Cross of Moldova*, as an expression of holding in high regard and as blessing from His Eminence Teofan, Metropolitan of Moldavia and Bukovina (17 May 2014); *Honorary doctorate* from *Ovidius* University in Constanța (2006), from *Valahia* University in Târgoviște (2009), from *Ștefancel Mare* University in Suceava (2011) and from *Gheorgh eDima* Music Academy in Cluj (2014) and from the Academy of Music, Theatre and Fine Arts in Chișinău - Republic of Moldova, 2015.

Analyzing the macro structure of this work, too, we may also infer this choice was intended to contrast the angelic sound of the children choir with the “humanity” of the male voices. Midway – in terms of meaning and distribution in the music sheet – lie the mixed choir and the vocalists – the “hard carriers” of this musical development of the Prayer. Despite a seemingly dense coral structure, the work develops as a prayer evoked by all performers, the thread of which is its melodic line as showcased throughout the work by the sopranos in the mixed choir and building up, by the intrinsic harmony it describes, into two distinct sections – one in D minor, the other in F major. However, the tonal aspect is not the only distinction between the two momentums of this work; in respect of the global structure, we will observe that section A will outline the vocalists by the countermelodies used to counter the harmonic structure of the mixed choir (bars 4-7), while section B reunites the vocalists and the choir in a writing tinged with polyphony (bars 28-32).

The musical score consists of the following parts and lyrics:

- Cor de copii:** *poco rit.* / *a tempo*
- Soli:**
 - Soprano (S):** *poco rit.* / *a tempo*. Lyrics: tru Vi - e a Ta, fa - că-se vo - ia
 - Mezzo:** Lyrics: Vi - e a Ta, fa - că-se vo - ia
 - Tenor (T):** Lyrics: tru Vi - e a Ta, fa - că-se vo - ia
 - Bass (B):** Lyrics: Vi - e a Ta, fa - că-se vo - ia
- Cor mixt:**
 - Soprano (S):** *poco rit.* / *a tempo*. Lyrics: Vi - e îm-pă-ră-ți - a - Ta, fa - că-se-vo - ia
 - Alto (A):** Lyrics: tru Vi - e îm-pă-ră-ți - a - Ta, fa - că-se-vo - ia
 - Tenor (T):** Lyrics: Vi e îm-pă-ră-ți - a - Ta, fa - că-se-vo - ia
 - Bass (B):** Lyrics: tru Vi - e a Ta, fa - că-se-vo - ia -
- Cor bizantin:** *poco rit.* / *a tempo*. Lyrics: tru Vi - e a Ta, fa - că-se-vo - ia

Fig. 3. m. 15-18

The work starts with a short bell intro (4 bars) that is aimed to familiarize us with the musical atmosphere in an orthodox church, of the vesper bells. From the fourth bar onward the bells leave the stage to make room for the a cappella choir – the children choir, the vocalists (SATB), the mixed choir (SATB) and the byzantine choir. As we have already mentioned, the mixed choir is the core around which revolve the other vocal groups. The writing for the 4 voices is chordal, preponderantly isorhythmic; the most distinguishable voice, as expected, is the soprano, as carrier of the psalmic melodic line transposed into the linear writing. Those inflexions specific to byzantine music – i.e. the melismata – are eliminated, leaving the melody modest and unitary from a rhythmic standpoint. The same simplicity is maintained on the harmonic level as the other voices create static

harmonies in the form of accompaniment (a reminder of the primary essence of byzantine music), either on the first note or on the accord of the subdominant (irrespective of the tonal affiliation with D minor or F major). All this outlines elements related to modal music due to the elimination of the dominant sound (and, therefore, of the appearance of the leading tone on the VIIth note) from the musical development. In turn, the D minor tonic is reinforced by a higher leading tone at E flat, emerging as a constituent in the interventions of the byzantine choir.

The musical score for measures 19-22 is structured as follows:

- Cor de copii:** Treble clef, 6/8 time. Lyrics: pe pă-mânt.
- Soli:**
 - Soprano (S):** Treble clef, 6/8 time. Lyrics: Ta, pe pă-mânt.
 - Mezzo:** Treble clef, 6/8 time. Lyrics: Ta, pe pă-mânt.
 - Tenore (T):** Treble clef, 6/8 time. Lyrics: Ta, pe pă-mânt.
 - Basso (B):** Bass clef, 6/8 time. Lyrics: Ta, pe pă-mânt.
- Cor mixt:**
 - Soprano (S):** Treble clef, 6/8 time. Lyrics: Ta, pre-cum în cer a-șa și pe pă-mânt.
 - Alto (A):** Treble clef, 6/8 time. Lyrics: Ta, cer a-șa și pe pă-mânt.
 - Tenore (T):** Treble clef, 6/8 time. Lyrics: Ta, pre-cum în cer a-șa și pe pă-mânt.
 - Basso (B):** Bass clef, 6/8 time. Lyrics: Ta, cer și pe pă-mânt.
- Cor bizantin:** Bass clef, 6/8 time. Lyrics: Ta, pe pă-mânt.

Measure numbers 19, 20, 21, and 22 are indicated at the top of the score. Dynamics include *mf* and *poco rit.*

Fig. 4. m. 19-22

Except for an inner momentum (bars 10-19), all it has to intonate is the accompaniment on E, occasionally enriched by this higher leading note at Eflat. This emphasizes the inspiration in the psalmic music and is somehow reminiscent of the

melismata specific to same, countering the simplicity of the melodic line we mentioned above. On the other hand, according to the traditional harmony, any minor second – especially on the tonic – puts a welcome pressure on the entire sounding apparatus by slightly stimulating the harmonic line. At this point we should mention the appearance of the dissonance arising sporadically in the choral development of the mixed choir (for instance, the collision between A and B – bars 8-9 and 20-21, respectively). There are other such overlaps of seconds appearing along the way that are due to a melodic progress (a passage or ornaments) following which one of the sounds of the interval in question is interpreted as a sound apparently dissonant (as with bars 16-17 for the alto voice and the tenor voice).

Regarding the collision between the C and D sung by the alto voice, which appears in the aforementioned bars as well as on a number of such other occasions, we should outline that this second does not just happen; on the contrary, it is one of the defining elements of the alto voice part: where these two sounds collide, the voice part divides itself, the first alto creates a higher ornament which overlaps the basic sound C kept by the second alto. This technique subtly suggests the idea of heterophony specific to the Romanian folk music and to psalmic music (the writing of which, through neume, oftentimes leaves room, to approximate interpretations of the melismata by several singers simultaneously). Our analysis reveals that the aforementioned lines have attempted to surprise harmonic elements specific to the composition version of Viorel Munteanu. We did not focus too much on the melodic aspect since a detailed analysis of the thread of this work is showcased in the presentation of Anton Pann's melodic version. In turn, one should note the independence of the 4 lead voices during bars 17 – 19 when they display their technical as well as performing skills, why? The composer takes note of the two requests.

1. The requests (3; 4), the most important ones in this prayer, as well as that simplicity in the musical writing. *Some composers have oftentimes disregarded this sacred and important moment.* This is arguably the only concerto moment of this work, especially as a result of the octave leap to the high A². Also, by the brief melismatic countermelody of the vocalist alto singer made on the ascending progression of the soprano part on the same bar. Furthermore, let us not forget what was happening a few bars earlier (14 with auftakt-15) at which point the entire ensemble (the children choir, the vocalists, the mixed choir, the byzantine choir) insert a text in the Prayer by saying “*Our Father*” split between the verse ended with “Hallowed be Thy name” and the verse beginning with “Thy kingdom come”.

Therefore, being an “outer momentum” over the course of the prayer, from a musical standpoint the bars in question distinguish themselves by a gradually descending melodic line that is in no way related to the actual theme taken over from Anton Pann. Furthermore, at this point, the byzantine choir intonates a countermelody defined by chromaticism: the ubiquitous descending IInd note is there and so is the IVth note altered ascendingly – G sharp (interpreted as a leading tone to the dominant in D minor).

It is melodically justified by the double ornament around A, without any harmonic implications (as we have mentioned above, the chord of the Vth note being removed from the chordal structure of the work to avoid attracting the discourse toward the tonal world). However, the Ist note is not neglected harmonically; on the contrary, it is reinforced by a double leading note towards the end of the A section (bars 21-22) due to the appearance of C sharp (soprano-alto) and E flat (the byzantine choir). This cadenza is followed by a sudden modulation towards F major, which marks the beginning of the second section of this work, which conveys a distinct feeling. This is required, firstly by the melodic line, which becomes brighter (due to the use of the leaps and substituting the minor sound by the major one), and then by the approach on the writing in its entirety.

The musical score for measures 41-46 of 'Our Father' by Anton Pann. It features a gong (Campane) at the top, followed by a children's choir (Cor de copii) and four vocalists (Soli) in Soprano (S), Mezzo (Mezzo), Tenor (T), and Bass (B) parts. The tempo is marked 'a tempo' and the section concludes with 'attacca'. The lyrics are 'Ta - tăl nos - tru' and 'al nos - tru'. The score includes a key signature change to F major and a time signature change to 3/4.

Fig. 5. m. 41-46

Legend

Pomenirea sfinților – Commemoration of the Saints

Introducere toacă, clopote de biserică, clopote tubulare, gong – Intro. – semantron, church bells, tubular bells, gong

1 Tatăl nostru – Our Father

Cor de copii – Children choir

Soliști – Vocalists

Cor mixt – Mixed choir

Corbizantin – Byzantine choir

N.B. Monodie de Anton Pann – Monody by Anton Pann

At this point the composer opts for a polyphonic discourse by taking over the melodic line from the soprano voice (which presents for the first time an idea without any harmonic support from the choir), by the tenor voice (bars 29-30). Besides, another significant aspect is that the vocalists and the mixed choir collaborate by a unification of the melodic lines: the vocalists sing along with the choir, as if feeling the urge to pray in unison to gain more power to beg for “the forgiveness of our trespasses”.

This approach is maintained as far as bar 36 when a cadenza is made with a halt on the sole sound D with a fermata. Mention should be made that over the course of these bars the children choir and the byzantine choir will not sing – maybe because the two entities represent two distinct worlds, one of sounds and of semantics, which have a bearing on other moments in the development of the song.

It is not surprising that these two choirs, are waiting to join, in one voice, the ensemble made of the mixed choir and the vocalists near the end of the song, which ends on a calm note, in *mezzopiano*, on an elliptic third D minor chord. This is the best sound to underline the divine nature of the Prayer and leaves room in the heart and mind of the listener to choose the bright (major) state or the pious (minor) state to speak to “*Our Father*”.

2. Conclusion

Lord's Prayer as seen by Viorel Munteanu. At the end of this research we reached to the conclusion that this is the first religious creation for a choir in the Orthodox Church which gives us the possibility of coming closer to God thanks to Viorel Munteanu's feeling for harmony. The composer does not abandon the byzantine style, but keeps a clear and sacred form typical for the religious repertoire.

3. References

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