
Creative Highlights of Serbian Church Music: Byzantine Origins and Traditional Folk Influences

Eugen Cinci

Faculty of Music and Theater
West University of Timișoara
eugen.cinci@e-uvt.ro

ABSTRACT

It is a well-known fact that the Romanian and the Serbian church music have common Byzantine origins. There is, also, clear evidence of the folk music influence on church music, which have been preserved to this day (Cinci 2009). These connections date back to the first centuries of the consolidation of Christian music. St. John Chrysostom (354-407), for example, speaks of the presence of secular songs by vintners, sailors and craftsmen in the Church (Hercman 2004). Songs of pagan origins, farmer songs, dance songs or instrumental music have been a part of the everyday life for the longest and it is almost impossible to think that church music has maintained itself free of these influences. Although the Church tried to protect itself from outside influences, this was a tedious process, the best evidence being the Ecumenical Synod of Constantinople that took place at the end of the 7th century, when numerous decisions referring to the priests' obligation to avoid influences of any kind from outside the Church were adopted. The authors of the songs performed in the Serbian Orthodox Church such as Kornelije Stanković or Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac represent the modern transposition of these rich and interesting experiences and historical trails.

Keywords

Byzantine music, church music, folk influences, collections of church musical compositions

INTRODUCTION

According to some musicologists, the musical creation of the Eastern Church can be divided into Byzantine and Neo-Byzantine (Moisescu, 1999). Thus, the Byzantine music represents the creation of the multi-secular Byzantine period, while the Neo-Byzantine music is considered the one that appeared in the Orthodox centers, after the disappearance of this very powerful empire in the 15th century. It is generally accepted that the Byzantine Empire existed between 330 A. D. and May 29, 1453 when, on that Tuesday morning, within those three hours of misfortune that had become famous in history and in the superstition of the Eastern peoples, the Empire fell under the Ottoman rule. In accordance with the same ideas, the Byzantine music can be divided into two periods, the *pre-sonorous* between the 4th and the 9th century and the *sonorous* between the 10th and 15th century (Hercman 2004, 12). The first preserved manuscripts date back to the 10th century while the first dated manuscript dates back to 1106, the so-called *Codex Petropolitanus graecus* (Hercman 2004). The fact that the history of music does not have manuscripts originating from the early centuries of Christianity and that the first

ones appear around the 9th or 10th century remains an impediment in historical research. It can be assumed that the later manuscripts also contain songs that originate from previous centuries, however this statement cannot be verified.

One of the reasons for the lack of written sources can be explained by the specific orality of the appropriation and transmission of Christian music to the next generations. Orality in church music for Serbs and Romanians occupies a considerable time span. The working hypothesis formulated in the context of what has been observed refers to a triangle formed by the church music, the folk music of oral provenance and the western influences of the written culture. The object of the demonstrations, rejecting or confirming the hypothesis, is directed towards verifying the extent to which the influence of popular music on church music has slowed down the adoption of a music notation system. On this background, at the end of the 19th century, the church music suffered considerable influences from the popular music, especially in the case of the Romanian lectern canticles of Banat (Cinci 2009). The existence of this phenomenon has been noted since the tenth century in numerous documents dealing with the connections between the pagan music and that of the Christians (Hercman, 2004, p. 19).

Music can be considered as a means for better understanding the divine wisdom (Hercman 2004). This statement might be a brief description of the religious view of the importance of music. In this respect, St. John Chrysostom recalls the words of St. Apostle Paul in which he invites us to learn psalms, hymns and other religious songs. In St. Paul's opinion, music helps overcome fatigue and religious texts are much better received. Music strengthens one's morality, highlights his good aspects, and emphasizes love.

Music played a special role in the Byzantine society also through the discovered theoretical preoccupations. One of the first works on the topic of Byzantine music theoretical principles is the one entitled *Introduction to the musical art*, the author of which is supposedly the old Bacchius (Hercman, 2004, p. 71). The preserved manuscript parts date back to the 12th-13th centuries. The manuscript is interesting due to the fact that it describes the elements of ancient Byzantine music. The musical sound is explained, however, some attention is also given to the more complex theoretical categories (Hercman, 2004). Later manuscripts, such as the one known as *Belerman's Anonymous*, after the philologist with the same name who was preoccupied with the research on ancient Greek music, we can find in transcriptions dating from the 14th-16th century. The preserved manuscript parts are larger and contain elements of rhythm, notation and manners of melody leading. Part two of the manuscript describes notions such as musical intervals, musical pitches, interval relationships, modulations and scales. Part three, which is attributed to a third author, discusses the elements of differentiation between the musical and the non-musical sound, the characteristics of melodic interval types (such as the perfect consonants: fourth, fifth and octave), the characteristics of the vocal registers, etc. The work ends with the description of the *solmization* system and the presentation of some exercises.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Among the works of the authors referred to, constituting themselves as study materials, those belonging to Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac, are highlighted by an increased interest for research, considering the specificity of his work. Among its artistic and scientific attributes we mention:

- The experience of learning the church music orally, in other words, a good knowledge of the church singing from childhood, even if it was approached in an amateurish way;
- A rich musical culture acquired while studying in Leipzig, Munich and Vienna;
- Experience of rich choral activity as a soloist and a conductor;
- Very good knowledge of folk music through study and the collections he made.

This paper is based on two modes of research: historical and comparative selection. The historical one highlights some aspects of Serbian church music, referring to its Byzantine origins, asserted and touted by various authors, as well as to the reality of its modeling, resulting from the form of oral transmission, not concerned with rigor but close to the folk music in concept, subject to permanent changes (Cinci, 2009). Further, by applying the method of comparative selection, we can say that having Byzantine origins and passing through the filter of orality, folk music becomes an inspiration for some compositions from which the present work selects the most important, above all in the activity of the most important 19th-century Serbian composer, Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac. Thus, the terms “marks of creativity” present in the title of this study, refer to the compositional preoccupation regarding some melodic models, modal structures and melodic towers specific to *voice modes* (Rom.: “*glas*”) or *ehs* in their somewhat standardized form, to the extent that the further transmission of music in the church, in the Orthodox spaces, remains predominantly oral. This paper refers to the compositional creations of religious provenance representative for the Serbian music, using the method of comparative selection and having as starting point the melodic models practiced in the Serbian Orthodox Church.

When we talk about the theoretical research on Byzantine music, we must mention some works that we have considered valuable from a historical standpoint. One of these is the *Introduction to Harmony*, attributed to the philosopher Gaudentiu. The oldest parts of this manuscript have been preserved from the 12th century. In terms of content, the work is similar to the one described above, containing descriptions of musical and non-musical sound, the typology of fourth, fifth and eighth intervals’ use, most of the manuscript referring to notation principles (Hercman, 2004, p. 76). In addition to *Gaudentiu's Theory*, we also mention Alypius' (or Alypii) *Introduction to Music* and a work that contributed decisively to the construction of the Byzantine concept on music, Aristidis Quintiliani's *On music*, of which the oldest parts were kept in a manuscript from the period of the 13th-14th centuries. The work consists of three volumes, the first referring to a set of generalities, the second to the issues of ethos and the didactic aspects of music, and the third to the philosophical aspects of music and its importance in society.

Although the Byzantines did not pay special attention to music notation, the latter being given greater importance only later, today, knowledge of musical notation is a desiderate. Through notation we are offered various information regarding the theoretical conceptions and approaches of the Byzantine Serbian music. The development of the Byzantine notation knows two distinct periods, the *paleobyzantine* comprised of the 10th- 12th centuries and the *late Byzantine*, the period until the fall of Byzantium in the fifteenth century (Moisescu, 1999). The approach to Byzantine notation necessarily leads us to the thought of the so-called *ecphonetic* (neumatic) writing, which did not have the establishment of absolute pitches as a primarily purpose, but had as a primary purpose

the reading of church texts, specifying the method of declamation of the apostolic and evangelical *pericopes* (fragments). This special way of reading the Apostle and the Gospel has been preserved in the church practice to this day and those who read these texts must be properly trained (Moisescu, 1996). The Byzantine signs (neumas) used during the *paleobyzantine* period did not establish precise intervallic jumps but only the melodic direction. Neumatic Byzantine writing becomes very present between the 9th-13th centuries, two centuries later falling into obscurity (Hercman, 2004, p. 260).

An important term that Byzantine theorists were concerned with was the so-called *harmonica*. This term should not be discussed in comparison with the classical term of harmony, although some of its elements can also be found in the Byzantine concept. Although the approach to this term has been subject to many controversies, several explanations have been outlined that had also to overcome issues of translation from Byzantine texts, so that *harmonica* could be understood as a part of music theory that addresses the sound pitches and the relationships between them. Rhythm and meter, although they represented important aspects of music, were not considered to be exclusively musical fields. The rhythm was most often discussed in relation to dance and the meter was considered an aspect of the literary text. What many Byzantine theories have in common is the division of the *harmonica* into seven parts which refer to sound-tones, intervals, systems, genres, scales, modulations and melodic movements (Hercman, 2004).

The transformation of Christianity into a tolerated religion in Byzantium (313 AD) gives it a very important social role. Christianity will penetrate into the lives of the simple people, the state and the authorities, and the religious services that were held several times a day could not be missing from the daily life of the various social strata. Music, very important to the divine service, is a constituent part of the clergy life, but also of ordinary believers. In church (with the proper difference that we should make between the institution of church and the place of religious praxis) music is interpreted together, so that it becomes part of the daily musical life. All of these led to the spontaneous phenomenon of inter-influences between the music of the Church and the music of the people, without a clearly expressed need to draw a line of demarcation between the two.

The connections between popular music and church music date back to the first centuries of Christian music consolidation. St. John the Golden Mouth (354-407), for example, speaks of secular songs of wine growers, sailors and craftsmen in Church (Hercman, 2004). Songs of pagan origin, farmers' songs, those from dance or instrumental music, were a part of everyday life and it is almost impossible to contemplate the idea that church music could elude these influences. Although the Church tried to protect itself from outside influences, this process was not an easy one, the best evidence being the Ecumenical Synod of Constantinople that took place at the end of the 7th century, when numerous decisions referring to the priests' obligation to avoid influences of any kind from outside the Church, were adopted. It is clear that even the priests did not remain insensitive to outside-of-church influences, and even more the people who actively participated in religious services. They often used folk patterns of interpretation and performed church singing in a form similar to that dedicated to the general public. At the end of an alleged artistic performance, they bowed to the congregation similar to a stage performance. We can conclude that church and secular (popular) music have been in close connection since the early years of Byzantium (and even much earlier), and that

connection remained very close throughout the development of the Byzantine culture (Hercman, 2004).

In the context given by the existence of folk music influences on church music, not only during the period of Byzantium but also after the disappearance of this great empire, another phenomenon has to be mentioned which we will describe later as being present in the Serbian and Romanian music, known as *the sistem of melodic models*. Namely, for Byzantine lay music was common to use one song for more than one literary text and vice versa. This phenomenon has been preserved until this day as one of the basic methods in the acquisition of church chant, even more so in the pre-20th century period when music sung by the psaltists (chanter) was transmitted orally from one generation to another.

The phenomenon of *adapting* the text of an already well-known song contributed to the rapid acceptance of Byzantine music, both church and secular. Orality, however, should not be considered as the sole reason for the folkloric influences permeating the church chant. An important reason for this can also be found in the rather imperfect notation. The ancient model of notation, used in the first centuries of Byzantine existence, which focused only on specifying the *pitch* of sounds, could not prevent the intrusion of new elements, with each interpretation. Freedom of interpretation can also be seen as a kind of Church tolerance, in its desire to have as many believers as possible, especially in the first centuries.

Before mentioning the names of some important Byzantine music creators, we will have to look back at some terms that refer to them. Precisely, in the early creation period, the terms used for the creators of music and literary texts were *hymnodist* or *melodist*. After the 7th century, the term *hymnographer* was used in order to designate the author of a literary text attached to an already-known song. It is not excluded the idea that this term referred sometimes also to the creators of music. Finding the actual data is also made difficult by the fact in the neo-byzantine texts appear other names such as *asmatograph*, *melurgos* and *musikos* with tasks insufficiently known, reason why each musical personality needs to be approached separately. For example, recent research affirms with great certainty that John Damascus was only the author of literary texts and not of the music, however, he was attributed this aspect of Byzantine creation due to his prestige (Moisescu, 1996).

By specifying the terms which the study refers to, we determine that by addressing the *creation*, we are referring particularly to the compositional opuses based on church music sung by psaltists (chanters), however, when relevant, also to the manners of canonical church music interpretation. The eight ecclesiastical voices, those melodic models used with specific variants in the Serbian Orthodox Church and described in the *Oktoih (Oktoechos)* of Mokranjac became a landmark while the method of comparative analysis between the canonical version of music and the artistic approach becomes the path to follow.

RESULTS

When discussing the important names of those who lived during the second half of the 7th century, besides St. John of Damascus we will also refer to Andrew of Crete, Cosma, Teodor, Joseph, Anatolius, Clement, Teoctist, Peter, Simeon as well as the Patriarchs of Constantinople, Germanus, Tarasios, Methodius, Photius etc. There are also some

testimonies on the creation of emperors such as Basil the First or Constantin the Porphyrogenite (Hercman, 2004, p. 177).

The practice of mentioning author's names began in the fifteenth century (Hercman, 2004, p. 191). Polemics regarding the historical period in which some melurgos were active still exist to this day. There are discussions even regarding the period when perhaps the most famous Byzantine music creator, John Koukouzelis, lived. It is generally accepted that he worked between 1280 and 1360. His opus was famous even during his lifetime and he left a mark not only on musical creation, but also on the theoretical sphere, respectively on pedagogy. Unfortunately, there is not much data about his life. It is known that his mother was of Bulgarian origin and that John's talent was discovered in his early childhood, so he was sent to Constantinople to learn. The Koukouzelian musical creation can be described as innovative. His songs have a generous range, he is very brave in using melisms, intermittent leaps and often appealed to traditional texts. Among his works and collections we mention: *Anagrammatismoi*, *Calophonic Stichera*, *Psalmodic Troparia*, *Cherubicon* etc.

Most of the bibliography in the field that addresses Eastern church music describes very modestly the voices (echoi) as scales (eight in number) with a specific interval configuration, forming the *Octoih*. The idea that the *octoih* is actually a group of scales is dominant, which shows that the Western bibliography, especially in the field of music history, did not pay sufficient attention to this domain. The *octoihal* principle, that is, the distribution of song over eight weeks, has been used since the time of Patriarch Sever, in the sixth century. There are opinions according to which the division of the way of singing in eight weeks has its origin in some pagan rituals (Hercman, 2004, p. 226). It is certain that in ancient theory, the term *ehos* (voice) did not define a scale. The question remains when the theoretical transformation and the identification with a scale of this term began (Hercman, 2004).

The folk-church song from Karlovci was first noted in a modern writing form by the Serbian composer Kornelije Stanković (1831-1865). He represented a prominent personality of Serbian music history. A true romantic, with studies in Vienna, Stanković becomes director of the Belgrade Song Society. His compositional activity was mainly dedicated to the creation for voice and piano (Marinković, 1994, p. 120).

Stanković's personality is important because he was the first researcher to be clearly concerned with the approach and use of church lectern singing practiced at the Sremski Karlovci church. Noting the obvious similarities between the Romanian lectern canticles of Banat and the lectern canticles practiced on a large territory of the jurisdiction of today's Serbian Orthodox Church, we could study them through Stanković's works.

Although Stanković's name is today linked to the beginning of modern exploits in the field of Serbian folk music, we cannot overlook the fact that the music the composer dealt with, especially from within the Church, was created over time through systematization and adaptation.

In this regard, the field of research of Serbian folk music is still addressed to a name, unfortunately not as well known as it should be. It is about Bishop Jerotej Mutibarić (1799-1858), a contemporary of Stanković and a personality fully dedicated to church music.

In this regard, the field of Serbian lectern music research addresses yet another name, unfortunately not as well-known as it should be: Bishop Jerotej Mutibarić (1799-1858), a contemporary of Stanković and a person fully dedicated to church music.

Jerotej (the worldly name Ignjatije) was born in Begeč. He graduated from the philosophical and theological studies and, in 1824, became a monk at the Rakovac monastery. He worked as a professor of religious singing in Vršac and Karlovci, being considered as one of the best connoisseurs of ecclesiastical music. At the request of the Metropolitan Stevan Stratimirović, Jerotej resorted to some *reformatio*ns of the lectern music, which he shortened, considering that the way of interpretation practiced by the archimandrites Dimitrije Krestić and Dionisije Čupić was inconvenient. Jerome made a final editorial of church chant with the blessing of the Metropolitan.

Influenced by the popular melos or not, starting from Karlovci toward other regions including Banat or not, the music that Mutibarić and Kornelije Stanković were preoccupied with can not be omitted when we want to create a complete picture of the lectern song from Banat. All the Orthodox church music from the Habsburg territories, later Austro-Hungarian, had a specific historical evolutionary thread which must be followed carefully in order to reach the correct conclusions.

Stanković's preoccupations with Serbian church chant was continued by many other renowned names of which certainly the most important is composer Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac (1856-1914).

Mokranjac is perhaps the most outstanding personality of the Serbian music of the past. He was a good connoisseur of folklore and made a great contribution to the research and exploitation of it. As far as Mokranjac's compositional activity is concerned, he especially explored the choral music, a field in which he created exceptional opuses. His work was not limited to composition. Mokranjac was also a good conductor and pedagogue. Under his baton, the Belgrade Singing Society had many concerts in several countries such as Austro-Hungary, Bulgaria, Turkey, Russia and Germany. As far as the pedagogical field is concerned, it should be noted that Mokranjac was a music teacher at one of the Belgrade high schools and taught at the School of Theology (Bogoslovija) from the same city (Marinković, 1994, pp. 121-122). He made a great contribution to the establishment of the first music school on the then territory of Serbia, in 1899.

As we have already mentioned, Mokranjac was concerned with the valuation of folklore. His most famous works inspired by folklore are the so-called *Rukoveti*, choral suites based on folk songs. Being a good professional and having studied in Munich, Rome and Leipzig, Mokranjac created an arrangement of songs collected from the people, which he transformed into a rhapsodic form, respecting the sound logic of the character and significance of the collected musical material. *Rukoveti* by Mokranjac still represents consecrated works from the repertoire of Serbian choral ensembles.

Mokranjac dedicated much of his work to religious choral music. One of his masterpieces in this respect is *Liturgy* written for mixed choir but also having a variation for equal voices choir. Although quite accessible, Mokranjac's *Liturgy* is not at all simplistic, proving the composer's knowledge, especially in the field of harmonic ornamentation.

Besides *Liturgy*, Mokranjac also wrote other pieces of music with religious character, observing canonical rules which allows them to be performed in the religious service. In this context, we mention: *The Akathist of the Mother of God; Two Songs for the Good*

Friday; You, Lord, We Praise and *The Funeral Service*. In most cases, the focus is on choral music.

The composer and conductor Mokranjac was a good connoisseur of church chanting. Since early childhood he was present at religious services, helping the liturgists and singing at the lectern (Manojlović, 1923). He became acquainted with church music foremost in a practical sense and only later sought some theoretical explanations. These aspects are visible in composer's religious creation. He uses quotes from the ecclesiastical singing. The shape of the melody, the melodic formulas that lead to cadences and sometimes the melodic lines entirely indicate that Mokranjac was a connoisseur of church music chant. His knowledge would later be transferred into *Oktoechos* and, of course, in its choral creations.

The *Oktoechos* is not Mokranjac's only work in which he portrays the beauty of Serbian ecclesiastical singing for Christian admirers and the general public to see. He is the author of yet another collection of songs called *Strano pjenije* (Lectern canticles) in which over 1500 stichera, prokeimena, megalinaria, cherubicon, irmos as well as songs known as *pricesne* and *sedelne* are described, a work of great value and importance for the Serbian Orthodox Church.

It is well known that Mokranjac based his compositions on the church songs he mastered. This fact is mentioned by many of his biographers and even by Mokranjac himself. Many times, in the works of the composer, it is difficult to find distinct melodic lines inspired by church chanting. Quotations are often summed up in a melodic turn in one or more motifs, or in a cadence-formula specific to church chanting. However, some of Mokranjac's composition opuses use distinct melodies of church singing. Looking at them or listening to some of them, we find a particularly interesting fact: they are characterized by a great resemblance to the lectern songs practiced in the Romanian Orthodox churches from Banat. The similarities are not visible only in Mokranjac's own compositions but also in his source of inspiration. We can find the same phenomenon by comparing the Banat song and certain pieces from Mokranjac's *Oktoechos*.

The similarities between the chanting practiced by the Serbian Orthodox Church and that of the Romanian Orthodox Church in Banat are obvious. They are also confirmed by the people from within the Church. Therefore, His Holiness Nicolae Corneanu, the Archbishop of Timișoara and the Metropolitan of Banat, in the *Argument* he wrote at the beginning of Nicolae Belean's *Church Songs*, unquestionably affirms that "the manner of singing in the Banat is almost the same as that in the Serbian Orthodox Church" (Belean, 1995, p. 5).

Particularly significant is another fact, affirmed with certainty by some researchers in the case of Serbian singing, and that we can see in the case of the Romanian lectern music from Banat: the visible permeation of the folk elements into the church music (Cinci, 2009). In this respect, one of the most important researchers of Mokranjac's work, Kosta Mjojlović (1923), referring to the church chants noted by the composer, states that Mokranjac discovered, extracted and permeated the psychological harmony hidden in the soul of the people in such a way that we can only ask how people could create such music (Manojlović, 1923)?

We can see, therefore, that the popular spirit transposed in the manner of melodic and ornamental approach as well as in numerous other musical elements is visible not only in the lectern song of Banat but also in the music of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

The reasons for the presence of popular elements in Serbian ecclesiastical music may be different and they need to be investigated separately. What is important is their presence in both Serbian and Romanian music in Banat. By speculating, we can refer again to the historical circumstances and to the canonical Romanian-Serbian coexistence for almost two centuries. Knowing also a visible resemblance between the music practiced in the Serbian churches, in general, and that of the Romanian churches in Banat, we can only assume that the presence of popular elements in religious music, in both cases, has a common origin and that it is due to the element of orality that dominated the lectern chanting from both for decades or even centuries, until the emergence of personalities such as Mutibarić, Stanković, Mokranjac or, in the case of music from the Romanian western space, Terențius Bugariu, Trifon Lugojan, Atanasie Lipovan and others.

The work which represents one of the most important attempts to systematize the lectern song of Banat and which has become a model for the later attempts but also for the appropriation of the Banat song is the book *Church Songs*, published in 1980, written by Professor Dimitrie Cusma, priest Ioan Teodorovici and Professor Gheorghe Dobreanu. In the *Preface* by His Holiness Nicolae Corneanu, the Metropolitan of Banat, to whom the authors dedicated this work, the Banat church dignitary presented some of the reasons why it was necessary to publish a book of songs, which later became a true alphabet of lectern singing in Banat. His Holiness Nicolae states that, in the past, the Banat songs were transmitted from one generation to the other due to lectern singers, mostly orally, although there were books of church chants. In this respect, the Metropolitan of Banat mentions the works of Terențius Bugariu (1910), Trifon Lugojan (1929), Nicolae Firu (1933) and Atanasie Lipovan (1944 and 1946). However, the titles of the papers are not clearly stated. The book *Church songs* published in 1980, which can be recognized by its famous black covers, has a total of 383 pages and it includes an errata in which attention is drawn to certain mistakes that slipped in the pages of the work.

It is a reference work both in the research of the lectern song of Banat as well as in the church praxis. The works that followed the volume composed by Cusma, Teodorovici and Dobreanu, especially the *Church Songs* by Nicolae Belean published at the Banat Metropolitan Publishing House in Timisoara in 1995, were largely inspired by the work of the former three. The *Church Songs* by Nicolae Belean represent one of the recent attempts to systematize the church song of Banat in a form somewhat different from that of the ancestors. The volume appears as a necessity, from the author's desire to complete and perfect the appearances that preceded him (Cinci, 2009).

CONCLUSIONS

Over the course of time, several papers appeared that dealt with the relations between the two peoples, Romanian and Serbian, from a social, political (of the states in which these people lived: The Romanian Countries or Wallachia – later Romania, the Habsburg Empire – later the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes – later Yugoslavia – and even later, Serbia) and cultural point of view. The musical connections seem to have been insufficiently present in their approaches. In this context, the close connections between the Romanian Banat music and the Serbian church music, two entities with many common points, for various reasons did not have their proper place among musicological research.

The Byzantine origin and the series of historical events made the two entities, the Romanians and Serbs from the north-Danube territories, live under the same religious hierarchical roof. Their common social and mental structure are some of the factors where one might find reasons for a significant similarity between the two types of music.

This paper contributes to the research of these connections, marking common aspects at the level of sound systems and structures, sound content, rhythm, meter and ornamentation. Research of these fields of the musical language only confirmed the strong connection between the Banat lectern music and the Serbian music embodied in Mokranjac's creative expression. Common are not only the configurations at the level of sound, but also the strong emotional content and exceptional beauty.

The volumes of songs, synthesized by Mokranjac, remain a source of inspiration for the composer. However, his creations were subjected to continuous changes caused by the continuity of orality in the study and learning of those who sang them. The standardized music of the Serbian Orthodox Church, noted in the volumes of songs synthesized by Mokranjac, on one hand increasingly hides the Byzantine origins while on the other hand imposes the folkloric ones resulting from the natural permeation of the worldly into the sacred through the creative construct of the unprofessional singer. Though one might reproach the lack of rigor, even this fact can become a new source of inspiration for a living music which is continually exceeding its limits, glancing toward the aura of the imagined divinity.

By imposing a discussion on the approach of the church music in general, in the case of the music practiced in the Orthodox cult in particular, the question is raised regarding its development path from today onwards. According to the canons of the church, musical aesthetics is not the dominant landmark of this kind of music. A singer cannot be reprimanded or judged if his interpretation is not in accordance with musical standards. In the interpretation of church music, the demands are different in comparison to the secular music. The quality that the singer has, of being placed in a place of worship, brings with it from the participants in the religious ceremonies the risk of criticisms referring to the interpretation. The recital that expresses its spiritual state when "it is addressed to God" allows its inclusion in a musical category other than the one in which the musicians specialized in performing religious works are found. Both the layman and the ecclesiastical interpreter communicate an inner state. The discussions take place in the realm of demands and of defining the social functions in which the rigor and the demands act. The aim of church music cannot be placed first in the service of aesthetics and then of the theology. This reality can create difficulties in the composer's relationship with the religious function of his creation, there being a danger that his compositional opuses may depart from the practice of the church and become exclusive expressions of the stage. The question arises then, from which side the compromise may come, because, of course, the desire of both parties is to pursue a sacred purpose. The intention, then, is a good one and fits within the dogma of the church according to which man is a creation. It remains to be seen whether theology and art will find the resources needed to reconcile all the paths to be agreed upon by each one.

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