

**Authoress of church songs in Romanian monachism  
(19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries).  
The stylistic, semantic and hermeneutical analysis the  
Religious Service of the Mother's of God Omophor,  
composed by the nun Epiharia Moisescu**

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**Abstract:** *Godliness to the Mother of God has always had impressive dimensions. She is present in personal prayers, in the liturgical space of the Church, in the works of the Holy Fathers, in iconography, but the most important place in which we find it, is the heart of every faithful. In her heart she carried it for years, all her life, the nun Epiharia Moisescu. With all the knowledge gained from learning psaltic music, most of the works created were dedicated to the Mother of God: Religious Service of the Omophor, the Grivance and the Religious Service of Death of the Mother of God. The present work refers only to one of these works: Religious Service of the Mother's of God Omophor analyzed from a stylistic, semantic and hermeneutic point of view. The whole analysis puts it at the service of highlighting the Romanian school of psaltic music that developed and perfected, revealing the love of God interwoven with the love for music of those who later became personalities of the history of the Romanian psaltic music.*

Key-words: *church songs, psaltic music, liturgical styles*

## **1. Introduction**

Next to folklore, the Byzantine rite church music constituted the framework in which Romanian music was born and strengthened for many centuries.

Production of the Putna Music School, The Romanian Psaltikia of Filotei sin Agăi Jipei dedicated to Saint Constantin Brâncoveanu in 1713, the great achievements of the composers who initiated the process of "Romanianization" from the beginning of the 19th century (adapting the Romanian text to the music,

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or composing a new melodic line that retains the Byzantine characteristics and is perfectly adapted to the Romanian text) there are only a few of the musical monuments, that have stabilized and facilitated to the north of the Danube a unique and original musical culture, which assured the Romanian Orthodoxy solidity and continuity over time.

As in the Byzantine world, local monasticism constituted the spiritual pillar on which the whole lives, both spiritual and cultural, were established.

The monastery scriptures have produced hundreds and hundreds of codices, some of them being musical, and an important segment of these musical codes were produced by the nuns.

## 2. Short biography

Why the nun Epiharia Moisescu?

Through her striking personality, she represented a model of determination and true spiritual experience in those times and can also be a worthy model to follow today. The nun Epiharia Moisescu (b. 1864) în Satulung Săcele, Braşov county (Victor Tudoran 1938, 54) - d. 1943 M. Bistriţa, Vâlcea county) represents a tab in the history of Romanian church music of the late 19th and early 20th century. In the year 1872, ".... at the age of eight years, in the monastery of Suzana, Elena Moise, (at the crossing from Transylvania to the „Kingdom” changed the name, from Moise to Moisescu), sings on voice 8 the " Glory from Vespers at the Birth of the Virgin Mary, listened by Ştefanache Popescu, the great omposer and singer at church of Bucharest, he realized that the little girl sang perfectly and with a special voice" (Dumitrean 2017, 3). She remained here as a nun of the monastery until 1883/1884.

Between 1883/1884-1890 we find her studying the psaltic music with assiduity in the Seminar "Metropolitan Nifon" in Bucharest, where she was colleague with Ion Popescu Pasărea, having a teacher with Ştefanache Popescu.

In 1892 she became nun, in the Țigăneşti Monastery where later, (1900) we find she a singer on the choir. From this position he signs his first work "Religious Service of the Mother`s of God Omophor", -"The melody of the work has a concise, pleasant and accessible style that certifies the talent and expresses the author's personality" (Lăzărică 2014, 5).

In 1911 he will publish a "Manual of church songs, which includes both the complete service of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary and the Complaint of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, the Second Edition".

In addition to these prints, between 1911 and 1940, the nun Epiharia Moisescu carries out a prolific advertising activity, composing works of psaltic music “strengthen the monastic life of the nuns in the country through education and work, according to our national and spiritual needs” (Nun Epiharia Moisescu 1900, 3).

### **3. The stylistics directions of the Religious Service of the Mother`s of God Omophor**

**3.1. Terminological**, music styling is a special discipline, belonging to modern musicology with an interdisciplinary character, which studies the musical style for all points of view (melody, rhythm, polyphony, harmony, timbre, etc.), by which it is individualized and valued.

**3.1.1. The stylistics and forms of the Romanian church music** have certain particularities.

The Romanian church music is part of the Byzantine musical style, formed and developed in the Byzantine Empire, between 395-1453.

More than any other musical system, Byzantine music manifests itself throughout the centuries in a fundamental and constant way as an integral part of the liturgical act. Starting from the principle that considers the liturgical song as “communion for the service of angels and people” (Fecioru 1986, 184) as well as the indissoluble connection between text and music, it derives the following distinguishing features: rhythm, metric, tempo and melodic line.

Thus, in church music we have four styles (Moldoveanu 2007, 135): recitative, irmologic (in fast tact, in slow tact and calofonic), stihiraric (in slow tact and fast one) and papadic. Along with the four styles, by the nature of the poetic-musical structures, we have in the liturgical Byzantine song, four main forms from which other secondary forms emerge, as follows:

**TROPARUL** - a short versified song that summarizes the essence of the respective feast, sung in a irmologic style, on the voice indicated in Octoih, Ceaslov, Minei or Tipicon. It has as secondary forms: automela (samoglasnica) - tropar with its own melody, podobia - tropar with melody-typical pattern of the voice, idiomela - tropar with one or more melodies, metric and own voice, antiphon - tropar that is sung in Utrenia.

**STIHIRA** - short hymn with melodic-rhythmic unfolding more complex than the tropar, sung in the stihiraric style, in the voice indicated in Octoih, Ceaslov, Mina or Tipicon.

CONDACUL - a relatively short hymn, a poetic composition of a verse, which contains a summary of the feast, sung in a irmological style, in the voice indicated by the book in Octoih, Ceaslov, Minei or Tipicon. It has only one secondary form, acatistul - made up of twenty-four tropes grouped into twelve smaller ones concluded with "Alleluia" and twelve longer ones concluded with the formula of worship of our Savior Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary or the Holy One to whom it is written.

CANON - liturgical poem with a complex structure, with developed poetic-narrative text composed of nine independent odes from the metric and melodic point of view, but united by a common liturgical theme, sung in the voice indicated in Octoih, Ceaslov, Minei or Tipicon.

Having the complete picture of the main styles and forms, as well as the secondary ones characteristic of the church music, I will continue to refer to the composition of the author included in my study.

### **3.1.2. Styling and forms at the Religious Service of the Omophor**

The service of the Religious Service of the Mother's of God Omophor, from the Minei on the month of October has the feast on the first day of the month. On the scheme of the religious service composed by the nun Epiharia Moisescu, we make a brief stylistic analysis (Table 1), in which only three of the four above-mentioned styles are found, namely recitative, irmological and stihiraric.

Byzantine music represents an invaluable treasure for the present and future liturgical musical creation, which we have a duty to preserve in its purest form, while preserving the original features with fidelity.

In both language and music, the relationship between tradition and innovation is biased towards the former, while preserving the old formulation in detriment to the new words proposed by update, as well as the inherited styles and forms.

Orthodoxism is characterized by conservatism both from the point of view of the liturgical language and of the elements that make up the service itself.

Everything is preserved from the earliest times, as revealed and subsequently written by the Holy Fathers.

*A brief stylistic analysis*

Table 1

Forms	Voice	Style	Tact
VECERNIA			
Stihiri 1	I	irmologic	Moderato
Stihiri 2	IV	irmologic	Moderato
Slavă și Acum	VIII	stihiraric	Andante
La Litie	Samoglasnice III, IV, II	irmologic	Moderato
Slavă și Acum	II	stihiraric	Andante
La Stihioavnă	Samoglasnice II, V, VII	irmologic	Moderato
Slavă și Acum	II	stihiraric	Andante
La Binecuvântarea pâinilor	-	recitativ	recitativ
Troparul Acoperământului	IV	irmologic	Allegretto
UTRENIA			
După Catisma 1, Sedealnă	III	recitativ	Recitative
Sedealnă	III	irmologic	Allegretto
Catisma 2	-	recitativ	Recitative
Sedealnă	IV	irmologic	Allegretto
Polieleu „Cuvânt Bun”	VII proto-varis	stihiraric	Andante
Mărimuri, Slavă și Acum	I	irmologic	Allegretto
Stihira 1 de la Vecernie	I	irmologic	Moderato
Aliluia, Slavă și Acum	I	irmologic	Allegretto
Sedealnă	IV	irmologic	Allegretto
Evanghelia	-	recitativ	Recitative
Stihiră	VIII	irmologic	Allegretto
Slavă și Acum	VIII	irmologic	Allegretto

#### 4. Semantic and hermeneutic features of Religious Service of the Mother`s of God Omophor

The text of the religious service is a extensive prayer expressed in very rich words in their religious content, which speaks entirely of the honour of Saint Omophor and of the prayers of the Virgin Mary for us by her Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. The tropar always formulates the summary of the respective holiday.

Troparul: “Today, the blessed people, enlightened we celebrate, being shady by your coming, the Mother of God and seeking Your Most High Icon, with humility we thank: cover us with Your Honest Omophor and escape us from all evil, praying for Thy son, Christ our God, save our souls”.

In the work we have the Great Vespers consisting of two moments with profound theological meanings: Vecernia with Lithia and Utrenia.

#### 4.1. Vesper

Is one of the most beautiful Church Praises that is celebrated daily. The service opens the liturgical ordinance of every day and concentrates a lot of spiritual meanings (Braniste 2010, 3), being ordained to be fulfilled when the lights are on, more precisely the candles, in a deep prayer atmosphere. Being a "watching - wake", we have a rich palette of prayers beautifully dressed in the melody of the voices of church music.

The beginning stihiries end with the same formula as text, "The one who is full of Gift, rejoice, the Lord is with you, the one who gives the world great mercy ", which expresses hope that people place in the love of God, through the highest intercession that of His Holy Mother.

Musically each formula supports slight changes of the melodic line to which the final cadence on na (pa) is added.

In the songs of Vespers we find a smooth melody, made up of small intervals with gradual ascending or descending, with no more high jumps used with enough reserve.

The transition from the diatonic to the chromatic voices: the stihiries from the beginning of Vespers - from the diatonic voice I to the chromatic voice VI (Figure 1),

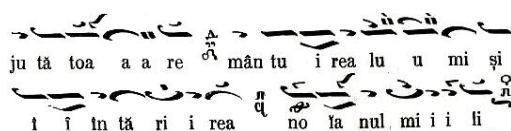


Fig.1. Modulation from the diatonic voice I to the chromatic voice VI

or from diatonic IV leghetos to chromatic VII proto-varis (Figure 2),

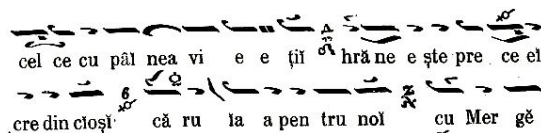


Fig.2. Modulation from diatonic IV leghetos to chromatic VII proto-varis

brings an extra colour to the painted picture depicted by the content of the texts proposed by the hymnographer. In the same way, the other songs were worked, the hymn addressed to God "Glory", followed by Vohod and especially by the

beautiful song "Lumină Lină " which by its simple and pleasant melody fills the soul with the joy of faith in God.

#### 4.2. Lithia

This word comes from the Greek "liti", which means a prayer of imploration, full of humility. Not being a self-serving religious service, Lithia is officiated itself to the Vespers and comprises two parts, the first in which the prayers of repentance are said with the intercession of the Virgin Mary and of all the Saints, and the second one in which the bread, wine, oil and wheat are sanctified, in the form of a cross, which symbolizes the five loaves that the Savior blessed and which, by multiplying, and fed with them, in the wilderness 5000 men, besides women and children (Luke 9: 12-17). Here the prayers sung with the spoken ones are interwoven, respectively the recitative style with the irmological one, realizing an extremely profound liturgical act.

We meet again with the stihiries. During the first two we have no temporary modulations, the melodic line being written only in the respective voice pattern. Only in the third stihira we have a modulation, from chromatic voice II - in diatonic voice I (Figure 3).

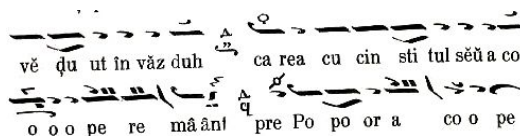


Fig.3. Modulation, from chromatic voice II - in diatonic voice I

#### 4.3. Utrenia

Is the service that is celebrated very early in the morning, which symbolizes the beginning of Christianity, through the very embodiment of our Savior Jesus Christ at the same time as the spread of His Teaching - the Gospel. Each of its songs (stihiries, hymns, polieleu, sedeanne, podobii), represents a gem of psaltic music by the way they are created to highlight the connection with God. All in one place make up a service with a spiritual freshness that brings hope in forgiveness and salvation. A special element is "Good Word", sung at the holidays dedicated to the Virgin Mary, which can also be found in the compositions of the nun Epiharia Moiescu. All three stihiries are composed in voice VII proto-varis and have in common the end by the formula "Aliluia". The style of the composition is simple, predominantly in the stihiraric style, poor in melisms, with monosyllabic constructions with a rather poor but concise dynamic.

In the songs of Utrenia we find the melismatics related to the consonant signs (of expression and ornament), which confers a slightly varied rhythm by the presence of antichenoma, the psifistonul, eteronul, varia or omalonul, characterized by a lively bounce of the voice, a short grace note, a legato of expression or a warm ripple on two sound heights and an immediate comeback as a consolation. The rest of the composition has the rhythmic construction who based on the values of two notes taken in the raising of the hand (optimal), of one beat (fourth), two or maximum three beats (half note and dotted half note, respectively). The imperfect, perfect and final cadences are often enriched with the consonant signs, and the defining feature of the style of composition is the transient modulations, many at the level of simple inflections, often unexpected.

## 5. Conclusions

These short presentations are meant to underline the zeal of the nun Epiharia Moisescu in her composition of his highly elaborated work, which brings an extra originality by enriching all the melodic formulas that make up the voices of psaltic music.

The text of this wonderful service represents a continual prayer of thanksgiving, of request, of praise and joy, for the Mother of God is always with us, praying for everybody at her Son.

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