

Romanian Music of Byzantine Tradition Between 1918 and 2018

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Abstract: Written in the year of Romania’s centennial anniversary as a national state, this paper intends to offer a panorama of the monodic music of Byzantine tradition of the period, composed by the Romanian chanters. Although the entire twentieth century was characterized by the harmonization of the already established church chants, the musical works written in neumatic notation specific to the Orthodox Church continue to exist, albeit discontinuously. Based on the political changes that occurred in the Romanian society, three distinct periods of psaltic music creation can be distinguished: a. 1918-1947; b. 1948-1989; c. 1990-2018. The first period coincides with the last stage of the process of “Romanianization” of church chants. The second one corresponds to the communist period and is marked by the Communist Party’s decisions regarding the Church, namely the attempt to standardise the church chants. After 1990, psaltic music regains its position and the compositions of the last two decades enrich its repertoire with new collections of chants. Thus, we can see that in the course of a century marked by political turmoil and changes, psaltic composition went on a hiatus in the first decades of the totalitarian regime, to gradually resurge after 1980, enriched with numerous works bearing a distinct Romanian stamp.

Keywords: centennial, psaltic music, standardized chant, composition.

1. Introduction

The Romanian culture encompasses, besides the categories of traditional (folk) and art music, an important component related to the Orthodox cult: the church music of Byzantine tradition¹. In this field, the creative contribution of

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¹ In the course of this paper we will use the phrase “music of Byzantine tradition”, which has been used in Romanian musicology for several decades. Archdeacon Ph.D. Sebastian Barbu-Bucur entitled his doctoral thesis defended in 1982 *Cultura muzicală de tradiție bizantină pe teritoriul României în secolul XVIII și începutul secolului XIX și aportul original al culturii autohtone* [The Musical Culture of Byzantine Tradition in Romania Between the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries and the Original Contribution of the Local Culture] (Barbu-Bucur, 1989). In a communication presented in Iași, in 1993, Titus Moisescu stated: “If we accept the name «Byzantine music» to refer to the music written before the year 1453 only on grounds of localization and of existence of the political power of the empire, the music written after 1453 should be more appropriately and more realistically referred to as «music of Byzantine tradition»” (Moisescu, 1995, p. 6) (our translation). The music of Byzantine tradition of the 19th

the Romanian chanters and teachers manifested itself differently over the centuries: first through original contributions with hymns born from the piety and devotion of chanters, monks and local priests, and then through the translation and adaptation to the Romanian language of the chant repertoire used in the religious services.

Inspired by the commemorative event of Romania's centennial anniversary as a national state, this paper attempts to synthesize a few aspects regarding the local psaltic music composed between 1918 and 2018, as well as to highlight the important moments in the development of an original liturgical repertoire, without aspiring, however, to be an exhaustive presentation of the Romanian church chants composed during this period.

The local contributions to the Byzantine musical treasure are evidenced by various documents and musical manuscripts dating from as early as the medieval period. Thus, among the first compositions of Byzantine music written in the Romanian space² are the *Pripeale* of Filotei the Monk from the Cozia Monastery³, attested at the beginning of the fifteenth century⁴. Towards the end of the same century, the local music of Byzantine tradition was strongly promoted at the Putna Monastery, as proven by the manuscripts preserving the 186 chants signed by Evstatie, the protopsaltes of the monastery, as well as by the compositions of Theodosie Zotica and Dometian Vlahu – all being composed to Greek texts (Moisescu, 1996). A particularly important moment is the year 1713, mentioned on the last page of the Romanian Manuscript No. 61 from the Library of the Romanian Academy, signed by Filothei sin Agăi Jipei. Suggestively entitled "*Psaltichie rumanească*" [Romanian Psalm Book], the manuscript includes the first musical works composed to Romanian text by this great personality from the Brâncoveanu period (Barbu-Bucur, 1981, pp. 77-81). The local chanters' talent and good knowledge of church music manifested creatively also after the 1814 Reform of Orthodox music, both in the numerous translations and adaptations to the Romanian language of the songs from the Greek collections, and in compositions such as those of Hieromonk Macarie (1770-1836), Ghelasie Basarabeanu (?-1851), Anton Pann (?1796-1854), Dimitrie Suceveanu (1816-1898)

to the 21st centuries is also called «psaltic music» – an expression that will sometimes be used in this text –, to differentiate it from the staff-notated church music from Transylvania and Banat.

² Another name mentioned, belonging to the first Christian centuries, is that of Niceta de Remesiana, author of the *Te Deum Laudamus* hymn. (Vasile Vasile, 1997).

³ See: Gheorghe Ciobanu (1979, pp. 269-292); Gheorghe C. Ionescu (1997, pp. 9-41); David Panca (2013, pp. 472-476).

⁴ In the absence of the musical manuscripts, it is only assumed that the former chancellor of the Wallachian Voivode Mircea the Elder is also the author of the melodic line of the small troparia that were recorded in the old codices only in text form, until the beginning of the nineteenth century when the song was notated by Hieromonk Macarie. See the studies signed by Gh. Ciobanu (1979) and Gh. C. Ionescu (1997).

or Ștefanache Popescu (1824-1911), chanters who sang on the kliros, along with translations from Greek sources, some of their own compositions.

During the century that has elapsed since the Great Union, the creative spirit of the Church's servants manifested itself with even greater force. But, as Father Nicu Moldoveanu remarked, “it can be said that, quantitatively speaking, the twentieth century is somewhat poorer than the previous one ...” because the chanter composers were more concerned with the refinement of the repertoire transmitted from the previous century and with the development of a choral repertoire that exploits the existing monadic sources (Moldoveanu, 2010, p. 123) (our translation). The predominance of compositions for several voices is also a consequence chanter of the transformations that occurred in the Romanian society after the 1859 Union of the two Romanian Principalities – Wallachia and Moldavia. The reforms undertaken then by Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza also envisaged – besides prohibiting the use, in church, of other languages than Romanian (1863) – the introduction of choral music in the religious service, while by the law adopted in 1864, the state tried to impose the performance of the religious service with the help of harmonic choirs (Moisil, 2018, p. 73), as well as the introduction of the study of choral music in the curriculum of the theological seminaries and secular schools⁵. Choir singing during the Divine Liturgy became a common practice wherever the possibility of organizing such an ensemble existed. The existence of numerous church and secular choirs also stimulated the composition of religious music, and many choir conductors, priests and church singers began harmonizing church chants or composing religious choral works.

However, the monody written in the neumatic notation specific to the Orthodox Church continued to exist in the extra-Carpathian areas of Romania, where the neumatic notation is still in use today, unlike in Transylvania, where the staff was adopted as early as at the end of the nineteenth century⁶. However, in the course of a century marked by political turmoil and changes, after the period marked by the establishment of a modernized and well-polished repertoire, psaltic composition went on a hiatus in the first decades of the totalitarian regime, to gradually resurge after 1990, enriched with numerous

⁵Regarding the measures taken at the state level, Costin Moisil states, inter alia, that: “a collection of chants for the Divine Liturgy arranged for two voices by Alexandru Podoleanu was printed in 1889 with the mention «Approved by the Holy Synod and by the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction for the primary schools in the country»”. Beginning with “1899, the pupils in the non-theological secondary education were also becoming familiar with harmonic church music and sometimes sang it during the religious services. In 1908, learning three-part church chants and singing them regularly during the Sunday service became compulsory for the primary school pupils in the rural areas” (2018, pp. 73-74) (our translation).

⁶ For details regarding the use of the staff in church music notation in Romania, see our book *Muzica românească de tradiție bizantină între neume și portativ* [Romanian Music of Byzantine Tradition Between Neumes and Staff], 2nd Edition, Editura Risoprint, Cluj-Napoca, 2013.

works bearing a distinct Romanian stamp. Thus, in the context of the changes that occurred in the Romanian society, three distinct periods of creation can be identified: **a.** 1918-1947, **b.** 1948-1989 and **c.** 1990-2018. In the following pages, we will attempt to summarize some of the contributions made during these hundred years to the fund of Romanian church chants.

2. Stability and effervescence: psaltic composition in the first half of the twentieth century (1918-1947)

The beginning of the twentieth century coincides with the period during which, according to the late Byzantinologist Archdeacon Ph.D. Sebastian Barbu-Bucur, the last stage of the process of “Romanianization” of church chants took place⁷. The one who played a decisive role in the completion of this several-centuries-long process was the chanter Ion Popescu-Pasărea (1871-1943). Through his entire activity, he will remain the prominent figure of the first half of the last century, although he is not the only psaltic music composer of that period.

The books on the history of church music as well as numerous studies and lexicon articles draw attention to a few names of chanters who composed chants for various religious services during the inter war period. Without taking into account those who wrote critical editions of the chant books published during the nineteenth century, we have identified 19 authors of church chants, most of which were also published. In chronological order, the composers included in the bibliography consulted are: Hieromonk **Irinarh Vântul** (?1860-1940?), **Theodor Stupcanu** (1861-1926), **Damian S. Rânzescu** (1862-1948), **Nicolae Severeanu** (1864-1941), **Gherontie Nicolau** (1867-1948), **Amfilohie Iordănescu** (1870-1937), **Bishop Evghenie Humulescu-Piteşteanu** (1870-1931), **Ion Popescu-Pasărea** (1871-1943), **Filotei Moroşanu-Hanganu** (1876-1951), **Dimitrie-Gheorghe Cutava** (1883-1974), **Vasile Coman** 19th-20th c.), **Gheorghe Cotenescu** (1886-1965), **Marin Predescu** (1891-1979), **Elefterie Marinescu** (1892-1985), **Ion Mardale** (1895-1971), **Vasile Sava** (1896-1985), **Atanasie Dincă** (1896-1973) **Anton Uncu** (1908-1976), **Victor Ojog** (1909-1973)⁸.

⁷ Sebastian Barbu-Bucur identifies four stages in the process of “Romanianization” of church chants: “1) from their appearance – at least from Coresi – until the late part of the seventeenth century, when singing in Romanian was “oral”, without Byzantine neumes; 2) from the last decades of the seventeenth century to the Chrysantine reform; 3) to Macarie and Anton Pann; 4) from Dimitrie Suceveanu, Neagu Ionescu, Ştefanache Popescu etc., to Popescu Paşărea, who was the last to play an important role in the process of Romanianization of ecclesiastical songs” (1989, p. 95) (our translation).

⁸ We note that when placing them in the first or second half of the twentieth century we took into account the period during which their compositions were written or printed, and not their

The data relating to the biography and activity of the chanter composers of the first half of the twentieth century enable us to reveal some characteristic aspects of the activity and importance of their creation in the context of Romanian church music.

First, we consider it important to highlight the schools they attended and the mentors who guided them, knowing that the Byzantine musical tradition always had an important oral component, passed down from generation to generation. With most of them being born in the last decades of the nineteenth century, they came into contact with church music in their native place or in monastic environments. For example, Evghenie Humulescu, who became an orphan at an early age, spent his childhood with an aunt at the Vărativ Monastery, while Victor Ojog, an orphan too, entered the Neamț Monastery at the age of 15 and, a few years later, took the veil. Later, the future chanter composers were students at institutions that had made a name for themselves at the national level through generations of well-trained graduates, such as the “Central”⁹ and “Metropolitan Nifon”¹⁰ seminaries in Bucharest, the famous schools of church singers in Iași¹¹, Râmnicu Vâlcea¹², or those from the Neamț¹³ and Cernica Monasteries¹⁴ – or just at seminaries and schools of church singers from cities in their native area, which benefited from the presence of great teachers, who were also church singers. We can therefore say that most of those who ventured to compose psaltic music had a solid training in the field, in the spirit of the great tradition inherited from the nineteenth century.

The quality of this training was enhanced by the establishment of the Academy of Religious Music in 1928¹⁵, at the initiative of Patriarch Miron Cristea, concerned with the development of the theological education and implicitly of the musical training related to it. In the speech delivered before

year of birth. Detailed information on the life and activity of the composers presented above can be found in the works of Gheorghe C. Ionescu (2003) and priest Nicu Moldoveanu (2010).

⁹ At the “Central” Seminary in Bucharest, Gh. Cotenescu and Elefterie Marinescu studied with Ion Popescu-Pasărea.

¹⁰ The future bishop Evghenie Humulescu and the great chanter Ion Popescu-Pasărea studied at the Metropolitan Nifon Seminary.

¹¹ Theodor Stupcanu, Vasile Sava and Victor Ojog studied in Iași.

¹² Marin Predescu was a student at the Seminary in Râmnicu Vâlcea.

¹³ Irinarh Vântul and Nicolae Severeanu were students at the school attached to the Neamț Monastery.

¹⁴ Amfilohie Iordănescu was a student at the school attached to the Cernica Monastery.

¹⁵ See, in this respect, the doctoral thesis written by the teacher Elisabeta Milea under the supervision of Pr. Prof. Vasile Grăjdian Ph.D. and defended at the Faculty of Theology of the “Lucian Blaga” University in Sibiu, in 2015. The Academy functioned as a stand-alone institution until 1941, when it was integrated as a department of the Royal Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts in Bucharest. With the change of the political regime in Romania, the Academy of Religious Music ceased its existence in 1948.

the Holy Synod on February 4, 1925, when the Romanian Orthodox Church was raised to the rank of Patriarchate, His Beatitude Patriarch included at point 3 of the program of the Romanian Orthodox Church the establishment of this institution which he considered “**absolutely necessary for the revival of the old church music at the artistic height of time**” (author’s emphasis, Barbu-Bucur, Buzera, 1999, p. V) (our translation).

On the other hand, the establishment of the Academy of Religious Music also reflects the sustained activity of a plethora of chanters from the early years of the century, who were interested in reviving the good tradition of church chanting; all of them mobilized their forces to set up schools attached to monasteries, in which psaltic music was taught by skilled teachers (Milea, 2015). We must note here that following the radical measures taken by Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza in 1865¹⁶, to replace psaltic singing with harmonic choral singing¹⁷, a state of confusion was created between the seventh and ninth decades of the nineteenth century due to the difficulties in organizing and training the choirs and the lack of a uniform repertoire. This true crisis of the church chant lasted until the end of the century (Chircev, 2013, I, p. 18) and even a little beyond, although in 1867 the Ministry of Cults issued an order of return to the psaltic chant¹⁸.

An important contribution to the enhancement of the quality of psaltic musical education and to the reinstatement of psaltic music to the position it had held over time was made by Ion Popescu-Pasărea, who, for over four decades was a teacher at the two seminaries in Bucharest, at the Conservatory of Music and at the Academy of Religious Music. The biographical data show that many of those who transposed their own religious feelings into music had studied with Ion Popescu-Pasărea¹⁹ at one of the two theological seminaries in Bucharest (“Metropolitan Nifon” and “Central”), or at the Academy of Religious Music in Bucharest²⁰. In his turn, Ion Popescu-Pasărea benefited

¹⁶ Decree No. 101 of January 18, 1865 provided the secularization of monastic estates, as well as “[...] the introduction of systematic vocal music in our Romanian church instead of oriental music, known as psaltic music” *apud* Cosma, 1976, p. 183 (our translation).

¹⁷ The phrase “harmonic choir” is often used to differentiate singing in several voices from the chanters’ monodic choir.

¹⁸ See, in this regard, *Memoriu pentru cântările bisericesti în România* [Report on the Church Chants in Romania], read by Bishop Melchisedec of Roman in the autumn session of the Holy Synod in 1881 and published in 1882.

¹⁹ We mention, in this respect, the names of the following chanters: archdeacon Ion Mardale, priest Elefterie Marinescu, archdeacon Anton Uncu, Marin Predescu, priest Gh. Cotenescu, archimandrite Victor Ojog.

²⁰ Ion Popescu-Pasărea was a teacher at the church music department of the “Nifon” (1893-1936) and “Central” (1899-1936) Seminaries, at the chair of comparative theory-solfege of the Academy of Religious Music (1928-1930 and 1932-1941) and at the Bucharest Conservatory of Music (1905-1912). See Ionescu, 2003, p. 301 and Cosma, V., 2005, pp. 82-88.

from the guidance of a famous chanter of the second half of the previous century, who had been a student of Ștefanache Popescu (at the “Metropolitan Nifon” Seminary), who is said to have learned the art of church singing from Anton Pann (1790?-1854)²¹. It is therefore easy to understand that the reputation and quality of the musical training provided by the great chanters attracted to Bucharest young people eager to specialize in this field, such as Victor Ojog, a graduate of the school of church singers in Iași, who came to Bucharest to attend the classes of the Academy of Religious Music between 1932 and 1935, distinguishing himself as one of the best students. Returned to Moldova, V. Ojog taught music at the School of Church Singers and at the Monastic Theological Seminary attached to the Neamț Monastery (1949-1959)²², thus contributing to the consolidation of the prestige of the theological school of Neamț.

By studying the activity carried out in the first half of the twentieth century, we find that one of the major concerns of the chanter composers was the unaltered preservation and transmission of tradition, an intention sometimes confessed in the prefaces to the books they wrote. For example, Theodor Stupcanu wrote numerous school books, including an *Anastasimatarion*, a collection that for centuries has been the “alphabet” for the learning of church singing because it contains songs in the eight ecclesiastical tones. In the preface to his book, the author points out that the melodic model he used is that of the *Anastasimatarion* published in 1848²³ by Patriarch Dimitrie Suceveanu, protopsaltes of the Iași Metropolitan Church, but that he also took into account church practice – i.e. tradition –, to which he also added several personal works (1926, p. 7). Although the collection compiled by Th. Stupcanu was published only in 1926, father Florin Bucescu states that given that his songs are “very well written, they were intensely circulated in the ecclesiastical schools in Moldova and in other parts of Romania for three decades (1910-1940)” (2018, p. 97) (our translation), which reveals the importance of Th. Stupcanu in the training of many generations of seminarians, in the spirit of the long Byzantine tradition existing in Moldova (Bucescu, 2018, p. 143).

Ion Popescu-Pasărea was also a faithful guardian of the psaltic tradition; relying on the principles laid down by Macarie and Anton Pann, as well as on

²¹ Found in various bibliographic sources, this assertion is questioned by Gh. C. Ionescu: “There are no reliable data confirming whether he was trained while helping Anton Pann on the kliros as his apprentice, or at the school where Anton Pann was teaching. The assertion that Ștefanache was Anton Pann’s student for three years at the *Central Seminary* in Bucharest (approx. between 1842 and 1845) is devoid of documentary evidence” (2003, p. 165) (our translation).

²² Among his students was Archdeacon Sebastian Barbu-Bucur, Ph.D., renowned byzantinologist and composer of psaltic music of the second half of the twentieth century.

²³ This is a revised and enlarged edition of the book written by Hieromonk Macarie in 1823.

the creative contribution of Dimitrie Suceveanu, he continued the process of Romanianization of church chants in the first half of the 20th century. As musicologist Vasile Vasile notes, the chants published by him “can be considered true effigies of the music written up to Popescu-Pasărea, in the most **traditional style** (our emphasis). His respect for this tradition is seen in the fact that his collection includes the most representative authors” (Vasile, 1997, II, pp. 193-194) (our translation).

From this perspective of preserving the traditional church chant, the work of protosingel Victor Ojog is highly appreciated. The *Anastasimatarion* written by him and published in 1943 is appreciated by Archdeacon Prof. Ph.D. Sebastian Barbu-Bucur, and by Priest Assoc. Prof. Ph.D. Alexie Buzera (the supervisors of the 1999 edition) as “the **work that cumulates and crystallizes the experience of two centuries of Romanian psaltic chant**” (author’s emphasis) (Ojog, 1999, pp. V-VI) (our translation). At the same time, Priest Prof. Ph.D. Nicu Moldoveanu believes that “all the chants are very well outlined in the traditional spirit. Many of them were at the basis of the standardized chants of the second half of the twentieth century” (Moldoveanu, 2010, p. 185) (our translation).

However, in addition to the concern for keeping tradition unaltered, this period was also marked by a growing interest in Western music, which was included in the complex training of some of the chanters who attended the Conservatories of Bucharest²⁴ or Iași²⁵. By attending the classes of music theory, harmony, choral conducting and music history, chanters broadened their musical knowledge, began harmonizing melodic lines taken from chant books and formed choirs at the churches where they were singing. They were appreciated in the cities where they carried out their activity both as chanters and as choir conductors and/or as animators of the local artistic life.

On the other hand, the knowledge of both musical notations facilitated their access to the staff-notated repertoire and to choral music, which was more and more appreciated by churchgoers in the first half of the twentieth century. The interest in the religious choral music led to unusual situations: Archdeacon Ioan Mardare, a servant of the Cathedral and teacher at the Ramnicu Valcea seminary, transposed into psaltic notation *Liturghia Sf. Ioan Chrisostom în Fa major* [the Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom in F Major], composed by Ion Vidu (1863-1931), so it could also be sung by those who did not know the

²⁴ The following were graduates of the Bucharest Conservatory: Nicolae Severeanu (1885-1890), Ion Popescu-Pasărea (1888-1893), Filotei Moroșanu (1900-1903), Dimitrie-Gheorghe Cutava (1903-1908), Gheorghe Cotenescu (1907-1912).

²⁵ Theodor Stupcanu graduated from the Music Conservatory of Iași (Ionescu, 2003, p. 268), and Vasile Sava temporarily attended the courses of the same institution, without graduating. Between 1926 and 1927 he attended the Psaltic music class held by Theodor Stupcanu at the Iași Conservatory (Ionescu, 2003, p. 387).

Guidonian notation, but had been charmed by the sound of the tonal-functional chords. The work was published in 1930, on the occasion of the composer's attendance, as a guest, of the summer courses for church singers, held at the Cozia Monastery (Moldoveanu, 2010, p. 130).

Another aspect that contributed to the stimulation of the chanters' creative skills was their work on the kliros. This provided them with a thorough knowledge of the existing repertoire, of the entire body of melodic formula, distilled over time and adapted to the specific character of the Romanian language. The richness of melodies of Byzantine essence was inspiring and was used to provide a better correlation of the literary and musical texts. A good example in this respect is represented by the great chanter Ion Popescu-Pasărea, who sang on the kliros for three decades, in various Bucharest churches, and who organized a mixed choir at the St. Ilie Kalinderu Church, which he conducted and in which he also served as chanter.

Returning to the prerequisites required for the valorisation of the native inclination for music composition – that is, a thorough theoretical training, learning the repertoire under exceptional guidance and its practice – we find that, although most of these composers were not prolific, some of them composed monodies that have resisted the test of time. An illustrative example is that of Bishop Evghenie Humulescu. Characterized as “one of the most devoted servants of the Romanian Church” (Moldoveanu, 2010, p. 129) and as “an exceptional singer of church chants” (Ionescu, 2003, p. 299) (our translation), he distinguished himself in the field of psaltic composition only through a few hymns, which, however, have remained in the chanters' repertoire to this day. The best-known hymn is *Iubi-Te-Voi, Doamne* [I Will Love Thee, O Lord], in tone 5, harmonized for mixed choir by Nicolae Lungu and for male choir by father Nicu Moldoveanu. Other famous ones are *Troparul Sf. Spiridon* [Troparion of St. Spyridon], tone 1, *Sfinte Dumnezeule* [Holy God], tones 5, 1 and 2, at the Hierarchical Liturgy, *Câți în Hristos* [As Many of You as Have Been Baptized into Christ], tone 1, *Am văzut lumina cea adevărată* [We Have Seen the True Light], *Veniți de luați lumină* [Come and Take the Light], *Troparul Sf. Grigore Teologul* [Troparion of St. Gregory the Theologian] (Ionescu, 2003, p. 300).

A similar case is that of hierodeacon Filotei Moroșanu-Hanganu. While several of his psaltic compositions have been included in the current repertoire of the churches²⁶, some of them being harmonized, his name is known

²⁶ Here are some of them: *Prochimenele Postului Mare* [The Prokeimena of Great Lent], *Fericit bărbatul* [Happy the Man], tone 8, *Robii Domnului* [O You Servants of the Lord], tones 3 and 5, *Catavasii la Nașterea Domnului* [Katavasias of the Nativity of the Lord], tone 1, *Doxologie* [Doxology], tone 1, *Svetilna Întâmpinării* [Exapostilarion of the Presentation], tone 3, *Învierea Ta Hristoase* [Thy Resurrection, O Christ], tone 8, *svetilna la Adormirea Maicii Domnului* [Exapostilarion of the Dormition of the Mother of God], tone 3, *Împărate ceresc* [O

especially for the Vespers hymn *Lumină lină* [Gracious Light] in tone 8 (with variants in tones 2 and 5), which was harmonized by Ion Croitoru, Ioan D. Chirescu and Nicolae Lungu for mixed choir, by Nicu Moldoveanu for male choir and by Elisabeta Moldoveanu for equal voice choir.

On the other hand, although some of the chants had a limited circulation, they prove the high level of training offered by the schools of church singers, by the theological seminaries and by the Bucharest Academy of Religious Music. That is why I consider that the most important thing is the fact that these chanters maintained the religious services at a high level and formed, in turn, generations of church singers who preserved and transmitted the tradition of church chanting, despite the harsh conditions imposed on the servants of the Church after the change of the political regime in the mid-twentieth century²⁷.

3. A new crisis of psaltic music creation during the communist regime (1948-1989)

“Psaltic music has gone through several crises [...] from time to time, but none has equalled the crisis of the last 50 years” (our translation), said Archdeacon Ph.D. Sebastian Barbu-Bucur and Priest Alexie Buzera on the occasion of the republication of Victor Ojog's *Anastasimatarion*, referring to the situation of church music during the second half of the twentieth century (1999, p. V). This period was marked by the events that took place in the Romanian society after the Second World War, when Romania fell within the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union. On December 30, 1947, His Majesty King Michael I of Romania was forced to abdicate, threatened and blackmailed by the communists who on the same day established the communist dictatorship – the totalitarian state, dependent on the Soviet Union and called the Romanian People's Republic. The model coming from the East started to be implemented across the entire society, which entered a period of intense transformations. In order to understand the direction taken by psaltic composition during this period, we need to refer to some of the decisions taken by the heads of the atheist state, which affected everything that was related to the spiritual life of the Romanian people.

Profound transformations radically changed the education system, which adopted the Soviet model, with ideology and indoctrination becoming the norm. One of the measures of this period that influenced the evolution of church music was the abolition of the Religious Music department of the Royal

Heavenly King], tone 8, *Sfinte Dumnezeule* [Holy God], tone 8, *De tine se bucură* [All of Creation Rejoices in You], tone 5, *Hristos a înviat* [Christ Is Risen], tone 2 (Ionescu, 2003, p. 320 and Moldoveanu, 2010, pp. 178-179).

²⁷ The Romanian People's Republic was proclaimed on December 30, 1947, after the forced abdication of King Michael I of Romania.

Academy of Music and Dramatic Art in Bucharest followed by Decree No. 177 of 1948, regarding the activity of religious denominations. As a result, for over four decades, the music of Byzantine tradition ceased to be studied in the higher education system, other than in the Theological Institutes in Bucharest and Sibiu, while the rest of the theological faculties were abolished. It was not until 1990 that, at the insistence of Archdeacon Ph.D. Sebastian Barbu-Bucur and following the steps taken by the leadership of the “Ciprian Porumbescu” Conservatory of Music (the current National University of Music), the department was re-established. This Decree also affected pre-university education, with all the schools of church singers being abolished²⁸ along with many theological seminaries of various denominations, including 40 schools of church singers and Orthodox theological seminaries²⁹.

Under these circumstances, many of the music loving graduates of the last five to six decades of the last century found refuge in secular education and studied in conservatories, whenever that was possible. However, many of those who had entered monastic life or had studied theology suffered under the political regime. Father Florin Bucescu, a graduate of the Seminary attached to the Neamț Monastery (1953) and of the Theological Institute of Bucharest (1957), while enrolled in doctoral studies at the same institution, had to interrupt them in 1960 and it was not until 1962 that he was allowed to enrol at the “George Enescu” Conservatory of Music in Iași. During the following years, he focused his attention on ethnomusicology, conducting numerous field collections and writing studies. His passion for the music of Byzantine tradition could manifest itself only after the Revolution of 1989, and his theoretical and practical knowledge of psaltic music and his pedagogical gift contributed to the development of research and the formation of generations of highly trained young people.

In 1958, a decade after the decree that had almost abolished the theological education of all levels, the Romanian Workers' Party³⁰ gave another blow to the Orthodox Church and theological education, through Decree 410, which brought a series of amendments to Decree No. 177/1948, intensifying the persecution of the “«black army of monks and nuns» who had to be suppressed by all means” (Enache, 2009) (our translation), and who had already been affected by other measures taken against them in 1955³¹.

²⁸ Until 1948, there had been schools in all the county capital cities as well as in other places, or attached to certain monasteries.

²⁹ After 1948, only six theological seminaries survived in the cities of Bucharest, Buzău, Craiova, Neamț, Cluj and Caransebeș.

³⁰ The name under which the Communist Party functioned between 1954 and 1964.

³¹ We quote from the same article published by George Enache in the newspaper “Lumina”: “At the end of 1958, the Department of Cults drew up a new regulation of monasteries which stipulated, inter alia, the exclusion from entering the monastic life of the following categories:

Although it was adopted only on October 28, 1959, the provisions of the Decree were applied retroactively and, between December 1958 and March 1959, all those who did not meet the requirements of monastic life were expelled from the monasteries³².

More than 100 monasteries were closed, and monks and nuns of less than 40 years of age were forced to devote their lives to “building socialism”, working in factories and plants, undergoing a process of re-education, meant to help them integrate into the new society (Mătrescu, 2008). One of the chanter composers who suffered from the effects of this decree was Archdeacon Ph.D. Sebastian Barbu-Bucur. In 1950 he entered monasticism and in 1957 he became a teacher of music and choir conductor at the Theological Seminary from the Neamț Monastery (after graduating from the Theological Institute in Bucharest), but he soon had to leave the monastery³³. He was supposed to work in a factory, but thanks to his stubbornness – as he confessed in an interview³⁴ – he was allowed to enrol at the Music Conservatory in Bucharest, to later become a music teacher at various schools in the capital city until 1990, when he became a lecturer at the Department of Byzantine Music Palaeography of the Conservatory. In the following decades, Father Professor Sebastian Barbu-Bucur made an essential contribution to the research of Byzantine music in the

minors, persons who have less than seven elementary grades, persons who have committed infringements of the monastic rules, persons convicted for common law offences, «counter-revolutionary elements», as well as those known for their «hostile manifestations» against the communist regime. On the occasion of the meeting of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church of December 15, 1958, Dumitru Dogaru, the secretary general of the Department of Cults, communicated the provisions of the new regulation, demanding that they be embraced and implemented.” (our translation)

³² Article 71 provided that “men of 55 and women of 50 years of age may be admitted to monasticism «if they waive their salary or pension rights and unless they are married or have obligations under the Family Code». This decree was a method for the Communist state to sidestep the decision of the Synod, openly assuming the paternity over the suppression of Romanian monasticism” (Enache, 2009) (our translation).

³³ In the same year, Victor Ojog, his former music teacher from the Neamț seminary, had to leave school, being also expelled from monastic life because of his democratic views, which were against the ideology imposed by the communist regime (Ionescu, 2003, p. 425).

³⁴ In a 2010 interview we conducted with Archdeacon Ph.D. Sebastian Barbu-Bucur, he confessed: “I became a music teacher at the best theological Seminary in the country, at the Neamț Monastery, a seminary directly patronized by Patriarch Justinian himself. The peace and satisfaction of the accomplishment did not last long. The autumn of 1959 was going to be a dramatic one. The flower of monasticism was crushed by the provisions of Decree 410, whereby 7500 monks and nuns were expelled and had to go each their own way. And so I was left useless, but I stubbornly refused to work as a factory worker, as the decree required, and knocked at the gates of the Conservatory. I was kicked out of there too, for one year, because of three crosses that I had given to my colleagues.” (Chircev, 2010, pp. 77-84 and Chircev, 2013, pp. 51-60) (our translation).

Romanian space and enriched the church music repertoire with numerous psaltic compositions.

The successive measures taken by the leadership of the Communist Party after the change of the political regime had already affected the training in the field of church music. The transmission of church chanting and its perpetuation became more and more difficult, and those who were familiar with it became fewer and fewer. The tradition of singing on the kliros was affected by the dissolution of many institutions (as mentioned above), as well as by the process of purification undertaken by the communist regime immediately after the proclamation of the Republic, in 1947. The situation thus created determined the Holy Synod to decide, in the June 1952 session, the standardization and obligatory introduction of psaltic chants all over the country (“*Lucrările...*”, 1952, pp. 616-617). A part of the required repertoire had already been published one year before (Lungu, Uncu, 1951), along with a theoretical work (Lungu, Costea, Croitoru, 1951), both in simultaneous notation, i.e. with neumes and staves. Criticized in recent years, this true reformation of psaltic music in Romania had, according to His Beatitude Patriarch Justinian Marina (1901-1977), the role of ensuring the active participation of parishioners in church services and of eliminating the regional differences in church singing³⁵.

Because of the lack of qualified church personnel and of the few seminaries that survived the successive decrees and oppressive measures, church music entered a period of crisis, which gradually diminished only after 1990. By the middle of the century, however, adapting themselves to the new orientation, many of the chanters who were familiar with both notations began writing chants or entire collections in both notations. Others, however, relying on the training gained in the music conservatories, dedicated themselves to religious choral music, expanding the existing repertoire with valuable works.

According to our research, between 1948 and 2018, a number of eleven musicians were preoccupied with the composition of psaltic music – with neumes or double notation. Below they are mentioned in chronological order, but we have no certainty that the list is complete because certain attempts may have remained in manuscript form or been destroyed: **Grigore Costea** (1882-1963), **Ion Croitoru** (1884-1972), **Chiril Arvinte** (1897-1968), **Chiril Popescu** (1897-1992), **Nicolae Lungu** (1900-1993), **Radu Antofie** (1904-1987), **Ioan Gh. Popescu** (1925-1992), **Sebastian Barbu-Bucur**

³⁵ [...] it is time to put an end to regionalist church music and it is absolutely necessary that in Transylvania, Banat and in all parts of the country we abide by the traditional psaltic music, so that at one point, by standardizing the church chants, a believer from Dobrogea can always take active part in the responses to the Divine Liturgy in a church from Maramureș, or a believer from Banat can feel the same in this respect, in a church from Moldova.” (*Lucrările Sfântului Sinod...*, 1951, p. 617) (our translation).

(1930-2015), **Constantin Drăgușin** (1931-2014), **Alexie Buzera** (1934-2011), **Nicu Moldoveanu** (b. 1940).

The foremost advocate of the standardized chant written in double notation was **Nicolae Lungu**, who collaborated with priest **Grigore Costea** and professor **Ion Croitoru** in the writing of the music theory book entitled *Gramatica muzicii psaltice. Studiu comparat cu notația liniară* [The Grammar of Psaltic Music. Comparative Study with the Linear Notation] (1951). Two years later, they also co-wrote *Anastasimatarul uniformizat* [The Standardized Anastasimatarion] including the Vesper chants; the one for the Matins service was written by Nicolae Lungu together with the priests Ene Braniște and Grigore Costea (1951). Previously, Nicolae Lungu had also collaborated with Anton Uncu in writing the chants of the Divine Liturgy (1951). Professor Nicolae Lungu transcribed a large number of church chants that written in double notation. Although they are not original works, the production of these volumes involved the creative work of selecting the musical material and adjusting and simplifying the chants. Nicolae Lungu is also remembered in church music history for the numerous harmonizations that he produced.

The same manner of notating church music was used by a disciple of Professor Nicolae Lungu, who was a priest (1929-1976) and conductor of the Bishopric Choir of Buzău: **Radu Antofie**. Trained in the spirit of the psaltic tradition at the “Chesarie the Bishop” Seminary in Buzău (1924) and a graduate of the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest (1929), he produced several collections of church chants in double notation, which, however, have all remained in manuscript form: *Noul Anastasimatar* [The New Anastasimatarion], *Cinci Slavoslovii* [Five Great Doxologies], *Slujba învierii* [Service of the Resurrection], *Cântări din Penticostar* [Pentecostarion Chants]. He also composed two liturgies for mixed choir and various other liturgical hymns, some of which were published in the “Glasul Bisericii” journal (Ionescu, 2003, pp. 403-404).

A similar case is that of father **Constantin Drăgușin** (1931-2014), who, in the troubled years before and after the middle of the twentieth century, was a seminary pupil and then a student at the seminaries in Râmnicu Vâlcea and Curtea de Argeș and at the Theological Institute in Sibiu and Bucharest, where he gained knowledge and experience from several teachers, including Gheorghe Șoima and Nicolae Lungu. He followed the example of his teacher from Bucharest (Nicolae Lungu) and wrote psaltic music in double notation: *Tropar la Duminica Sfinților români* [Troparion of the Sunday of the Romanian Saints], tone 3, *Tropar pentru Sfântul Teodosie* [Troparion of Saint Theodosius], tone 1 and *Prea Curată Maică pururi Fecioară* [Most Pure Mother, Ever Virgin Mary], tone 3 (on verses by Vasile Militaru), preserved in

manuscript form for a long time³⁶, unlike his choral works which were printed already in 1965, in choral journals and anthologies³⁷. His multifaceted activity contributed to the knowledge and preservation of the music of Byzantine tradition. Gh. Ionescu characterized him in the following terms: “A distinguished, persistent and enterprising musician [...] in his capacity as teacher at the Theological Seminary and Institute, as conductor and composer and as editor and author of several psaltic music books, he contributed his skill and talent to promoting the church chant of Byzantine tradition in the contemporary cultural and religious landscape” (Ionescu, 2003, p. 483) (our translation).

Although there are opinions according to which for the period between 1950 and 1990, the standardization of psaltic music “was welcomed and in part reached its purpose, especially in the case of the chants of the Divine Liturgy in which many believers participate actively...” (Barbu-Bucur, Buzera, 1999, p. V) (our translation) the measure failed to stimulate psaltic composition. In the preface to the theoretical book published in 1951, the authors justified the act of standardization by stating that “our effort does not aim to... change or replace psaltic music, as, perhaps, it is believed by those who do not know the problem, but, on the contrary, to save and secure it, like an asset that is an integral part of our spiritual heritage. Anyone is free to use any of the two notations, which in this grammar are overlapped. What really counts is that the unparalleled beauty and charm of the psaltic chants be not distorted by misinterpretation and faulty performance, as is happening today at every step, because of the existing complicated and confusing psaltic grammars” (Lungu, Costea, Croitoru, pp. 8-9) (our translation).

Even if the authors of the *Grammar...* (quoted above) expressed their conviction that the work would prevent the churches from “inappropriately peppering the choral repertoire heard today in our churches, and that we will by all means be spared from the disappearance of the psaltic chant and its replacement with another type of song, as has happened in other Orthodox Churches” (Lungu, Costea, Croitoru, 1951, p. 9) (our translation), we notice a stagnation, a regression of psaltic composition and an orientation especially towards choral composition. Affected by the drastic measures directed against the monastic order, priests and believers, too few of those who had the necessary training also had the conditions to devote themselves to music composition, all the more so as denunciation was raised to the rank of civic duty.

³⁶ From among his compositions, *Ectenia mare* [The Great Ectenia], tone 1, p. 91, along with Antiphon I and Antiphon II, both in tone 1, were published in the book *Cântările Sfintei Liturghii și alte cântări bisericesti* [The Chants of the Divine Liturgy and Other Church Chants], 1992, on pages 91, 92 and 93-95.

³⁷ See their list in Ionescu, 2003, pp. 483-484.

However, psaltic composition written only in neumatic notation was not entirely absent during the communist period. Some of the works were preserved in manuscript form, with no indication of when they were written. For example, **Chiril Popescu** (1897-1992), who learned the psaltic art from Ioan Zmeu and Ion Popescu-Pasărea, composed psaltic music, but his works have remained in manuscript form: *Cântări la Pavecernița Mare* [Chants of the Great Compline], tone 8; *Ceea ce ești mai cinstită* [Thou the More Honourable], tones 5, 6, 7; *Lumină lină* [Gracious Light], in eight tones; *Aliluia ce se cântă în Postul Mare* [Hallelujah Chanted during Great lent], in eight tones; *Tropare și Condace* [Troparia and Kontakia] for the Saints whose relics were or are preserved in Curtea de Argeș (St. Nifon, St. Filofteia, Serghie, Vach and Tatiana) a.o. (Ionescu, 2003, p. 391). Following the already established tradition, he contributed to the enrichment of the repertoire in double notation with *Cântările Penticostarului uniformizate, lucrare întregită cu slujba Înălțării Domnului și Pogorării Duhului Sfânt* [The Standardized Pentecostarion Chants, a Work Completed with the Liturgical Service of the Ascension of the Lord and the Descent of the Holy Spirit]³⁸ and with a few separate chants, some of which were published after 1990³⁹. Father Nicu Moldoveanu appreciated that “his style seems to be a synthesis of his predecessors Anton Pann, Macarie, Varlaam and Schimonahul Nectarie, but especially of the chants composed by I. Zmeu, his mentor” (2010, p. 132) (our translation).

We also know the publishing years of other works that were published in various journals, especially in “Biserica Ortodoxă Română” and “Glasul Bisericii”. It is the case of another composer, trained at the schools in Râmnicu Vâlcea, Bucharest and Sibiu, who benefited from the guidance of professor Nicolae Lungu: **Ioan Gh. Popescu** (1925-1992). He composed religious choral music as well as several psaltic works published in the official journal of the Romanian Patriarchy: *Luminânda la Adormirea Maicii Domnului* [Exapostilarion of the Dormition of the Mother of God], tone 3; *Răspunsurile mari* [The Great Responses], tone 3, in both notations, *Axion duminical* [Sunday Axion], tone 3⁴⁰. Also, in 1982, priest **Alexie Buzera**, professor at the Theological Seminary in Mofleni-Craiova (1956-1960), at the “St. Gregory the Theologian” Seminary in Craiova (1981-1994) and later at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in the same city (1992-2004), composed and published

³⁸ Published at Editura Institutului Biblic in Bucharest, in 1980.

³⁹ *Doxologie* [Doxology], tone 5, in “Glasul Bisericii”, București, Year XLVI (1986), No. 5 (Sept.-Oct.), in Appendix, p. I-XII; *Veniți să fericiim pe Iosif* [Come, Let Us Praise Joseph and Bless Him], tone 5 (p. 267-271) and *De vreme ce eu păcătosul* [Since I, the Sinner], tone 5, in *Cântările Sfintei Liturghii* [The Chants of the Divine Liturgy]..., 1992.

⁴⁰ All these works were published in the journal “Biserica Ortodoxă Română”, București, Year LXXXVIII (1970), Nos. 7-8 (July-August), pp. 837-856, *apud* Ionescu, 2003, p. 466.

Slujba Sf. Grigore Cuvântătorul de Dumnezeu. Patronul Seminarului Teologic din Craiova [The Service of St. Gregory the Theologian. Patron of the Theological Seminary in Craiova]⁴¹. Five years later, he published another composition, *Catavasii la Duminica Fiului Risipitor* [Katavasia of the Sunday of the Prodigal Son]⁴². Strongly dedicated to teaching and research, he harmonized many folk songs, but resumed psaltic composition after 1990.

One of the most prolific composers was Archdeacon Ph.D. Sebastian Barbu-Bucur, although only two of his works were published during the communist era: a *Doxology* and a *Polychronion* dedicated to His Beatitude Patriarch Teoctist. We will therefore dwell more on his works in the next section of this paper.

Although there may have been other musicians trained in theological seminaries during the inter war period or at the middle of the twentieth century who also composed psaltic music, this was not made public until after the changes brought by the 1989 Revolution, which is why we will take into consideration the year of publication.

4. Psaltic composition embarking on a new path (1990-2018)

In the nearly three decades that have passed since the events of December 1989, the music of Byzantine tradition has embarked on its natural path thanks to the re-establishment of the theological schools of all levels, to the efforts meant to provide high quality musical training and to the endeavours of the priests and of the entire clergy.

One of the first important achievements besides the establishment of the religious music departments within the three conservatories existing in Romania in 1990 (Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca and Iași) was the publication of the book entitled *Cântări la Sfânta Liturghie și alte cântări bisericești* [Chants of the Divine Liturgy and Other Sacred Chants]. As one can understand from the “Foreword” signed by His Beatitude Patriarch Teoctist (1915-2007), this was a project initiated before 1990⁴³, as confirmed by the fact that the songs were written in double notation, just as they had been since as early as 1951. As a matter of fact, in the preface it is also stated that “this is in fact an action that continues the work initiated by the great Patriarch Justinian ... at the beginning

⁴¹ Published in “Mitropolia Olteniei”, Craiova, Year XXXIV (1982), Nos. 1-3 (January-March), Appendix, pp. 1-12.

⁴² Published in “Mitropolia Olteniei”, Craiova, Year XXXIX (1987), No. 2 (March-April), pp. 139-142.

⁴³ At the beginning of the “Foreword”, His Beatitude Patriarch wrote: “We live moments of great joy, now when after a thorough and careful preparation of nearly four years, one of the most expected and comprehensive collections of traditional and contemporary church chants ... used in the Romanian Orthodox Church finally sees the light of day” (*Cântările Sfintei Liturghii...*, 1992, p. 3) (our translation).

of the sixth decade, an action that has proven to be of ever-greater importance to the Romanian spirituality, especially as the atheist hostility in which church life was carried out deprived the Orthodox church of both books and chanters” (*Cântările Sfintei Liturghii*, 1992, p. 3) (our translation).

This anthology includes several compositions by those who continued to write psaltic music in the late part of the last century: Archdeacon Ph.D. Sebastian Barbu-Bucur⁴⁴, Pr. Prof. Ph.D. Nicu Moldoveanu⁴⁵, Marin Velea⁴⁶. Other notable names of musicians of this period are: **Florin Bucescu** (b. 1936), **Marin Velea** (b. 1937), **Victor Frangulea** (b. 1939), **Ion Gavrilă** (b. 1955).

The following years witnessed the re-publication of many collections of church chants, but the practice of double notation was gradually abandoned, to be replaced by neumatic notation, one argument being that “as long as the chants are in double notation (psaltic and linear), the pupils and students **will not learn psaltic music** (author’s emphasis). They come to the theological schools with a minimal knowledge of linear music [...] which they use empirically in order to follow only the meaning of the melodic-rhythmic diagram, which diverts them from reading the psaltic neumes, which are the only ones that can render the authentic song” (Barbu-Bucur, Buzera, 1999, p. VI) (our translation).

During the period herein under consideration, the development of psaltic composition was owed particularly to Archdeacon Ph.D. **Sebastian Barbu-Bucur**. In an interview he gave us in 2010, the distinguished Byzantinologist confessed that he had always been tempted to compose psaltic music⁴⁷, but that his

⁴⁴ The following compositions of Father Sebastian Barbu-Bucur are included: *Laudă suflete al meu* [Praise the Lord, O My Soul] (Ps. 145) tone 8 (p. 91); *Iubi-Te-voi, Doamne* [I Will Love Thee O Lord], tone 5 (p. 122), *Iubi-Te-voi, Doamne* [I Will Love Thee O Lord], tone 7 (p. 123), *Am văzut lumina* [I Saw the Light], tone 5 (p. 208), *Să se umple gurile noastre* [Let Our Mouths Be Filled], tone 5 (pp. 209-210).

⁴⁵ The following compositions of father Nicu Moldoveanu are included: *De tine se bucură* [All of Creation Rejoices in You], tone 5 (pp. 55-56), *Iubi-Te voi, Doamne* [I Will Love Thee O Lord], tone 8 (p. 124) and one by Ioan Zmeu, revised by father N. Moldoveanu – *Bine voi cuvânta pre Domnul* [I Shall Praise the Lord], tone 2 (p. 210).

⁴⁶ *Bine este cuvântat* [Blessed is He], tone 3 (p. 205).

⁴⁷ “In 1982, while I was at sea travelling to Mount Athos, as the monasteries began to appear in the distance, the first one being the Rusicon in all its splendour, I started humming in my mind a glorification in tone 8, which is still one of the most successful of the 11 I have written. When I arrived at Prodromos and prayed to the miracle maker icon of the Mother of God Prodromite, I hummed in my mind the same doxology, which I then wrote in psaltic neumes. Thus began the series of psaltic compositions for *Vespers, Matins, Liturgy and other chants* at the instigation of the Theotokos and of the famous father confessor Petronius, Abbot of the Prodromu Skete, and out of the need to provide the students of the Department of Religious Music with a repertoire as rich and diverse as possible...” (Chircev, 2010) (our translation). See, also, *Har și instruire îndelungată sau despre compunerea muzicii psaltice, interviu cu arhid. dr. Sebastian*

attempts achieved consistency especially during the ninth decade of the last century. Given that the general context was not favourable to the display of such preoccupations, his compositions were published especially after 1990. That is the year of publication of *Rugăciune* [Prayer], on verses by Vasile Militaru – with the monodic variant notated with neumes above a two-part choral variant, notated on staff – (1990a, p. 6), *Prea Bune Doamne, ascult-a noastră rugă* [Good Lord, Hear Our Prayer] (1600 years after the death of St. Gregory the Theologian) (1990b, p. 471) and *Necuprinsă-ți este slava și nemărginită mila* [Your Glory is Immeasurable and Your Mercy Is Infinite] (1990c, p. 472). They were followed by 33 religious services for the Romanian saints canonized by the Romanian Orthodox Church in 1992, several works published in the two volumes of *Cântări psaltice pentru cursul de muzică religioasă* [Psaltic Chants for the Religious Music Course], the volume *Cântări la Vecernie, Utrenie și Sfânta Liturghie* [Chants for Vespers, Matins and the Divine Liturgy], dedicated to his Beatitude Patriarch Daniel; another volume comprising *Slujba Vecerniei și Utreniei Sfintei Mucenițe Filofteia, Sfântului Iachint de Vicina, Mitropolitul Țării Românești, Sfântului Neagoe Basarab și a Sfântului Cuvios Ioanichie cel nou de la Muscel* [Vespers and Matins Service for the Holy Martyr Filofteia, Saint Hyacinth of Vicina, Metropolitan of Wallachia, Saint Neagoe Basarab and Saint Pious Ioanichie the New of Muscel] was dedicated to His Eminence Calinic, Archbishop of Argeș and Muscel. 2014 was the year when the book with the chants of the Divine Liturgy was re-published, comprising, among others, 58 original Sunday axions in all the eight church tones.

The compositional output of father Sebastian Barbu Bucur includes hundreds of songs, written with skill and grace. We have analysed some of these works on various occasions⁴⁸ and we have found that the distinguished musician met all the conditions required for a chanter to become a composer: a

Barbu-Bucur [Natural Talent and Long Training or on Psaltic Music Composition, Interview with Archdeacon Sebastian Barbu-Bucur] (Chircev, 2015, pp. 77-85).

⁴⁸ The paper *Ipostaze ale stilului neo-bizantin. Slujba Sf. Ioan cel Nou de la Neamț de arhid. dr. Sebastian Barbu-Bucur* [Illustrations of the Neo-Byzantine Style. The Service of St. John the New from Neamț by Archdeacon Ph.D. Sebastian Barbu-Bucur] was presented at the symposium *Collegium Musicologorum Colloquium*, at the “Gheorghe Dima” Academy of Music Cluj-Napoca, 2005 and was subsequently published in the volume *Amprente românești în muzica de tradiție bizantină* [Romanian Elements in the Music of Byzantine Tradition] (2013, pp. 211-224). It was also published in English, in Chișinău (Chircev, 2010b). *Tradiție și modernitate în creația psaltică actuală. Cântările ale Vecerniei de arhid. dr. Sebastian Barbu-Bucur* [Tradition and Modernity in Current Psaltic Music. Vespers Hymns by Archdeacon Ph.D. Sebastian Barbu-Bucur] was presented at the Symposium *Muzica central-europeană în contemporaneitate: încotro?* [Central-European Music in Contemporaneity: Where to?], held within the framework of the 9th edition of the “Cluj Modern” Festival, on April 14, 2011 and published in the bilingual journal “Musicology Papers”, vol. XXVI No. 2 (Chircev, 2012).

sound musical training, theological thinking and spiritual experience (Chircev, 2013, p. 225). Some time ago, we remarked that “with his compositions, Archdeacon Ph.D. Sebastian Barbu-Bucur marks a new stage in the long process of adaptation of the church chant of Byzantine tradition to the Romanian language [...] because, by writing them directly to Romanian text, he creatively uses the accumulations of the previous two centuries, managing to condense the most prominent features of the traditional psaltic style into an original form, in which the chanter's skill combines with the refinement of the well-informed researcher” (Chircev, 2013, p. 236) (our translation). The beauty of the melodic lines, in full accordance with the text that they complete musically, along with the masterfully used elements of psaltic tradition have often been appreciated thanks to the performance of some of these works by the Byzantine music ensemble “Psalmodia”, founded on his initiative. In 2008, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of its foundation, His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel awarded the Patriarchal Cross to the musician, stating that “through this art of the sacred sound, Father Professor Sebastian Barbu-Bucur is a bearer of the Light of the Resurrection and of the revival and rediscovery of the perennial values of psaltic music” (Catrina, 2010, p. 202) (our translation).

Another distinguished representative of the church music of the recent decades is Professor Ph.D. **Nicu Moldoveanu**, who studied with professors Chiril Popescu, Constantin Drăgușin and Nicolae Lungu. His work was especially focused on the harmonization of psaltic music, as illustrated by his *Anifoane* [Antiphons], *Heruvic* [Cherubic Hymn], *Pre Tine Te lăudăm* [We Praise Thee], *Axion* [Axion], *Lumină lină* [Gracious Light], *Îngerul a strigat* [The Angel Cried Out] etc. (Vasile, 1997, II, p. 256). He composed many church chants, which were published in various collections: megalynaria, troparia, kondakia, sessional hymns, stichera, praises, kontakia of the Akathist hymn of several feasts of the year; *Iubi-Te-voi*, *Doamne* [I Will Love Thee, O Lord], tones 1, 3, and 8, *Răspunsuri mari* [Great Responses], tones 1, 5 and 7; *Axion la Liturghia Sf. Vasile cel Mare (De tine se bucură)* [Axion to St. Basil's the Great Liturgy (In Thee Rejoices)], tone 5; *Cinei Tale* [Of Thy Mystical Supper], tone 7, *Lumină lină* [Gracious Light], tone 5, *Învierea lui Hristos* [Christ's Resurrection], tones 1, 3, 5 and 8; *Anixandare* [Anoxiantaria], tone 5; *Slujba Sfintei Ecaterina* [Religious Service to St. Catherine]; *Slujba Sfântului Elefterie* [Religious Service to St. Eleftherios]; *Slujba Sfântului Ghelasie de la Râmeț* [Religious Service to St. Gelasius of Râmeț] etc. He corrected and completed church chant books, alone or with other collaborators, which were published at the printing house of the Holy Patriarchate, after 1990.

Among the composers who have published psaltic music after 1990, we also mention two of the priest professors who have contributed to the revival of

the psaltic musical education in the theological seminaries and carried out a sustained activity of research of the Byzantine musical manuscripts: Priest Prof. Ph.D. Alexie Buzera and Priest Prof. Ph.D. Florin Bucescu. Immediately after the events of 1989, father **Alexie Buzera** gathered his compositional and folkloric preoccupations into an anthology titled *Toată suflarea să laude pe Domnul. Cântări bisericești, pricesne și imnuri religioase, colinde și cântece de stea culese și revizuite de Alexie Buzera* [Let Everything That Has Breath Praise the Lord. Church Chants, 'Priceasna' and Other Religious Hymns, Christmas Carols and Songs Collected and Revised by Alexie Buzera] (1991), a book that complements the numerous studies and books dedicated to the Romanian music of Byzantine tradition.

Father Professor **Florin Bucescu** dedicated the last decades of his life to the research and discovery of the musical manuscripts housed by the libraries in Moldova region. Inspired, perhaps, also by the musical treasure preserved in the old codices, in 1997 he composed *Liturghie psaltică în glasul III – ga* [Psaltic Liturgy in Tone 3 – Ga], thus trying to enrich the liturgical repertoire of the last decades, centred on tones 5 and 8. The liturgy was written “for the revival of the psaltic repertoire of the students of the «St. Basil the Great» Orthodox Theological Seminary in Iași” (Bucescu, 2006, p. 8). The work is presented in simultaneous neumatic and linear notation. The volume is all the more valuable as in the second part it includes versions for two and three voices, with the choral variants being produced by composer Vasile Spătăreanu from Iași.

Besides the above mentioned composers, the bibliography consulted reveals the compositional preoccupations of father Professor **Victor Frangulea**, who composed psaltic choral music as well as psaltic monody: *Slujba Sf. Ghelasie* [Religious Service to St. Gelasius], canonized by the Romanian Patriarchy in 1992 (Romanian saint from Transylvania). He was described as “a lover of psaltic music which he serves and cultivates in the authentic traditional spirit” (Ionescu, 2003, p, 501) (our translation).

5. Conclusions

The retrospective view of the psaltic music composed during the hundred years that have passed since the Great Union of Transylvania with Romania highlights some important aspects related to the Orthodox church music in our country. First of all, we have noticed the overwhelming influence of the events that marked the Romanian state during these one hundred years. However, regardless of the political regime and unfavourable context of the second half of the twentieth century, the Byzantine tradition of chant and neumatic notation was preserved outside the Carpathian chain.

Although the preoccupation with psaltic music was intense during the first half of the century, when many chanters showed interest in composition, it

almost stagnated for about four decades, returning with increased intensity as soon as the political conditions were favourable, and especially after the year 2000.

The effervescence of the inter war period – when 19 composers made a name for themselves – is not necessarily associated with a compositional output of equal scale, as the chanters' focus and efforts were concentrated mainly on the refinement of the repertoire translated into the Romanian language in the nineteenth century.

The four decades of communism moved the centre of gravity to the transcription of the repertoire on staff and its simplification so that it could be used in the joint chanting of the believers; however, this activity too involves knowledge of the specific nature of psaltic music, as well as creativity in adjusting the melodies. The interest in psaltic composition was limited, as only 11 composers published a few church music compositions, most of the volumes published during this period being focused on standardized music and written in double notation (neumes above the staff). However, the standardization of church chants, initiated by Patriarch Justinian, had little success, and even today, church chanting contains a substantial amount of regional features. Neumatic notation and the specific style of interpretation have been kept unchanged in the eastern, north-eastern and southern parts of Romania, while in the central, western and north-western parts staff notation is used. However, the standardized repertoire has had a certain influence on the musical education of the generations of chanters singing on the kliroses of the Romanian churches. We believe that this is reflected in the preference for the diatonic tones 5 and 8, in the disappearance of microtones (and implicitly of the intonations specific to the enharmonic genre) or in the manner of interpreting the consonant signs.

We have also found that each of the three periods distinguished by us was marked by a personality who dominated it with their work: the prominent figure of the first period remains the great chanter Ion Popescu-Pasărea; then followed the distinguished personality of Professor Nicolae Lungu, while in the last decades, psaltic composition was represented by Archdeacon Ph.D. Sebastian Barbu-Bucur.

Although quantitatively, the number of composers decreased in the second half of the twentieth century, after 1990 the original contribution has been consistent through the works of Archdeacon Ph.D. Sebastian Barbu-Bucur and of priest Prof. Ph.D. Nicu Moldoveanu.

The numerous initiatives of the young people trained in the theological schools at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the mobilities, information and training they can benefit from will continue to ensure the perpetuation of the Romanian music of Byzantine tradition.

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