

THE SACRAL MUSIC OF GHEORGHE DIMA (THE LITURGY)

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Abstract: *In "The Songs of Holy Mass – in G major" the composer shows a particular interest to emphasize the polyphonic and modality expressiveness. Typically to these works is the shaping of the text adapted to the melodic structure of the author and the lack of the inflections or passages, which remind us the psaltic musical themes. The connection music-text is specific to sacred creations, the text having a great importance because the prayer itself is a conversation between man and God. Religious music is a prayer which is sung, and its structure should highlight even formal the divine awesomeness.*

Key words: *religious choral repertoire, vocal technique, melismatic sound.*

1. Introduction

The most productive period with a rich creative activity related to choral religious music the composer had it in Braşov between 1899 and 1916.

Here, as a conductor of the Choir of the Church "Holy Trinity", also known as the Greek Church, has made an outstanding contribution to the enrichment of musical heritage focused on three directions, which were aimed on the reform of the religious musical vision of local church.

This work was carried out on three levels: the choir and the improvement of the singers' vocal quality, religious choral repertoire developing the liturgical choral music and the fund of the Church's library [2, p. 100-101].

2. Problem Formulation

I made a thematical what is important to be emphasized related to his choral

compositions designated to church services and especially for the Divine Liturgy, is the lack of native creative resources, a reality that the composer had to face it, especially by the fact that "Greek choral musical scores that had to be studied and learnt, had to be translated into people's language" [2, p.102].

Gheorghe Dima, being a teacher at the Orthodox Theological Seminary from Sibiu, is very interested in the religious choral music "seeking to capitalize the spirit of this secular song using the classic conquests" [1, p.361].

Considered by some musicologists to be tributary to the German School, Dima "is mainly influenced in the beginning of his works, the two Liturgy scores for male choir and mixed choir" by Schumann and Mendelssohn. [3, p.340]

Gheorghe Dima was, therefore, able to get closer to the ethos of the Transylvanian liturgical chant, as a teacher at a

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theological school. This liturgical chant was somehow protected from the Eastern Greek influence, as his predecessor Dimitrie Cuntan had said in his studies from Metropolitan Church of Transylvania.

In his work, liturgical compositions have a special exigency, sometimes treating the voices in an instrumental manner.

A good example is the score of the irmos-The Entrance in the Church, sung on 21 November, where "the central section is a melismatic chant almost instrumental requiring a perfect vocal technique" [3, p. 271-272].

Being an ancient Byzantine style of the papadic chant, having intense melismatic passages, the entire musical discourse is enriched by ornaments that are built on a background of a slow movement, specific to this liturgical moment.

This song dedicated to the veneration of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God suggests, using the cantabile and melismatic sound, the profound honor and the glory dedicated to Virgin Mary.

The construction of words praising the virginity outlines suggestive the homage, gratitude and praise that are addressed to the Holy Virgin for her purity:

The image shows a musical score for a liturgical piece. It consists of four staves. The top two staves are vocal lines, and the bottom two are piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked 'Andante grave'. The lyrics are: 'ei, lau - da fe - cio - ri ei, lau - da fe - cio - ri ei, lau - da fe - cio - ri ei, lau - da'. The score features long, flowing melismatic lines with many grace notes and ornaments, characteristic of Byzantine-style chant.

Fig. 1. *Melismatic passages*
(*Axionul Intrării în Biserică*)

The Mass for mixed choir is a work in which the Transylvanian composer illustrates the orientation to a harmonic structure, dense and intense modulated, having polyphonic passages, demonstrating that he is no stranger to the traditional lectern chant, emphasizing "modal melodic towers, ancient method of opposition antiphonic groups, alternating passages interventions supported by ison with harmonic musical interventions, a minor-major game" [3, p. 361].

In "The Songs of Holy Mass – in G major" the composer shows a particular interest to emphasize the polyphonic and modality expressiveness.

Typically to these works is the shaping of the text adapted to the melodic structure of the author and the lack of the inflections or passages, which remind us the psaltic musical themes. In these master works, the composer develops melodic symmetrical motives, preserving metric accents, which give a symmetrical, classic and expressive evolution.

Considered to be the best-known religious work written by Gheorghe Dima during the time when he lived in Sibiu, The Liturgy/Mass in G, for mixed choir and male choir is considered to be a "bold innovation in Romanian Orthodox music" [2, p. 100-101] not only for the harmonic and complex fabric and complex but also for the "contrasting expressions of the dramatic blast that animates it" [4, p. 149].

The composer uses, in building the musicality of his work, the means the classical - romantic harmonic expressions, however exploiting also the native musicality of the Romanian music, using various elements of Romanian liturgical music: modal melodic inflections, alternations of the antiphonic groups of voices creating expressive timbre mixtures, unison phrases [4, p. 149].

An example of harmonic- polyphonic thinking the Holy Mass in G songs for

male choir, in which is highlighted the magnitude of the Romanian liturgical composition, is the answer of the choir, after Great Blessing. [4, p. 149]

The word "Amen" is structured in a melodic structure that stretches over 23 measures. Speech sound is opened by Tenor II, having on the background the fundamental sound, in an ascending melodic profile, which the stage IV appears altered (c #).

The two themes are structured for each of two parties as follows: first theme for Tenor II and Bass and the second theme first played by Tenor and Baritone parties, these themes being developed in a thematic imitation, three bars farther as follows.

The 1st theme surprised from the very beginning of the score it is joined by the second theme to every descending quarter-tone, being supported by the part of the baritons.

The Bass highlights the main theme with a more robust touch (f), different from the original, and three thematic measures farther, the first tenor sings in a dynamic evolution (f) the second theme.

Using a generous vocal range (two octaves) musical discourse can be synthesized in a wide melodic arch which evolves reaching a point of maximum intensity in the 13th measure.

Remarkable it is also the presence of the fourth, fifth, octave, the enhancement being actually a large heavy sound structure which has different melodic structures, so that after the maximum amplification it turns through, a descendant melodic profile, to the initial sonority.

The text, even if seems to be simple - "Amen" (which translated means "so be it, truly ") should be seen as a natural continuation of the priest's words "Blessed is the kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ..." and during this continuous chant, the man expresses entire adherence to the confession of faith. With

ample melodic construction with fifths, fourths, octaves suggests an expressive cantabile vocal music, in which rhythmic formulas-dotted minim, dotted eighth note, dotted crotchet note or quaver-are the best expression of the constant balance mind and soul of a Christian.

The image displays a complex musical score for a male choir, specifically for the word 'Amen'. It consists of four systems of staves. The first system shows the vocal line with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The subsequent systems show multiple parts, likely representing different vocal parts (Tenor II, Bass, Tenor, Baritone) with various dynamics and articulations. The score includes rhythmic notations such as dotted minims, dotted eighth notes, and dotted crotchets. The word 'Amen' is written below the staves, and there are markings for 'Cresc. str. viv.' and 'Amen' throughout the piece.

Fig. 2. *Polyphonical construction of The Divine Liturgy in G*

The first response of the choir during the Mass in G for male choir highlights the compositional trajectory of the musician Gheorghe Dima, which it is found throughout the whole composition, one that has "the strong feelings of exuberance amplified in a harmonic and melodic line".

The central moment of the Orthodox Liturgy is when the gifts, brought to the altar by the community of believers, are transformed into the Body and Blood of the Lord and it has its important place in liturgical music creations, choral or Byzantine-psaltic music.

3. Problem Solution

The solemnity, the greatness and sublimity of the moment are drawn by cantabile structures, where lyrical passages alternate with sound module that creates a sonority with a generous dynamic.

The preamble of the Great Answers of Mass in G is expressed through a unison voice that is a strong incipit and "is consumed" in a final pianissimo the first response" *Mercy and peace, a sacrifice of*

praise.' The response " *It is meet and right to worship...*" reminds us the theme of the Byzantine Liturgy 5th tone, by Romanian precentor Anton Pann.

Cu vred-ni-ci-e și cu drep-ta-te es-te a-ne
în-chi-na Ta-tă-lui și Fi-u-lui și Sfîn-tu-lui Duh,
în-chi-na Ta-tă-lui și Fi-u-lui și Sfîn-tu-lui Duh,
Cu vred-ni-ci-e și cu drep-ta-te e-s-te
în-chi-na Ta-tă-lui și Fi-u-lui și Sfîn-tu-lui Duh,

Nº 41. Andante grave.

Fig. 3. *The byzantin themes of Răspunsuri Mari (the most important moment of the Liturgy) and the choral constructions (Gh. Dima)*

The entire sound architecture is built around an ascending melodic profile, cantabile, evolving in equal values, pointing out the lack of interval leaps and the chromatic, specific to Gheorghe Dima's compositions. Using an exceptional sextant leap in intensity when the word "Trinity" is said, expresses the gratitude offered to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Trinity, one in essence and undivided.

The upward course culminates invoking the name of the Holy Trinity, and it may

suggest that the whole creation is devoted towards The Holy God. These measures demonstrate that the composer knows very well the psaltic music, written for the lectern, and he transforms it in his own style, keeping the ethos and keeping it lyrical.

This part of Choral Orthodox Liturgy has a counterpart in the Papadic model, sung in a wider tempo, the composer using the agogic stress and a suitable dynamic according to a certain moment, aspects that are highlighted by various indications

(Andante grave, Maiestoso, pp , p, mf , f).

The section " Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of Sabaoth " has a counterpart in the Catholic Messa called "Sanctus" which glorifies the name of God in a solemn atmosphere in which it is testified that the whole creation is full of God's greatness" heaven and earth are full of thy glory.

In contrast with the previous section, this one is built in a tripartite form, ABA and Coda.

The debut of a vibrant majestic allegro is sung in forte, in unison by the choir, framed in a homophone structure that emphasizes a tonic-dominant correspondence.

The bass section begins the polyphonic exposure of the melody, transposed into the score for the first tenor stage, on fifth level (D/Re).

Polyphonic melodic speech is still played by the bass-baritone voices, and evolves into a descendent sound profile, within a tierce.

Musical construction focuses around the alternation of homophony and polyphony, the composer choosing to expose the main melodic themes and motives of bariton - bass voices.

The section has a cadency in a bright agreement using Si Major and coincides with speaking words *Hosanna in the Highest (Hosanna in excelsis)*.

Section *b* is a homophone lyrical section, which continues the worship of God, Jesus Christ, "He that comet in the name of God...".

The sound contrasts by using a different tempo (Meno Mosso), the melodic arch touches acute tones in Forte and rapid crescendos (piano forte) suggesting an explosion of sound and light, expressing moments of extreme solemnity.

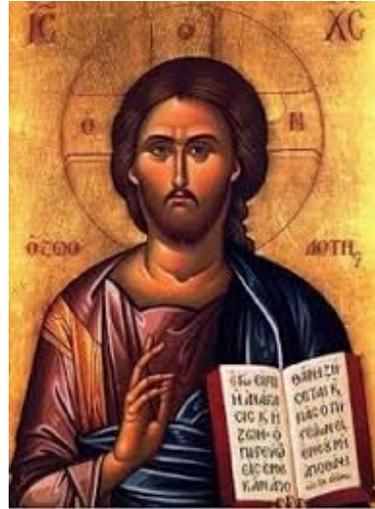


Fig. 4. *Jesus Christ, God and Saviour*

The relationship between music and text is specific to liturgical framework in the sense of the primacy of the last one. Therefore, music is just a way that the Christian prays, the music being adapted to the prayers.

4. Conclusion

The return to section *a* is expressed by changing the tempo, and the returning to tempo primo.

As in the beginning of the Great answers, the bass exposure lies in a robust sonority (f) of the thematic discourse, highlighting the joy and exaltation invoking divine power and glory.

Coda in Lento is a recitative part in G Major, which has a role in preparing the tranquility and recollection moments that precedes the Epiclesis, the most important section of the whole Liturgy.

Music - text relationship suggests a distinct complementarity, which reflects the state of intense prayer, of praise of the divine Majesty in the most important time of the Christian liturgy.

The sonority impresses with solemnity and exaltation and the contrasting tempo (Andante- Allegro Maestoso), music evolving in tones expressing the feeling of piety and Christian humility, admiration and praise to the Lord for all His blessings.

Religious Music is one of the most sensitive forms of art, one that manages to reach souls, embodying the prayer that unites man with God.



Fig. 5. *Orthodox Church*

When prayer is accompanied by music, its message is powerful, direct, and full of inner strength and love.

Therefore, many prayers - the most sensitive, deeper, longer and more ornate -

are those that were accompanied by appropriate music, which meet certain standards of construction and interpretation.

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