

The adaptation of Byzantine and post-Byzantine monody and of psaltic Christmas carols in Viorel Munteanu's creation

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The idea of adapting Byzantine music has found its most representative champion in Viorel Munteanu. In times when composing religious music was almost impossible, the Romanian composer succeeded in creating an extremely valuable piece, which received the "George Enescu" Award of the Romanian Academy in 1980. This piece is the vocal-symphonic poem *The Voices of Putna*, based on Byzantine sacred music from the manuscript sources of the 16th century¹. How was this possible? The answer lies in the courage, enthusiasm and inquisitiveness of the young musician who had been educated in the new school of composition within the Iași Conservatoire under composer Vasile Spătărelu; these qualities enabled him to find new sources of inspiration and musical expression unsought for before. This act of creation was possible also thanks to the renewal occasioned by the research done by a team of Romanian and foreign musicologists at the important centre for the learning and teaching of Byzantine arts at the Putna Monastery during the reign of Stephen the Great and up to the end of the 17th century. Within this context, between 1969 and 1976, the Byzantinologist Grigore Panțiru published several papers on the musical centre at Putna: *Unpublished musical manuscripts from the Putna Monastery*², *The musical school at Putna: 1) unidentified musical manuscripts; 2) An old hymn on Saint John the New from Suceava*³. In turn, Byzantinologist Gheorghe Ciobanu published valuable studies on the musical school at Putna: *The musical school at Putna during the period of Stephen the Great and his successors*⁴, *The musical school at Putna*⁵, *The manuscripts at Putna and some issues related to mediaeval Romanian music*⁶, *The manuscripts at Putna and the question of the Romanian – Bulgarian relations during the Middle-Ages*⁷ (vol. XII, București, 1976). Both researchers were also the first publishers of the musical transcriptions of a number of chants, among which *The Hymn of Saint John the*

¹ București: Edit. Muzicală, 1982.

² In **Biserica Ortodoxă Română**, an. LXXXVII, nr. 3-4 martie-aprilie (București: 1969), pp. 434-441.

³ In **Studii de muzicologie**, vol. VI (București: Ed. Muzicală, 1970), pp. 31-67.

⁴ Excerpt from the Annals of the Romanian Academy, Bucharest, Ed. Academiei, an.100 (1966), secț. a IV-a, vol. XVI, pp. 587-593.

⁵ In **Studii de etnomuzicologie și bizantinologie**, vol.I (București: Ed. Muzicală, 1974), pp. 418-440.

⁶ In *Studii de etnomuzicologie și bizantinologie*, vol. II, București, Ed. Muzicală), pp. 293-305.

⁷ În **Studii de muzicologie**, vol. XII, București (Ed. Muzicală, 1976), pp. 99-118.

New from Suceava (Gr. Panțiru) and *The Chalice of redemption* (Gh. Ciobanu). These impressive achievements in Byzantinological research impressed young composer Viorel Munteanu; drawing his inspiration from the melodies of the hymns from Putna, he composed the symphonic poem *The Voices of Putna*, a piece which has enjoyed appreciation and success and is interpreted on almost all the continents. The composer also benefited from Gh. Ciobanu's expertise, who helped him understand the specific features of the Byzantine monody as they are found in the Putna manuscripts and offered some musical suggestions.

In his composition *The Voices of Putna*, the composer Viorel Munteanu aimed at recreating the praying spirit and meditation atmosphere, of spiritual elevation at Putna Monastery using the musical means of the string orchestra and male voice choir. The composer was impressed by the melodic richness and expressiveness of two illustrative Byzantine chants belonging to two Romanian composers, Dometian Vlahu and Evstatie the Protopsaltis, and used a number of musical motifs which he further adapted using specific musical means and succeeded in recreating the atmosphere of prayer and deep piety in monasteries. On rediscovering the charm and expressive richness of the Byzantine music and relying on the old canons, the Romanian composer created a monody supported by means of the isons, the spatialization of the sound flow as the various musical motifs are played by various instruments, the combination between antiphonic and heterophonic singing.

Section I of the poem

The poem reveals a large strophic form of the type **A B Avar**, where each stanza is constituted freely of a number of articulations. The beginning of stanza **A** creates an atmosphere of mystery, introducing the suggestion of monastic life through an imitation of the bell ringing and semantron sound. The semantron beat is suggested as the second violin repeats with rhythmic variations the musical interval of a minor ninth *re-mi*, as well as through the onomatopoeic repetition of the semantron beat, performed by the cello *solo*, rhythmically hitting the instrument with the bow *con legno*. The suggestive incipit of the piece is augmented by the sudden performance of a harmonic cluster by the entire orchestra (m. 1 – 2), which sounds like a bell whose reverberations increase the atmosphere of mystery and suggest the night service (Midnight Service⁸). The Romanian composer drew his inspiration from a Byzantine sticheron of great beauty, namely *The Hymn of Saint John the New from Suceava*⁹, possibly one of the most accomplished and illustrative musical

⁸ This is the service at midnight at monasteries according to a well established *typikon*.

⁹ Saint John of Suceava was a young Christian man killed by the Turks at Cetatea Albă (1330) because he didn't accept to be converted to Islamism. He was thus crowned as a martyr and his relics capable of performing miracles were brought by Prince Alexander the Kind at Suceava in 1402. Apud Ioan M. Stoian, *Dicționar religios*, București, Ed. Garamond, 1994, p. 134.

creations of Evstatie the Protopsaltis of Putna, the most important composer of the Musical School at Putna. The text is supposed to have been created by the learned priest and writer, the Greek Grigore Țamblac¹⁰, while the music is supposed to have been composed by an anonymous psalm reader. Later, during the reign of Stephen the Great, the melody of the hymn was re-created and recorded using the koukouzelian notation by Evstatie; versions of this chant can be found in the manuscripts belonging to the Musical school of Putna¹¹.

The image shows a page of a musical score for a symphony. The score is written for five string sections: Violini I (Violins I), Violini II (Violins II), Viole (Violas), Violoncelli (Violoncellos), and Contrabasso (Double Bass). The tempo is marked 'Larghetto-rubato'. The score is divided into two systems. The first system includes a 'Solo' section for the Violoncelli and 'Solo con legno' for the Contrabasso. The second system features various musical notations, including dynamics (p, f, sf), articulation (pizz.), and performance instructions (Solo, Solo con legno). The score is marked with asterisks (*) indicating unison passages. The Violini I section has a 'Solo' section with a 'p' dynamic. The Violini II section has a 'Solo' section with a 'p' dynamic. The Viole section has a 'Solo' section with a 'p' dynamic. The Violoncelli section has a 'Solo' section with a 'p' dynamic. The Contrabasso section has a 'Solo' section with a 'p' dynamic. The score is marked with asterisks (*) indicating unison passages.

¹⁰ Idem, p. 278.

¹¹ One of the versions can be found in *Evstatie's Antologhion* (*Antologhionul lui Evstatie protopsaltul Putnei*, Ms. 350) at the State History Museum of Moscow (document fund Sciukin), f. 138v (cf. *Antologhionul lui Evstatie Protopsaltul Putnei*, in the collection *Izvoare ale muzicii românești*, vol. V, *Documenta*, edition and notes by Gheorghe Ciobanu și Marin Ionescu, with a preface and an introductory study by Gheorghe Ciobanu, București, Ed. Muzicală, 1983, p. 488).

Once the monastic atmosphere is created, the composers go on to expand the state of meditation and prayer by gradually diminishing the intervals, starting from the initial generating cell (based on the interval of a minor ninth, performed by the second violin, m.5); in this way the entrance of the voice chanting is announced.

The image shows a page of a musical score for a string quartet and woodwinds. The score is divided into four systems, each with five staves. The instruments are labeled on the left: Vln I (Violin I), Vln II (Violin II), Vcl (Violoncello), and Cb. (Contrabasso). The first system (Vln I) features a solo part starting with a '3' above the staff, marked 'Solo', 'mf', and 'f'. It includes a 'sul tasto' marking and a 'poco' section indicated by a double-headed arrow. The second system (Vln II) features a solo part starting with a 'Solo' marking, 'mf', and 'f', with 'sul tasto' and 'poco f' markings. The woodwind parts (Vcl and Cb.) are marked 'mf' and 'mp'. The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics, articulation, and performance instructions.

5 Solo sul tasto ← ord. → 6 sul pont.

p *f* *poco sf* *arco* *f* *p*

Vni I

1 *poco sf* *arco* *f* *poco sf* *arco* *f*

2 *poco sf* *arco* *f* *poco sf* *arco* *f*

3 *poco sf* *arco* *f* *poco sf* *arco* *f*

4 *poco sf* *arco* *f* *poco sf* *arco* *f*

5 *poco sf* *arco* *f* *poco sf* *arco* *f*

Solo sul tasto 4 ord. *f*

Vni II

1 *poco sf* *arco* *f* *poco sf* *arco* *f*

2 *poco sf* *arco* *f* *poco sf* *arco* *f*

3 *poco sf* *arco* *f* *poco sf* *arco* *f*

4 *poco sf* *arco* *f* *poco sf* *arco* *f*

Vle

1 *poco sf* *arco* *f* *poco sf* *arco* *f*

2 *poco sf* *arco* *f* *poco sf* *arco* *f*

3 *poco sf* *arco* *f* *poco sf* *arco* *f*

Solo *f* *mp* *p*

Vlc.

1 *mp* *p*

2 *arco poco sf* *f* *f*

3 *f*

Cb. *f*

The first anticipation of the motif of the Byzantine monody is intoned in the head register as a solo by the first violin (which intones the *semantron* motif, m.5); this is answered to by the orchestra with a bell sound (the harmonic tone cluster) and the *semantron* sound of the cello (at m.6). Gradually the smaller intervals are introduced, such as the seconds and thirds and a heterophonic moment is introduced for the first time (m. 7–8) between the first and the second violin, composed in counterpoint in a melody motif playing the role of countermelody (to be later found again in other parts of the piece) and the repetition of the *semantron* signal (performed by the cello) (m. 9-10). The Byzantine hymn can be detected starting from measure 11 in the chest of violas when the tempo is changed from the initial *Larghetto-rubato* to the *Poco andantino* which later flows uninterruptedly and successively take over the melody conduct by the various instruments playing solo or in instrumental groups: the violas in counterpoint with the cello and violins (m. 11 – 20); the first and second violins in chorus, supported by the violas and the cello; *tutti* in chorus (m. 26) with cadencing in chorus on the *finalis* (first step) of the *echos*, *re*, which concludes the first section A (at m. 27):

The image shows a page of a musical score, measures 11 to 27. The tempo is marked 'Poco andantino'. The score is for Violins I and II, Violas, Violas, and Cello. The Violin I part starts with a solo in measure 5, marked 'Solo' and 'pp'. The Violin II part starts in measure 11, marked 'Tutti' and 'pp'. The Viola part starts in measure 11, marked 'Tutti' and 'pp'. The Violoncello part starts in measure 6, marked 'pp'. The score includes various performance instructions such as 'sul tasto', 'sul pont.', and 'arco ord.'. A red vertical line is drawn on the right side of the page, starting from the top of the Violoncello part and extending down to the bottom of the page.

21

Solo *p* sul pont. *mp* 1,2,3* ord.

Vni I

1 *mp*

2 *mp*

3 *mp*

4 *mp*

5 *mp*

Vni II

1 *mp*

2 *mp* 2,3,4*

3 *mp*

4 *mp*

Vle

Solo 1 *mp*

2 *mp*

3 *mp*

Vlc.

1 *mp*

2 *mp*

3 *mp*

Cb. *mp*

Detailed description: This is a page of a musical score, page 63, featuring four string sections: Violin I (Vni I), Violin II (Vni II), Viola (Vle), and Cello (Cb.). The score is written in 4/4 time. At the top left, a measure number '21' is indicated with an arrow pointing to the first measure. The Violin I section (staves 1-5) begins with a 'Solo' marking and a dynamic of *p*. The first violin part includes a 'sul pont.' instruction and a dynamic of *p*. A boxed section of the Violin I parts, starting from the second measure, is marked 'ord.' and '1,2,3*'. The Violin II section (staves 1-4) has a dynamic of *mp*. A boxed section of the Violin II parts, starting from the second measure, is marked '2,3,4*'. The Viola section (staves 1-3) has a dynamic of *mp* and includes a 'Solo' marking. The Cello section (staves 1-3) has a dynamic of *mp*. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

unison

25

Vni I

4,5*

mf

Tutti*

Vni II

1,2*

div.

mf

Tutti*

3,4*

Vle

mp

mf

Tutti*

Vlc.

mp

mf

Tutti*

Cb.

mp

mf

Thus, in this first part of the poem the composers induces the atmosphere of prayer at Putna Monastery through the sound of the bells and the semantron, as well as through the melodic invention inspired from the *Hymn of Saint John*, which consists of the *authentic echos I* with the first step on *re*. The melodic invention of Byzantine influence plays other roles as well, which places it on a higher plan than the original, since it is invested with an important role in the general structure of the piece. The string ensemble (first and second violins, violas, cellos and double bass) chosen by the composer as the main expressive means is organized in such a manner that it renders most suggestively the monadic character and the atmosphere of the religious chant. To achieve this, Viorel Munteanu took over certain *elements of style* of Byzantine inspiration from Evstatie's *hymn*; these elements are particularly prominent; one of them is derived from the intoning formula (*apechemata*) of mode I: *ananes*:

The diagram illustrates the intoning formula 'A na nes.' in two parts. The top part shows the cheironomic signs: a stylized 'A' with a cross above it, followed by a sign for 'na' (a horizontal line with a hook), and a sign for 'nes.' (a horizontal line with a hook and a dot). Below these signs are the letters 'A na nes.' The bottom part shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody consists of three notes: a quarter note on G4, a quarter note on A4, and a quarter note on B4. Below the staff is the text 'A - na - nes'.

The first musical motif of the of the melody invention of the section A of the symphonic poem *The Voices of Putna* is very similar in terms of melodic interval with this intoning formula (if we consider its second placed vertically and in a wide position).

Another method used to raise the melodic invention to a level higher to that which inspired it is the melodic contour, created not through repetition and motif sequencing (which were methods specific to the composers at Putna) but rather through melodic gradation. This is particularly obvious in the scalar profile of the *ondulatio* type leading to a *culminatio* (m. 11–16). The sound climax of the first section is achieved not only through melodic gradation, but also through dynamic gradation achieved in two distinct ways: 1) through gradual increase of the nuance from *p* to *sost. f*; 2) through the tempo indication *implorare* initially deriving from the transcription of the cheironomic sign of expression *parakalesma*. The effect is also enhanced through the gradation of the sound and timbre amplitude achieved through orchestral means. Thus, at m. 11–12 the monody supported only by the chest of violas is emphasized by the first violins that play a double rhythmic pedal in mixtures of fourths, as well as by the second violins that perform a trill *sul tasto* in chorus on important sounds in the scale, while the low-pitched strings intone the ison with rhythmical interventions at the first step of the mode or in a subtonic. In another example the composer intends to emphasize an important cadence of the monody, for instance that at the end of the end of section A, which is performed by the

orchestral *tutti* in chorus with small differences in the second and third (m. 26-27).

Section II of the poem

The end of section A is a point of departure for section B, composed in the tempo *poco sostenuto* since, along with the previous cadence (on D) the motif of the semantron is reintroduced, transformed in the cello; further on, the melodic conduct is taken over by the second violin solo, while the first violin evokes the semantron signal again:

The musical score is for measures 26 and 27, marked *Poco sostenuto*. It features five staves: Violin I (Vni I), Violin II (Vni II), Viola (Vle), Violoncello (Vlc.), and Contrabasso (Cb.).

- Violin I (Vni I):** Measures 26-27. Dynamics: *pp*, *2 Solo*, *P*, *mp*.
- Violin II (Vni II):** Measures 26-27. Dynamics: *pp*, *mp*, *mp*, *mp*, *mp*.
- Viola (Vle):** Measures 26-27. Dynamics: *pp*, *pp*, *pp*, *pp*.
- Violoncello (Vlc.):** Measures 26-27. Dynamics: *mp*, *mp*, *p*, *mf-mp*, *p*, *mp*, *mp*.
- Contrabasso (Cb.):** Measures 26-27. Dynamics: *pp*, *pp*.

Annotations include *Solo* markings for Vni I, Vni II, and Vlc., and *cui part.* for Vlc. and Cb. The score also includes a *2,3** marking for the Cb. part.

the sounds that constitute the melody and performed by the second violins and the violas. In order to mark the passage from one harmonic aggregate to the next the *glissando* is used masterfully, but not in one instrument only, but simultaneously in all the instruments with a harmonic function; in this way, the composer points out the vocal origin of the melody:

The image shows a page of a musical score, likely for a symphony or concerto. The score is written for a string quartet (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello) and a woodwind section (Flute, Clarinet, Bassoon). The first violin part is marked 'Solo' and features a melodic line with a 'Solo' instruction. The other string parts are marked 'gliss. lento' and 'lento'. The woodwind parts are marked 'lento'. The score is divided into two systems, with the first system starting at measure 32. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Starting with m. 35, from the tempo indication *Andantino*, through the intrusive cadence of the previous phrase the monody is taken over by the group of low-pitched strings; the first cello leads the melody in the *plagal of the 4th mode* (Ionian), inspired from the *Koinonikon* while the double bass plays the role of the ison on the finalis *C* of the 4th plagal mode (m. 35–39).

Starting with m. 40, the melody is expanded and becomes more rounded as it is performed by the chest of violas. The Byzantine monody with modal features is emphasized through its accompaniment by the ison performed by each group of string instruments; this is achieved through the vertical summation of these pedals; harmonic aggregates are thus created again from important sounds of the echos. Had he done differently, for instance by using a classic harmonic accompaniment, the scale of the mode could have easily been misunderstood for a Western type tonality, in this case that of C major, while the entire modal atmosphere would have been marred.

It is also interesting to note the manner in which the composer treats the issue of the mobile steps, of the modulating inflexions or of the modulations used on the melody path of the original chant. In order to enrich the expressive colours of the exclusively diatonic monody, the composer resorts to a short fragment in which the 4th step, the mobile note *B* as well as the alteration *A flat* (m. 74). This feature is specific to psalm chant, in practical chanting the phenomenon of attraction between certain important degrees on the scale can be found, such as in the plagal of the 4th mode, when *zo (B)* is sung natural in the raise and flat in the descent. Another such instant is that in which in the original Byzantine melody the chromatic flora of the 2nd mode on *di (G)* appears, with the role of altering the nature of the melody from the diatonic to the chromatic (m. 50).

In this case, the composer treats the fragment under discussion as the harmonic major scale; however, the Byzantine monody is not affected through the modal accompaniment based on the ison vertically cumulated as a harmonic aggregate.

Solo ← (35) Andantino

Vni I

1 *p*

2 *lento* niente

3 *lento* niente

4 *lento* niente

5 *lento* niente

Vni II

1 *lento* niente

2 *lento* niente

3 *lento* niente

4 *lento* niente

Vle

1 *lento* niente

2 *lento* niente

3 *lento* niente

Vc.

1 *p lirico (implorare)*
2 Soli

2 *p*

3

Cb.

p

37

Solo

p

p

Vni I

1

2

3

4

5

Vni II

1

2

3

4

Vle

1

2

3

1

2 Soli

mp

Vlc.

2

3

Cb.

mp

lifetime, the melody climax is achieved by an association with the feelings of deep spiritual experience which is suggested by the composer through median nuances of *mf* and full (*f*), as well as through the indication *implorare*¹³. Together with the *glissando*, which is a technique inspired from the specifically Byzantine manner of singing, frequently used by the composer in this piece, this indication (*implorare*) which occurs in the moments of greatest expressiveness of the musical discourse, is another confirmation of the fact that the composer had a good understanding of the deep meanings of the expressiveness of the Byzantine melody and could express it masterfully and touchingly.

The final part of section B is created mainly through dynamic diminution (*mp*), and also through the transfer of the melody path from the area of the acute sounds of the first violins to the middle sounds performed by the second violins accompanied by the violas and the faint ison of the cellos, which uses a melodic cadence formula borrowed from the *koinonikon* as a monodic source.

Section III of the poem

In the final section of the poem, **Avar**, the composer reconstitutes the austere, highly spiritual atmosphere of monastic prayer, which is perhaps an ideal of spiritual life in the Orthodox Church during the medieval period; this is made possible as the composer introduces a new very important instrument – the human voice. Viorel Munteanu reveals the melodic invention of Byzantine intonations from *Saint John's Hymn*; he also uses them in the first section, but in this third section they are closer to the original scores of Evstatie the Protopsaltis.

In this final part in *Larghetto-rubato* (the same as the introductory part A of the poem), the main musical motifs used in the first part are repeated: the *semantron* motif, based on a diminished seventh, the onomatopoeic imitation of this pseudo-instrument, the motif anticipating the hymn performed in the 1st *echos*, too, which is transcribed in the temperate manner (as the Dorian mode); they are all wrapped in a different atmosphere, less dramatic, possibly because this time the intense bell motif, created through clusters, is no longer used. The composer expressively uses his musical images to render almost graphic visual associations. The instrumental motif preceding the Byzantine monody (m. 72, first violin, solo) is followed by the direct performance of this motif by the entire group of violins in the unison (while the other groups of instruments have the role of counterpointing the melody and then of counterpointing the harmonic pillars), accompanied by the *semantron* motif performed by the cello (m. 73–74) in a vigorous *gusto* representing the expressive climax of the entire piece. As soon as the melody flow quiets down again, the tempo is quickly changed to *Andantino-rubato* and the male voices enter, randomly dispersing among the

¹³ The original scores that served as his inspiration use at certain points the cheironomic sign *parakalesma*, which is explained and interpreted by paleographers as “expressiveness of imploration” (of the Divine Being, n.n.).

instruments¹⁴, thus representing the monks' choir. They intone in a *molto espressivo, calmo* manner a *cantus firmus* that contains the melody pillars of the hymn of Saint John on a text inspired from the original text of the stichera: "Land from above, rejoice and sing / Son among the suns of our branch, / Voice among voice you bring forth...". The Byzantine hymn is performed by the cello, with its warm tone colour, similar to that of the male voices:

The finale developing in a calm serene atmosphere is built mainly through the means of heterophony. The voices involved in heterophony are the male choir, the first violin solo and the first cello; the other voices support the pedals (the low-pitched strings, the violas) or counterpoint the melody through a rhythmic motif, based on a descending major second (the first violins):

¹⁴ As the composer indicates in the scores on page 33.

in the concert hall; such masterpieces as the piece presented above create this link:

93

Br. Bass

Vni I

Vni II

Vle

Vlc.

Cb.

(1980)

To conclude, it can be said that in *The Voices of Putna*, the composer Viorel Munteanu undoubtedly proves to have the *vocation* of the monody, which he shapes and raises to unprecedented heights, thus continuing in a personal style and with modern means the idea of orchestral unison brilliantly illustrated by George Enescu in *A Prelude in the Unison* in the 1st Suite. This is one of the possible explanations for the appreciation that this poem enjoys all over the world.

At the Birth of the Holy Virgin: *The Virgin Today*

In another piece, also a vocal symphonic one, namely *The 2nd Suite for Christmas*¹⁵ the composer Viorel Munteanu draws his inspiration from old church music and also from ancient Christmas carols, either folk or of psaltic origin. One of the pieces in this suite, with the title *The Virgin Today*, centres round the theme of the short hymn of praise at the Saviour's Birth; its text was written for the first time in the 6th century by Saint Roman the Melodist. Byzantinologist Ioan D. Petrescu, the father figure of Romanian paleography, published a seminal study, *The Short Hymn of Praise at the Saviour's Birth*¹⁶; by using a comparative approach, he proved the lexical and musical continuity of this hymn from the first written documents to our time. Among the musical versions of this hymn that Ioan D. Petrescu studied are some dating from the 18th century written in Greek; others were found in manuscripts discovered on the territory of Romania, dating from the 18th to 19th century. In the musical praxis in the historic provinces of Romania, Wallachia and Moldavia, the version in the notation of Macarie the Hieromonk, Anton Pann, D. Suceveanu is still used for the religious service. However, in Transylvania and Bukovina, where due to foreign dominance the Byzantine chant was not influenced by oriental music (Gh. Ciobanu), an older, more archaic version is preserved, with a structure which is similar but not identical with that used in the provinces. The musical characteristics of the hymn in its Transylvanian version caught the attention of composer Viorel Munteanu; he took it over and adapted it for soloists, children's choir and orchestra.

The following groups of instruments are used: wood winds (two flutes, an oboe), percussion instruments (vibraphone, campane da chiesa, campane tubolare, sonagli, semantron), plucked and struck strings (harp, pianoforte, celesta), bowed strings (first and second violins, violas, celli, double basses). The selection of the instruments is such that their specific colour could render as suggestively as possible the mysterious and spell-binding atmosphere of the winter holidays (especially the church bells, the semantron, the celesta, the harp etc.):

¹⁵ In Viorel Munteanu, *Strop de Ier*, vol. II (Iași: Trinitas, 2000).

¹⁶ Ioan D. Petrescu, *Condacul Nașterii Domnului, Studii de muzicologie comparată*, București, Tip. Universul, 1940.

LA NAȘTEREA DOMNULUI

Viorel Munteanu

1 **I. Fecioara astăzi ***

Tempo libero $\text{♩} = 80$ (poco rubato)

Flaut 1. pp
2. p

Vibrafon mp

Campane da chiesa ppp f mf mp mf p
Muta in Campane tubolari mp

Toaca f mp p pp

Harpa

Pianoforte

Sopran Solo mp

Tenor Solo mp

Cor I. $unis.$ mp
II. $unis.$ mp

Violini I. p
II. p

Viole p

Violoncelli p

Contrabassi p

Tempo libero $\text{♩} = 80$ (poco rubato)

* *Carte de cântece bisericesti*, Editura Institutului Biblic și Misiune Ortodoxă, București, 1975, p. 60.

The melody of the hymn is performed by the solo soprano and tenor voices; in the composer's view, they are meant to remind of the Romanian

protopsaltis of old interpreting chants of Byzantine origin; many inflections are introduced, also reminiscent of Romanian music. The melody path also makes use of the main characteristics of the *stichera* time: the calm free tempo (fourth=80), the presence of melismas of 2 to 6 sounds to a syllable and of specific ornaments (appoggiaturas, echapé).

The musical score is arranged in a standard orchestral format. It includes the following parts:

- Fl. (Flutes):** Two staves, marked with *pp* and *p*.
- Vibr. (Vibraphone):** One staff, marked with *pp* and *p*.
- Camp. (Campana):** One staff, marked with *pp* and *p*.
- Hp. (Harp):** One staff, marked with *mp*.
- Pftc. (Piano):** One staff, marked with *p*.
- S. Solo (Soprano Solo):** One staff with lyrics: *ciao ra as tázi pre cel*.
- T. Solo (Tenor Solo):** One staff with lyrics: *ciao ra as tázi pre cel*.
- Cor (Chorus):** Two staves (I and II) with lyrics: *ciao ra*.
- Vni. (Violins):** Two staves (I and II).
- Vi. (Viola):** One staff.
- Vc. (Violoncello):** One staff.
- Cb. (Contrabasso):** One staff.

The score features specific musical markings: a '3' and '2' above the first two measures, a rehearsal mark '10' in a box above the third measure, and various dynamic markings (*pp*, *p*, *mp*) and articulation marks (accents, slurs).

For the adaptation, the composer analysed the original melody, taking into account its modal and expressive characteristics. The melody of the hymn belongs to the 3rd echos, which in psalm musical theory contains quarter tones which, through tempered transcription becomes diatonic in nature. As it is an old

melody, the middle ambitus of the voice of a major sixth is used; especially the gradual scalar profile of the *ascensio-descensio* and undulating type are used for construction. The highly expressive melody was changed from *ga* (F) to *di* (G) and the composer did not alter its original contour. In order to emphasize the archaic character of this music, the vocal technique of the *glissando* was used for interpretation, a technique which is commonly used in Romanian performance of Byzantine chants.

Children's choirs usually play a very important part supporting the timber of the solo part and suggest the clear voices of the children, the first that bring news of the Saviour's Birth and its celebration in the traditional archaic rural world. To emphasize with the help of the childish voice timbre the atmosphere of celebration specific to the winter holiday, the composer decided to use two choirs of this type and a varied set of musical means: passages which are common with the soloists' melody path, common isons at various moments of the chant; isons intoned differently at different intervals: second, fifth, sixth, eighth. In this musical piece, Viorel Munteanu reveals himself as masterful exploiter of the ison technique, for instance by dividing the second choir on a double pedal at a fifth interval, while the first choir leaves the ison through a scalar profile, similar to a countermelody; the result is a rhythmic complementary opposition with the soloists' melody plane (m. 45–53). Sometimes this technique leads to the formation of sound aggregates of the type: *mib-F#-lab-C* (m.60). The children's choir does not perform entire sentences but mainly long sounds (isons) or the incipits and endings of certain sentences.

The orchestra according to the composer's choice of instruments, however, has the role of creating the original sonorous atmosphere which gives this piece in *The Second Christmas Suite* its entire charm. The composer proves his quality as an orchestrator by making best use of the qualities of each group of instruments. Thus the wood winds and the percussion have the role of performing the mixtures of fifths that create the harmonic support of the psalm melody. At certain points, the harp accompanies the soloists' main melody path and contributing to the sonorous richness of the whole through its specific clear colour. The piano, an instrument with manifold resources, has the role of emphasizing the modal harmonic support by intoning the harmonic aggregates or the chords resulting from the vertical superposition of all the groups of instruments and vocal parties. The bowed strings are especially involved in supporting the double ison, performed at a fifth; there are, however, moments in which they perform a counter melody, so they rhythmically and melodically complete the main melody conduct, as do the two choirs.

As a large musical form, the short hymn consists of two stanzas, **A** and **A1**, each of which is structured as a chain of sentences; **A** follows the text "The Virgin today gives birth to the One higher than the skies. The Earth the cave to the One Who is untouchable provides. The angels bring forth the news, while the magi travel guided by the star, for unto us a new child was born, God before

the ages”; part A1 playing the role of a reprise – identically repeats the first sentence “The Virgin today gives birth to the One higher than the skies”.

The harmonic and polyphonic means used by the composer are modal, in a writing in which the vocal plane of the soloists accompanied by the two choirs are made to stand apart; the other groups of instruments have the role of supporting the modal harmony consisting mainly of double isons evolving into mixtures.

Through this masterful adaptation for the orchestra, soloists and children’s choir, the composer transforms the simple melody of the short hymn of praise *The Virgin Today* in the *third echos* into a beautiful vocal instrumental miniature which convincingly and movingly renders the Christmas atmosphere and the mystery of the Lord’s Birth of the Virgin Mary.

You Are the Holy Light

Another piece that is also part of *The Second Christmas Suite* is *You Are the Holy Light*; here the composer resorts again to the Byzantine source, but this time it is not extracted from the chanting performed in the church choir in the 16th – 17th centuries, or the modern Chrisantic chants, but from the folk music. The inspiration is drawn here from the Christmas carol *You Are the Holy Light*; whose text is inspired from the service books, while the melody is of church chant origin, therefore related to psalm music. The carol was included in the famous collection of *Carols* by George Breazul¹⁷: for instance the monody-type carol.

The text of this carol is a genuine folk poem of Christian expression, referring to the mystery of the virginity of Mary, Mother of God, and her role of saving mankind from sin through the birth of Jesus: “You are the holy light / Blessed Mother of God / For you gave birth to the Holy Son / for the people on Earth / You are the spring of life / You quench the thirst with sweetness / and are the true Mother / for you gave birth to a fatherless Son / more revered / holier than the sun / You are the manger inhabited / and the sealed book”. The melody is impressive through its beauty and expressiveness and its psaltic origin is observable in both its sound scale belonging to the 5th mode on Pa (the first musical sentence) and to the 1st mode on Pa (the second sentence) and through the prevalent gradual scalar and undulating profile, which is specific of psaltic music. From a literary point of view, this carol is obviously part of folk poetry: the eight-syllable acatalectic lines of verses, paired rhyme, the architectural form consisting of four melody lines prove it.

In this piece, the carol melody represents the main expressive means, while the instrumental part is an illustration created by the composer to settle the

¹⁷ G. Breazul, *Colinde* (București: Fundația Culturală Regală „Principele Carol”, 1938), nr. 66.

atmosphere specific to religious holidays (the bells, the semantron, the vibraphone). In the vocal adaptation of the carol the composer uses free imitative polyphony, the counterpoint and the harmonic pedal. The interesting thing, however, is that, displaying amazing intuition, before quoting the actual melody, the author introduces in the second choir the intonation formula *ananes*¹⁸ used in the 1st mode of Byzantine music:

The musical score is arranged in a multi-system format. The instruments and voices are listed on the left side of each system:

- System 1:** Vib. (Vibraphone), Camp. (Campana), Toaca (Toaca).
- System 2:** Pfte. (Piano).
- System 3:** T. Solo (Trombone Solo).
- System 4:** Cor (Choir), with parts I and II.
- System 5:** Vni. I and II (Violins), VI (Viola), Ve. (Cello), Cb. (Double Bass).

The score includes a page number '20' in a box at the top right and another '20' at the bottom right. The vocal lines contain lyrics in Romanian. A specific section of the second choir part (Cor II) is highlighted with a black box and labeled 'ananes' in the original image. This section shows a melodic phrase: 'Tu ești lu mi vor și'.

¹⁸ See the previous explanation of the apechema *ananes*.

had collected an anthology of Romanian carols for which he selected the most interesting melody types from all the Romanian provinces that had been published by various authors in the past. The subtitle of the anthology clarifies what types of melodies are anthologized: *Christmas carols, songs of the star, wishes, The Little Plough and other songs for the New Year*. Answering Viorel Bârleanu's proposal, composer Viorel Munteanu selected a part of the melodies in the anthology and adapted them so that they could be used for school choirs in two or three voices. The initiative of this anthology is particularly welcome and useful, as Viorel Bârleanu showed in the *Foreword* to the volume, since in the period before 1989 "almost no collection of original full-text Christmas carols and songs for the star had been published," since many had been censored or even forbidden due to their religious content. The collection is therefore a restorative gesture of filling a void in the didactic music dedicated to children; the authors considered that "it is necessary to include carols with genuine unaltered musical structure along with those based on psalm chanting, which are both acknowledged to be of considerable age and to play an important role in a child's education." Other adaptations of carols existed between 1960 and 1990 masterfully created by talented composers such as Tudor Jarda, Vasile Spătărelu, Adrian Pop and others, but such collections were not meant for pupils and they did not have a religious content, they were mainly for mixed choirs and the texts were lay or adapted.

A part of the carols and songs of the star adapted for two or three voices by Viorel Munteanu display the presence of a melody of psaltic influence. Here are some of the titles: for two voices: *Mary was walking, Christ's Holy Mother, Under two apple trees, under two plum trees, Whose mansion is this, The Holy Mother has started Her journey, The Star is up, Three magi from the East (two versions), Adam if he sinned, We are a'carolling oh Lord, Before these handsome mansions, Between the valleys and the mountains (Miorița), The came down, and down they came, Unto me was born and was brought up, High, low and high again, Wake up, ye mighty lords (two versions), In the town of Bethlehem, Leru-i o Lord*.

The composer Viorel Munteanu has also recently created several choir adaptations for two – three – four mixed voices which were included in a new collection of choir pieces *We Praise the Lord*²¹: *Rejoice, oh, Holy Mother* (tenor and bass baritone), *Up at the gates of heaven* (soprano + tenor), the triptych *Wake up, ye mighty lords, Out ye come, ye mighty lords, UP at the gates of*

volumes there are musical studies and collections authored by the above mentioned ethnomusicologists; volume 9, *Melodii de joc din Moldova* (1990) contains only musical folklore and an ample introductory study. See the study "Melosul popular în Caietele Arhivei de Folclor" by Fl. Bucescu and V. Bârleanu, in **Anuarul Muzeului Etnografic al Moldovei – X. In honorem prof. univ. dr. Ion H. Ciubotaru.**

²¹ Viorel Munteanu, Viorel Bârleanu, Florin Bucescu, *Lăudăm pre Domnul – Antologie corală* (Iași: Artes, 2010).

Heaven (soprano, alto and tenor), the choirs pieces for four mixed voices *Leru-i o Lord, We are a'carolling oh Lord*, and *the Voices of Putna* – a piece inspired from the homonymous vocal symphonic poem.

The means used to adapt these pieces are suited to the moral and aesthetic goal. Consider, for instance, the following carol:

COLINDĂM, DOAMNE

din COLINDE, Culegere
întocmită de George Breazu

The musical score is for a four-part vocal setting of a Romanian carol. It is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time, with a tempo of quarter note = 88 and a dynamic marking of *mf*. The score is arranged for Soprano (S.), Alto (A.), Tenor (T.), and Bass (B.) voices. The lyrics are in Romanian. The score is divided into three systems. The first system contains the first two lines of music. The second system contains the next two lines, with a measure rest in the Alto part for the first two measures. The third system contains the final two lines, with a measure rest in the Alto part for the first two measures. A box containing the number '10' is located above the second system. The lyrics are:
 S. Ia, scu-laj!, bo - ie - ri mari, la, scu-laj!, bo - ie - ri mari, Cu - lin - dăm, -
 A. -
 T. -
 B. -
 S. Doam - ne, co - lin - dăm. Că pe cer - s'a a - ră - tat - Un lu - cea - făr mi - nu - nat, Co - lin - dăm, -
 A. Că pe cer - s'a a - ră - tat - Un lu - cea - făr mi - nu -
 T. -
 B. -
 S. Doam - ne, co - lin - dăm. El vă zi - ce: Să tră - iji! Să tră - iji, să'm - bă - tră -
 A. - nat, Co - lin - dăm, Doam - ne, co - lin - dăm. El vă zi - ce: Să tră - iji! Să tră - iji,
 T. -
 B. El vă zi - ce: Să tră - iji! Să tră - iji, să'm -

Thus Viorel Munteanu uses mainly a light polyphonic and harmonic writing, well balanced and as simple as possible so it can be performed by children or young people.

Here are some of the polyphonic means he uses in the adaptations of the carols: the imitation at various intervals (prima, fourth, fifth etc.), especially in polyphonic entrances of the voices, imitation *in stretto*; imitation in canon (less frequently); free counterpoint writing on limited melody paths. Some of the harmonic means he uses are: melody intervals (especially in the adaptations for two voices); tone modal chord combinations, such as trisons in authentic and plagal relations; the harmonic pedal (ison) as a specific means to accompany the melodies of psaltic origin; the rhythmical pedal.

The adaptations of psaltic carols published by the composer Viorel Munteanu in the volume mentioned previously and the choir anthology *We Praise the Lord* are a felicitous completion to the musical literature for the youth; they emphasize the quality of the melodies of psaltic origin of being particularly useful – in either monadic original form or in adapted form for the choir – for the musical education of the young, as they enhance their propensity for the beautiful in general and for sacred music especially.

Conclusions regarding Viorel Munteanu's musical creation of Byzantine and psaltic influence

Through his musical creation, which is illustrative of the last three decades, composer Viorel Munteanu has a distinctive place in today's Romanian music, due to his openness to almost any musical genre and the fact that he used extremely valuable sources, and due to his original style and expression. His most valuable creations are those that draw their inspiration from the folk Romanian music or from the Byzantine chant. His melodic creativity was manifest in all his work; however, when it touches upon the religious feeling, his creativity acquires a special quality through its lyricism, the novelty of the musical language and its expressiveness. Pieces such as *The Voices of Putna* and *Concerti grossi* are remarkable, as well as the later pieces such as the adaptations of psaltic carols, *The psaltic Tryptich*, *The 1st and 2nd Suites for Christmas*.

The adaptation of Byzantine and post-Byzantine monody and of psaltic Christmas carols in Viorel Munteanu's creation

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Abstract

For his piece for voice and orchestra *The Voices of Putna*, composer Viorel Munteanu drew his inspiration from the Byzantine melodies stored in the manuscripts at the Musical school at the Putna monastery. He borrowed several motifs of two distinctive Byzantine chants by Romanian composers Dometian Vlahu and Evstatie the Protopsalt, which he adapted using specific musical methods. Relying on the old canons, he thus succeeded in producing an original monody supported by the use of isons, the spatialization of the sound flow as the various musical motifs are played by various instruments, the combination

between antiphonic and heterophonic singing. In *The Voices of Putna*, composer Viorel Munteanu recreates the atmosphere of piety and prayer to be found in monasteries.

In his *Second Christmas suite*, Viorel Munteanu draws his inspiration from old church music (in the piece *The Virgin Today*), as well as from old archaic Christmas carols, from either folklore or psaltic music (in *You Are the Holy Light*).

In the volume *A drop of "ler"*, Viorel Munteanu adapts with harmonic methods and polyphonic methods of a modal nature folklore Christmas carols, both lay and religious carols for two-voice and three-equal voice choirs, which can thus be used for youths, especially in schools.