

Mirroring the Author's Personality in Composer Carmen Petra-Basacopol's Sacred Music

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Abstract: For centuries, the study of personality has been a need for understanding human nature, but it also has become a scientific endeavour, starting with the first half of the twentieth century. Research in this matter has materialised through papers by important psychologists, who considered the unitary study of human beings, the understanding of their motivation, as well as the understanding of the psychological differences that make us unique. Thus, personality is a dynamic concept which reveals the behaviour of a person that allows the possibility of adapting to the environment. While her works are frequently performed in recitals and concerts, Carmen Petra-Basacopol is one of the most appreciated Romanian musicians also due to personality traits, which are undoubtedly reflected in her creation. The universe of sacred music has been a favourite field in her works and includes all musical genres, from chamber music to concerts. In this study I have planned to analyse musicologically three choral works with sacred orientation from the perspective of a psychological profile of the composer: *Sacred songs for a capella* mixed choir, op. 90; *Sacred hymns* for male choir, op. 112; *Psalm triptych* for a *capella* choir with female voices, op. 116. The proposed working tool for outlining the psychological profile, as well as the correlation of the studied works with the universe of sacred music is represented by the interview.

Keywords: personality, choral music, sacred music, psalm-singing, creativity.

1. Introduction

Human psychology contributes to forming personality through its mysterious composition and the complexity of its mechanism (sensations, perceptions, representations, thinking, memory, imagination, motivation, affectivity, communication, attention, will). "There is no psychological experience, designated through different concepts, left outside the concept of personality." (Zlate, 2009, p. 253) Personality is a reality and a construct, which, through a multitude of typologies, creates humanity's unity in variety. The present research is interdisciplinary between the two fields of music and psychology, which together reveal elements of construction of the human psyche, of a composer's personality traits. Thus, we consider focusing on a

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personal and general point of view, which we believe has assertion value: **any individual's work is a self-definition, a mirror of one's personality.**

1.1. Concepts

We will present the concepts that support this study from the point of view of an honest analysis of composer Carmen Petra-Basacopol's personality.

Personality represents a dynamic concept, which reveals a person's behaviours enabling him or her to adjust to the environment. Temperament, skills, character, intelligence and creativity are essential components of personality.

Emotion is a construct in psychology that defines the way in which the relations between reality and imagination are perceived. Emotion is a response to external stimuli, which sooner or later outline a certain adaptive behavior. Emotions build one's entire life.

Temperament is the emotional structure of personality. The four types of temperament, anticipated since Antiquity and defined by Galenius, highlighted through the heterogeneity and complexity of moods, are: sanguine, melancholic, choleric, phlegmatic.

Thinking is the cognitive psychic process that allows the capture of information, their mental representation through specific operations: analysis, synthesis, comparison, abstraction, concretization, generalization – individualization and their transformation into notions, judgments and reasoning. Thinking “produces substantial changes in the information it operates with, changes the nature of the information, makes the leap from non-essential to essential, from individual and particular to general, from concrete to abstract.” (Zlate, 2009, p. 156).

Musical thinking is referring to audible reality, which is processed through the same operations and is modified in notions, arguments and judgments with the help of language and musical language.

Intelligence. From an etymological point of view, the noun intelligence has its origin in the Latin word *intelligentia* and has the meaning of relation, of organization. This skill is conditioned, differentiated by the particularities of the nervous system, by one's familial and social profile.

Empathy is a person's capacity to manifest understanding for those around him or her, for their emotions, by demonstrating compassion and psychological support.

Inspiration is defined by psychologist Mihaela Roco as: “a psychic state of strong tension with a variable duration, during which future ideas or new solutions are outlined in general. The essential attributes of inspiration are: spontaneity and affective vibration” (Roco, 2004, p. 13).

Fantasy is that quality of mind, which, by correlating perception and previous knowledge, creates representations and unusual ideas.

Creativity is a component of personality which is expressed through the intelligence-and-fantasy binomial. It has the gift of shaping new material or spiritual perspectives, going beyond traditional, conservative boundaries. Psychologist and professor Gordon W. Allport (Harvard University, United States, where he held for the first time the course The Psychology of Personality) introduced the term *creativity* (1938), pointing out that “the psychic basis of creation is irreducible to skills and requires a general disposition of personality oriented towards the new, a certain (stylistic) configuration of psychic processes in a personality system...” (Popescu-Neveanu, 1978, p. 152). In the opinion of composer, musicologist and professor Jozsef Csire (1926-2004), “creativity expresses the essence of human beings, as a feature that generates the new, the everlasting impetus of human civilization and progress, of the transformation of the world. Human existence itself is due to general and specific creativity” (Csire, 1998, p. 66).

2. Carmen Petra-Basacopol

2.1. A stylistic profile

CPB - *No, I only wanted composition. I also played an instrument. Only composition. I started when I was a child. I improvised.*

Carmen Petra-Basacopol is a well-known and appreciated Romanian composer, whose works are performed in Romania, but also abroad. She attended her university studies at the București Conservatory, being supported and guided in the art of musical creation by composer and Professor Mihail Jora. The Department of Philosophy within the University of București, which she graduated in 1968, guided and completed her deep knowledge, which was useful to her in composing. Impressed by the musical thinking of George Enescu, but also of Mihail Jora and Paul Constantinescu, the composer elaborated and finalised her doctoral thesis at the Sorbonne University, Paris, with the theme *L’originalite de la musique roumaine, a travers l’oeuvre de G. Enesco, M. Jora et P. Constantinescu.*

Being a composer from the post-Enescu period, her original stylistics reveal her orientation towards the aesthetics of the late 19th and early 20th century: Impressionism, Neo-Classicism, Neo-Romanticism, with characteristic formulations of Romanian folklore or Byzantine music. The innovative trends of the 20th century, atonality, bruitism, concrete music and so on, did not influence her musical thinking into creating a stylistic constant. The atonal orientation is present only to a small extent in only two opera. Thus, the genres of her musical works – the lied, the suite, the sonata, instrumental chamber music, the instrumental concert, the symphony, the cantata, the oratory – are in the style of modernism, with unique features of the Romanian folk melos and of the hieratism of psaltic music.

2.2. Composer Carmen Petra-Basacopol's choral creation of sacred orientation

CPB - *In any case, I would like to point out that I have written sacred music very easily. It seemed to me the easiest thing I ever composed, precisely sacred music. So, somewhere it was lying in my soul and it had to appear. And I chose David's psalms.*

The composer's choral works represent a dimension of her creation, without being vast, but with original stylistic features. Her supple spirit and sonic science directed the composer towards another musical path, that of the choral creation of Byzantine orientation: *Psalms*, op. 66 (1992), for mixed choir; *Sacred songs*, op. 90 (2001), a *cappella* mixed choir; *Sacred hymns*, op. 112, (2006) for a *cappella* male choir; *Psalm Triptych*, op. 116 (2007), for a *cappella* choir, female voices.

The interview represents the tool of the present research. We have envisaged this interview as a substitute for the well-known personality questionnaires, but with the purpose of exploring emotional features and characteristics in order to understand the composer's motivational dynamics in relation to her compositions of sacred music.

Interview with Mrs. Carmen Petra-Basacopol, 26 October 2019, București

1. RM – What made you focus on music?

CPB – It is a gift that God gives you, and as you grow older the desire to make music also increases.

2. RM – In your work, when composing, do you need to set clear goals?

CPB – There is no need for this because everything is given to you. When you focus on a composition, you just have to close a door, withdraw and the inspiration comes, and stays there until the work is over. And then again you enter the ordinary world.

3. RM – When composing, does it happen for you to start from an idea and then harmony, polyphony, rhythm and timbre begin to enchain?

CPB – I have no worries about how it appears, how it disappears, I told you, when I feel the need to compose and something really starts to sing in my head then I retire, lock the door, inspiration comes and you have everything you need.

4. RM – Which element do you feel is the most important in your work among the four elements: pitch by melody or harmony, rhythm, nuances or timbre?

CPB – You cannot separate them, it depends on the musical idea that appears and that musical idea encompasses them all in a certain way. You cannot choose one.

RM – They are in synergy, so you consider.

CPB – Yes, yes.

5. RM – When you start composing, do you think you will finish well, that you will be satisfied with the work in the end? Do you have this optimistic end?

CPB – I have to be satisfied by the fact that when I have to compose I withdraw from my ordinary life and what I am given that is what I give.

6. RM - In your profession, as well as in your relationships with others, with your students during the time when you were teaching, were you a patient person? Are you a patient person?

CPB – Maybe I made mistakes, but I knew every student, I loved each and every one of them no matter how they behaved, and I always gave an 8 if he deserved a 7. If he deserved a 4 I gave him 5 to pass, but I would tell him to study and if I couldn't give a pass I would show him how to study so that he wouldn't be noted 4.

RM – Meaning, you have always been supportive and understanding.

CPB – I have always been supportive and they knew this, that's why even now when they see me, even on the street, they greet and hug me. They have not forgotten my love.

RM – Nobody forgets your love.

7. RM – Do you find reasons for joy in your career, both pedagogical and creative?

CPB – It's natural to be happy, it's very natural. It is an accomplishment in a way.

8. RM – Did the goals you set for yourself represent you? Were you satisfied or did you consider other people's opinions to a greater or lesser extent? Were you the one who decided most of the time for your career, for your works or your creation?

CPB – That depends on the period, because when I was younger, I had Master Jora. I worked with him for years and he was extremely exacting. So that was one period and after that I didn't have anyone anymore and I let everything unfold as it came.

9. RM – Your musical career had emotion as a manner of expression. You send positive emotion through your work.

CPB – Yes.

10. RM – We, the public and the musicologists, perceive it like that. But do you hide your emotions or do you express them in your relationships with other people? Even when you are in a concert hall and you hear your works, do you hide your emotions or express them easily?

CPB – No, I express them sincerely. I have no problem in expressing emotions.

11. RM – There is a sincerity that characterises you. How much time do you dedicate to your work?

CPB – That depends on the moment, it's hard to say. Of course, there were times when I was doing more composition, times when I did less, it depended. And then you may not be happy with something and resume the work.

12. RM – Do you happen to prefer **loneliness** to the company of other people?

CPB – Unfortunately, yes.

13. RM – Does it happen, when you work, to be very committed or determined or can you pay attention to other aspects around you, which would prevent you from finishing the work?

CPB – No, no, that is something I would not accept. Once I enter the path of inspiration, I do not accept to be interrupted. It cannot happen because the desire to write becomes painful. It is not possible. **When you engage in a work, it has to be done.**

14. RM – Do you trust yourself?

CPB- I do not trust myself, I trust that **you are given what is rightfully yours.**

15. RM – I am doing an analysis of the sacred music composed by you. And the sphere in which the sacred music falls is the spiritual one.

CPB – In any case, I want to point out that I have written **sacred music with so much ease.** To me it seems the easiest work that I have ever composed, precisely sacred music. So, it was lying somewhere in my soul and it had to appear. And I chose David's psalms.

16. RM – Was this a favourite topic?

CPB – Yes, especially since David accompanied himself with his harp. My favourite instrument is the harp. And then I understood how things worked. It's not by chance. He sang and played the harp, thereby accompanying himself.

17. RM – Therefore, out of the instruments you chose, in the framework of sacred music, which of them inspired you the most?

CPB – The harp, and although it is very difficult to write for harp, I have succeeded, I do not know thanks to which circumstances, but I have succeeded.

18. RM – Professor, what do you think about the future of academic music?

CPB – I think there are still young composers of value, although they are all frightened; they will not be lost, I believe that what is needed will be found for each era.

RM – You are right, I have the same belief, I have great faith in our young people.

CPB – I have a lot of faith in the young people that I see around me.

19. RM – Which of the musical genres feels closer to your personality, chamber music or broad concert genres?

CPB – I think my favourite genre is the concert genre.

20. RM - **But what about choral music, what can you tell us?**

CPB – I feel like I wrote less than I could have written.

21. RM – Do you feel more inspired by an ensemble of mixed voices or by an ensemble of even voices? Male or female?

CPB – Both, I wrote for both male and female voices.

22. RM – Which of these types of voices inspires you the most? The male voice through its depth or the female voice through its delicacy?

CPB – The male voice.

RM – It conveys the Divine message by means of Byzantine music.

23. RM – Where is the place of sacred music in your creation? How much does sacred music mean in your heart?

CPB – I do not know the answer, **I wrote sacred music with ease.** With so much ease that I cannot express it. Yes. I believe that if I had not felt so close to sacred music, I probably could not have written it. **It was as if I was pushed from behind towards sacred music.**

24. RM – Composition was your own choice or was your first thought electing the piano?

CPB – No, **I only wanted composition.** I also played an instrument. Only composition. I have composed since I was a child. I improvised.

25. RM – Which of the two qualities do you think characterises you, the creative or the practical one?

CPB – The creative one, without a doubt.

RM – I kindly thank you for your courtesy!

CPB – Thank you very much. I just want to tell you that because you keep asking me about **inspiration**: the moment this door closes, the moment I, somehow, leave this world and someone wants to come through that door, they bring me so much pain. It's not possible. That's why I always say: when you see that door closed, do not come, it kidnaps me from the world I have entered.

RM – It is an ineffable connection.

CPB – It is a connection for which you are not responsible. But if I close the door, it's something else, you're in another world. And if someone opens the door and comes in, they bring me back and it's very painful. That really hurts. I am just saying it, you don't need to write it. But I am telling you this to know what inspiration means. Of course, you must have all the knowledge. Inspiration does not tell you what to do. No, **you have to be learned in the field**, it's not a game, surrendering to inspiration. It does not work like that.

3. The interpretation of the data

3.1. The scientific framework for the concept of personality

We are starting our research from the assertion that music is a form of energy that starts from the brain and psyche of the creator and / or the

performer and is transferred to the brain and psyche of the receivers, or even the performers, causing instantly quantifiable transformations at the level of consciousness as they assimilate and become aware of perceptions, and over time, through changes in an individual's education and personality.

Personality is a dynamic process that is built and enriched throughout life (embryonic period, childhood, pre-adolescence, adolescence, adulthood, and maturity). Far from having a referential pattern, however, personality is a unity of being that superimposes, in unequal layers, dimensions of temperament, skills, character, intelligence and creativity. In this way, personality involves proportions of the physical, mental, emotional body, and, the relation to a social component. Psychologist and Professor M. Zlate states about human personality that "it is the living, concrete, empirical, passionate, rational man, so man as he is perceived outside of or in our being" (Zlate, 2009, p. 253).

Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961), the initiator of analytical psychology, is the one who, inspired by the ancient Greek model of the four temperaments or moods, revealed the two major categories of personality:

Extraverted – the energy is outwardly oriented.

Introverted – the energy is inwardly oriented.

His research took shape following his descent into the human psyche, through psychotherapy and clinical psychoanalysis. The results of these pieces of research are featured in the volume *Psychological Types* (1921). Conjugated with the two categories of extraverted and introverted, C. G. Jung also developed four functional types of personality.

- Rational functions: reflective and affective - specific to people who have initiative and ease in making decisions and judging
- Irrational functions: Sensorial and intuitive - specific to people who want to enrich their knowledge, in order to survive and to have normal behaviour.

C. G. Jung states that these typologies are not found in practice in a pure form. "It follows from the exact investigation of the individual case that, together with the most differentiated function, there is always a second function of secondary importance in the consciousness, and therefore less differentiated and relatively determinant." (Jung, 2004, p. 426)

3.2. Features highlighted in composer Carmen Petra-Basacopol's personality

By interviewing the composer, we have discovered the following personality features, which outline her stylistics:

- **Spirituality and Faith:** *"It is a gift that God gives you, and as you grow older, your desire to make music grows."*
- **Sincere expression of emotions:** *"I express them sincerely. I have no problem expressing emotions."*

- **Joy:** *“It is natural to be joyful; it is very natural. It’s an accomplishment in a certain way.”*

- **Optimism:** *“I don’t worry about how it appears, how it disappears, I told you, when I feel the need to compose and something really starts singing in my head, then I withdraw, lock the door, the inspiration comes, and you have everything that you need.”*

- **Empathy:** *I live with them, that is clear (Are you close to others, experiencing joy and sadness with them?)*

- **Determination:** *“I only wanted composition. I also played an instrument. Only composition. I started when I was a child. I improvised.”*

- **Consistency:** *“I easily wrote sacred music, as if I was pushed from behind towards sacred music.”*

- **Fantasy:** *“...because everything is given to you. When you focus on a composition, you just have to close the door, withdraw, and inspiration comes, but inspiration stays for as long as you work on that composition. And then again you enter the ordinary world.”*

- **Creativity:** *“But I am telling you this for you to know what inspiration means. Of course, you must have all the knowledge. It doesn’t work like that: inspiration tells you what to do. No, you must be a master of the topic, it is not just a game of awaiting inspiration. It doesn’t work that way.”*

- **Discretion:** *“I have to be content, meaning that when I need to compose, I withdraw from my ordinary life, and what I am given, that’s exactly what I give back.”*

- **Introversion:** *“Unfortunately, yes.” (Do you prefer loneliness to the company of other people?)*

The composer’s personality proves to be full of sensitivity, with an optimistic attitude, with the joy of living and offering from the fullness of her grace, introverted, with proper alternatives, connected to everyday situations, between rational functions, which are composed of reflexivity and affectivity, and irrational ones, through sensitivity and irrationality. “A musician becomes his own double in the compositional act: on the one hand, (s)he is the musician who imagines possible psychic structures, on the other (s)he is someone who elaborates the most appropriate objective structures to generate the imagined psychic structures.” (Bentoiu, 1977, p. 28)

Emotions guide personality. A musician’s, as well as a composer’s thinking implies the application of musical schemes, in psychological language, *patterns*, which have been learned, repeated through education and then through the diversity of musical, compositional or interpretative experiences: recitals, concerts. Over time, these *patterns* have become the elements of language, specific to the composer.

Through the mirror of these references, we have elaborated the analysis of the following works from composer Carmen Petra-Basacopol's sacred creation: *Sacred songs*, for mixed *a capella* choir, op. 90 (2001), *Sacred hymns*, for male choir, op. 112 (2006), *Psalms Triptych*, op. 116 (2007), for a *capella* choir, female voices.

3.3. Mirroring the author's personality in composer Carmen Petra-Basacopol's sacred music

3.3.1. *Sacred songs*, for mixed *a capella* choir, op. 90 (2001)

The cycle of *Sacred Songs*, op. 90, is under the symbolism of number four, about which Elena Chircev says that "it is the Number of the Holy Cross and of the Evangelists" (Chircev, 2009, p. 48). Thus, the work has four pieces composed for four voices (soprano, alto, tenor, bass). The musical scores surprise us with refined elements of language, elaborated melody, musical rhythm, through all three intensely varied components – rhythm, metrics, tempo –, the lively dynamics, as well as the timbre of a mixed choir, being different than the one allowed in psaltic music. All these are elements of the composer's fantasy and creativity, conceived with the consciousness of Sacrality, which convey a particular emotional flow. Due to the proximity to the elaborate, but lively qualities of secular academic music, the cycle was called *Sacred songs*.

Mântuișete-mă [Save me] – *Psalms 68*

The first chant of the cycle is a prayer for redemption, for forgiveness of sins in order to receive peace and security. *Save me, God, / for waters have entered my soul / I have sunk into the mire of the deep*. In order to achieve a verisimilar realisation of imploring salvation, the composer correlates the lyrics with an equal rhythm, in *Moderato* tempo, in the sad colour of the *Aeolic B* mode. The **AB** bistrophic lied architecture with an Introduction and Coda is the one designed for the sacred message. As a sign of the tension, of the request waiting for an answer (*Save me, God*), the composer plans the first phrase (mm. 1-3), as an alternance of the 5th and 6th steps, a modal sonority that signifies tension and inner turmoil.

I "Mântuișete-mă" - Psalm 68 Carmen Petra-Basacopol

The musical score is for four voices: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. It is in 3/4 time, Moderato tempo, and features a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics are: "Mân-tu-i eș-te-mă, Dum-ne-ze-u-le, că a-pe au in-trat pă-nă la". The score is marked with a dynamic of *mf* (mezzo-forte). The music is in the Aeolic B mode.

Fig. 1 Carmen Petra-Basacopol, *Psalm 68*, mm. 1-4

The composer directs this state from acceptance to begging, passing through step I (mm. 9, 10), through the chord of 2nd step altered ascendingly (mm. 11-12), step V (m. 13). The climax of this first section is reached by synchronising the cry of despair with a leap of small sixth, a motif which is variously and melodically taken over by alto (perfect-fourth leap) and bass (perfect-octave leap).

Fig. 2 Carmen Petra-Basacopol, *Psalm 68*, mm. 14-18

The end of section A (measures 21-24) is a reflection of the state of despair, which the composer envisages on the vowel *o*. By alternating a small second at the soprano voice (*F#-G*), a long second at the alto voice (*D-E*), the composer suggests a sigh. The male voices support through accompaniment:

Fig. 3 Carmen Petra-Basacopol, *Psalm 68*, mm. 19-24

In section B, a surprising element is the unique escape from the isochronous rhythm, a triplet of equal values, which represents the composer's intention of emphasising the significance of the soul. The formula that accompanies the phrase *My Soul!* is present in a modified tempo, *poco meno mosso – molto rubato*, doubling the intention through the agogic sign of *decrescendo* and *ritenuto* (mm. 31-34):



Fig. 4 Carmen Petra-Basacopol, *Psalm 68*, mm. 30-33

The last section, *Coda*, is directed in an ascending direction, both melodically and harmonically: VI 7, VII 7, I, V, I. The imperative requirement is obvious: *Save me, God!*

Inima mea s-a turburat [My heart is troubled] – *Psalm 54*

The second chant of the cycle supports the attribute of originality through several elements of language. In the architecture of the bistrophic lied piece **A** (mm. 1-18) **B** (mm. 19-33) and *Coda* (mm. 34-39), the composer focuses her attention onto the rhythmic plane, the asymmetrical metrics - 5/8 - and the atypical phrases. Thus, section **A** has four phrases, where the rigour of the square phrases is replaced by the modernity of asymmetric expression, due also to the prosodic rhythm: f1 = 6 measures, f2 = 5 measures, f3 = 4 measures, f4 = 3 measures. This last phrase is noticeable through the overlapping of two texts, a sign of perseverance in prayer, in measures 16-18:

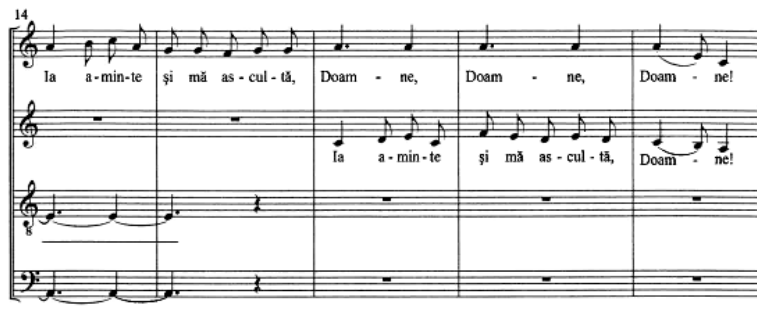


Fig. 5 Carmen Petra-Basacopol, *Psalm 54*, mm. 14-18

In section **B**, the composer persists in the same asymmetry of phrases, which allows melodic and prosodic fluency.

Coda is a manifestation of joyful emotions, as a response to *Lord will give me wings to fly*. The melodic and rhythmic enchaining is that of a game, on the syllables *la, la, la*, in *crescendo*, culminating on the sound *la 2*, in the soprano voice:

Fig. 6 Carmen Petra-Basacopol, *Psalm 54*, mm. 34-39

Binecuvântează suflete pe Domnul [Bless the Lord, soul] – *Psalm 102*

The third chant brings to attention another dimension of the musical architecture, that of the monostrophic lied, in which **A** (mm. 1-9), is exhibited on step I in the *Aeolic D* mode, and **Av** (mm. 15-19) on the third step, altered ascendingly.

A short five-measure bridge leads with the same lively, almost dancing motif to the *Coda*.

In this final **Av** section, which has two phrases, the composer experiences a dynamic form of accompaniment, in sixteenthths, in the same alert tempo, *Allegretto – poco rubato*, only to diminish the tempo and the nuance in the last four measures (mm. 33-36), on the syllable *a*, suggesting gentleness in the request to the Divinity: *Bless the Lord, soul a....*:

Fig. 7 Carmen Petra-Basacopol, *Psalm 102*, mm. 33-36

Ziua și noaptea am strigat [I screamed day and night] – Psalm 87

The fourth chant contrasts the most to the model of psaltic music. From the very beginning, the composer surprises through the easiness of the tempo, *Allegro appassionato*, allowing sadness and then submission to express themselves categorically. The rhythmic and syntactic plan is the one that allows the composer to convey the message, close to the technique of *bell canto* virtuosity. The free lied form, **ABCA** and Coda, is the structure that allowed the composer to configure new motifs out of the old ones, displayed in eighths, in **A** and **B**, then in sixteenths with a dot, in **C** and **Av**, a sign of a well-developed compositional technique, that serve novelty and musical aesthetics.

The first phrase of section **A** begins with a polyphonic display in descending direction, suggesting the sound of the bells:

- Psalm 87 -

Allegro appassionato

Fig. 8 Carmen Petra-Basacopol, *Psalm 87*, mm. 1-4

The end of section **B** (measures 15-16) surprises through the temerity of the writing. The alto voice, then the soprano and tenor, chain sixteenths on the vowel *a*, which outlines a vocal virtuosity less found in a choral ensemble score of sacred inspiration:

Fig. 9 Carmen Petra-Basacopol, *Psalm 87*, mm. 14-16

desires You, my God. / My hope, my salvation, living God, my God / Bring joy to my soul and my heart. The language elements are always a sound support of the text, often symbolic and cryptic. The work reveals in great detail the composer's personality. The symmetry of the chant, the form of an **A B Av** tristrophic simple lied (each section has the size of a period), is there to express the composer's creativity for each dimension of the musical language: the *Aeolic C* mode with the mobility of the seventh step (only at the baritone voice), the agogical indication, *parlando-rubato*, which awakens the emotion of worship and submission to Divinity):

The image shows a musical score for three voices: Tenor (T.), Baritone (Bar.), and Bass (B.). The score is for measures 5 through 9 of Psalm 41. The Tenor part is in the treble clef, and the Baritone and Bass parts are in the bass clef. The music is in a 3/4 time signature and features a melody with various ornaments and dynamics, including *mf* (mezzo-forte). The lyrics are in Romanian and are: "pe Ti - ne Dum - ne - ze - u - le, nă - dej - dea mea mân - tu - i - rea mea" for the Tenor and "su - fle - tul meu pe Ti - ne Dum - ne - ze - u - le, nă - dej - dea mea mân - tu - i - rea mea" for the Baritone and Bass. The score includes a triplet of eighth notes in the first measure of each part.

Fig. 11 Carmen Petra-Basacopol, *Psalm 41*, mm. 5-9

Often, the tenor voice is the one that supports melodically the symbolism of the lyrics, enriched dynamically through accents of expression and the hue of *forte*. The technique of accompaniment, which has a supporting role, and from a psychological point of view, of acceptance, approval, is often taken over by the solemn voices of baritone and bass.

Până când [Until when] – *Psalm 12*

The significance of the lines in Psalm 12 allows us to make this association between the psalmist's prayer, and the manifested despair: *Until You, Lord will forget me / Until you turn your face / Until my enemy rises / O Lord God / I for your mercy hoped / Hear me, my God*. The end of the psalm, however, reveals the joy and trust in Divinity, *Let my heart rejoice / I shall sing Halleluiah to the Lord*.

The originality of the work, the composer's level of fantasy consists in the order of the two human, dichotomous attitudes of despair and exultation, in two distinct sections of the chant, following the architecture of a lied of binary structure: **AB**. Thus, the first part is thought out in a polyphonic syntax

Allegretto

T. Pă-nă când, pă-nă când Doam-ne mă vei ui-ta pă-nă când

Bar. Pă-nă când, vei în-

B. Doam-ne mă vei ui-ta A. pă-nă când vei în-

Fig. 12 Carmen Petra-Basacopol, *Psalm 12*, section A, mm. 1-7

while the second section, **B**, is planned in a homophonic syntax, as sign of the reunion:

mf tranquillo

T. eu spre mi-la Ta am nă-dăj-du-it a-u-zi - mă Dum-ne-ze-ul meu,

Bar. eu spre mi-la Ta am nă-dăj-du-it a-u-zi - mă Dum-ne-ze-ul meu,

B. eu spre mi-la Ta am nă-dăj-du-it a-u-zi - mă Dum-ne-ze-ul meu,

T. bu-cu-ra-se-va, bu-cu-ra-se-va, bu-cu-ra-se-va i - ni - ma mea'

Bar. bu-cu-ra-se-va, bu-cu-ra-se-va, bu-cu-ra-se-va i - ni - ma mea cân-ta-voi

B. bu-cu-ra-se-va, bu-cu-ra-se-va, bu-cu-ra-se-va i - ni - ma mea

Fig. 13 Carmen Petra-Basacopol, *Psalm 12*, Section B, mm. 17-25

The tempo *Allegretto*, suggesting the Byzantine irmological movement, the ternary metrics, the often-attributed theme of the bass, the accompaniment passages, the rhythmic variation, are language elements that support compositional freedom within the referential framework of Byzantine music.

Către Domnul am strigat [I cried to the Lord] – *Psalm 119*

The architecture designed by the composer for the third part of the cycle is monostrophic, and the homophonic syntax and slow tempo, *Andante*, support the unity of the chant. The text suggested that structure: *To the Lord I cried and He heard me, / Lord, redeem my soul, from the deceitful tongue, from the unrighteous lips, / To the Lord, I cried:*

1 *Andante*
T. *mp*
Că - tre Dom - nul am stri - gat,
Bar. *mp*
Că - tre Dom - nul am stri - gat,
B. *mp*
Că - tre Dom - nul am stri - gat,

Fig. 14 Carmen Petra-Basacopol, *Psalm 119*, mm. 1-2

An element of originality with a special vibrational load is that of a general pause, measure 19, felt by the composer as an urgent need for recollection:

1 *Andante*
T. *mp*
Că - tre Dom - nul am stri - gat,
Bar. *mp*
Că - tre Dom - nul am stri - gat,
B. *mp*
Că - tre Dom - nul am stri - gat,

Fig. 15 Carmen Petra-Basacopol, *Psalm 119*, mm. 17-19

Lăudați pe Domnul [Praise the Lord] – *Psalm 148*

Joy is the sovereign attitude of this chant, which suggests the same element of the composer's personality. Thus, the last chant of the choral cycle represents the gesture of grace oriented towards Divinity, an aspect highlighted by the choice of the lines in Psalm 148: *Praise the Lord, praise Him / In the highest, praise the Lord / Sun and moon, stars, light / Mountains and hills, trees and cedars / etc.* The elements of musical language also support this

three lieder have the meaning of songs of praise and love for the whole creation: psalms 103, 116, 134-135.

Binecuvântează suflete pe Domnul [Bless the Lord, soul] – Psalm 103

The first chant has an architecture, simple bistrophic lied, **AB**, which allows, through the contrast of the two sections, some elements of originality that harness the Byzantine background in a modern vision. Thus, the chant has mainly gradual writing, only sporadic insertions of perfect-fourth, perfect-fifth, small-sixth leaps. The rhythm is isochronous but the values are very short, sixteenthths. The measure is 4/8 in section A and 3/8 in section B. The change of metrics is accompanied by an agogic change: *poco meno mosso*, thus being an accentuation of the metric variation.

Iubesc pe Domnul [I love the Lord] – Psalm 116

The second chant of the cycle, *I love the Lord* (Psalm 116), has the architecture of an **AB** simple bistrophic lied, sections framed by an Introduction (mm. 1-5) and Coda (mm. 19-23). The song is thought in the alternation of the speed of movement with the first lied, *Andante con moto*, the slow and serene tempo being a suggestion of the thanks and gratitude shown to God. From the introductory phrase, we attest here the composer's attitude of sensitivity and godliness, which transpires through the delicate melodic line, through the subdued tone of the *mp*, through the subtle sliding of the second voice, towards the outline of the melodic line, on the discrete insistence on *my voice*:

2. Iubesc pe Domnul
Ps. 116

1 *Andante con motto*

32 *mp* Iu-besc pe Dom-nul căci El a-u-de gla-sul meu, gla-sul meu, gla-sul meu

A. *mp* Iu-besc pe Dom-nul căci El a-u-de gla-sul meu, gla-sul meu, gla-sul meu

Fig. 17 Carmen Petra-Basacopol, *Psalm 116*, mm. 1-5

Both sections are contrasting in musical ideas through tempo, but have a common feature that suggests the psalmist's joy in directing the feeling of love to the Lord: an original refrain on syllables *la, la, la*:

S1
 la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, toa-tă via-ța mea
 S2
 la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, toa-tă via-ța mea
 A.
 la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, toa-tă via-ța mea

Fig. 18 Carmen Petra-Basacopol, *Psalm 116*, mm. 9-10

The passage to the third chant, *Praise the Lord* (Ps. 134, 135), through the last measures of the second psalm, is natural, continuous, through the *crescendo* dynamics and the polyphonic display of voices. Thus, the beginning of the third psalm of the cycle is firm, by the metrics (6/8) and the rhythm proposed by the composer, by the polyphonic entry of the voices, by the suggestive tempo in accordance with a song of praise, correlated with the hermeneutical genre of the Byzantine song:

1 *Allegro giocoso*
 S1 *mf* Ia - tă, bi-ne-cu-vân-tați pe Dom-nul, bi-ne-cu-vân-tați pe Dom-nul, A
 S2 *mf* Ia - tă, bi-ne-cu-vân-tați pe Dom-nul, A
 A. *mf* Ia - tă, bi-ne-cu-vân-tați pe

Fig. 19 Carmen Petra-Basacopol, *Psalm 116*, mm. 1-4

For the most truthful transmission of the selected lines, the composer planned the work in a free-lied form, **ABCD**, each section emphasising a representative verse of the psalm through melodic, metric and dynamic aspects.

In contrast to the first section, **A**, displayed in the Ionian **D**, the last one, **D**, is completed on *Aeolic B*, allowing the soprano 2 and alto voices to lead the musical idea, and the soprano 1 voice to insist on the approach of a dynamic and rhythmic accompaniment:

Fig. 20 Carmen Petra-Basacopol, *Psalm 116*, mm. 18-19

4. Conclusions

C.P.B. - I don't know, I wrote sacred music easily. So easily that I don't know how to tell you. I think if sacred music weren't so close to me, I probably wouldn't write it, that is why. But it was as if I was pushed from behind towards sacred music.

By analysing the three cycles of choral works, we understood to correlate composer Carmen Petra-Basacopol's personality to the essence of her works. The identification of her personality with the elements of language that we have found in the choral scores of sacred orientation constitute proof of the confirmed hypothesis: **Any work by an individual means self-definition, a reflection of one's own personality.**

Composer Carmen Petra-Basacopol's entire creation is an emblem of the Romanian musical culture of post-Enescu orientation, which represents an expression of the essence of her personality. Her works, from the chamber ones to the vocal-symphonic ones, are an upward step from her education, knowledge, the need for creative expression and living in spirituality. The composer's resistance to the radical orientations of modernity is owed to her personality, which emphasised her "moderately modern" orientation (Valentina Sandu Dediu). Thus, her personality features are those that marked her work, by which she showed admiration and respect for the musical thinking of G. Enescu, M. Jora, P. Constantinescu, those who proved the specificity of Romanian music and who raised and integrated it into the universal musical culture.

The composer's thinking in the analysed choral music of sacred orientation is based on the modernity of her compositional science, through the conjunction between the aesthetics of Neo-Classicism, of Impressionism, of the Romanian ethos having in its structure some fundamental elements of the Byzantine psaltic song: the repetition of melodic figures, the variational process, the accompaniment, the proximity of the Byzantine tempos – irmological, andante, papadic. However, the song remains the primary element

of artistic expression, such as “Cantilena, with its lyrical, meditative character will predominate in Byzantine music”. (Giuleanu, 1986, p. 322) Rhythmic and dynamic variation constantly enriches her musical pages. Timbre is coordinated by the composer’s creative fantasy, because the tradition of the exclusive use of male voices does not limit timbre in two of her works, *Psalm Triptych*, for female voices, and *Sacred Songs*, for mixed choir.

Thus, the message of composer Carmen Petra-Basacopol’s works of sacred essence reveals attitudes of a distinguished endowment that are subsumed to the belief of spiritual elevation: sincere expression of emotions, especially of joy, gratitude, empathy, consistency and determination, discretion and slight introversion, an obvious manifestation of fantasy, creativity, gifted originality.

RM – What made you focus on music?

CPB - It is a gift that God gives you and as you grow older, your desire to make music also increases.

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