

Institutions of Religious Music Education in Interwar Romania. Case Study: The Academy of Religious Music in Bucharest

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Abstract: In the spring of 1928, Miron – the first Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church – established The Academy of Religious Music in Bucharest, the only academic music institution in Romania, at the time, whose purpose was – from the perspective of its founder, the Patriarch – the rehabilitation of the status of Byzantine music in the Orthodox Church and the establishment of a coherent relationship with Western vocal religious music. The present article investigates the historical, social and cultural context of the establishment of this singular institution of religious music education in Romania, as well as its necessity, objectives and utility. It also explores the benefits it brought to Romanian Orthodox religious music and to the Church, until 1948, when it was disbanded by the Communist regime.

Keywords: Romanian music, Church chant, Nationalism in music, National School of Composition, Byzantine musicology

“I feel a dire need for a ‘religious music academy’ to be created, where truly prepared people could thoroughly study our ecclesiastical music... An academy which would rescue this treasure, the traditional music of our Church – which is already on its way to being lost, influenced by elements which corrupt its originality. Our ecclesiastical life will require every sacrifice for its salvation and nursing.”¹

¹ “Simt mare trebuință să se creeze o «academie de muzică religioasă», în care să se studieze temeinic și de oameni deplin pregătiți muzica noastră bisericească... O academie care să salveze această comoară, tradiționala muzică a Bisericii noastre – care începe să se piardă și să se influențeze de elemente stricătioase pentru originalitatea ei. Viața noastră bisericească cere orice jertfe pentru salvarea și îngrijirea ei. ***”, “Cuvântare rostită de I.P.S. Dr. Miron Cristea în ședința din 4 februarie 1925 a Sfântului Sinod, după ridicarea la rangul de Patriarh,” *Glasul Bisericii*, year LI, no. 1-5, January-May (1925): 83-84.

These are the words through which Miron Cristea (1868-1939) expressed on November 1, 1925 in his enthronement speech as first Patriarch of Romania his vision of a future establishment. It was meant to revitalise traditional religious music and to perfect Church singers by over-specialising them as teachers of music, protopsaltes and Church choir conductors.² It is easily noticeable that the rhetoric of the first Patriarch of Romania is part of a trend which valued the ideology of nationalism, popular not only in Romania, but in the whole Europe of those times. The context for such an initiative was likely created by the following circumstances:

1. First of all, there is the creation of “Greater Romania” in 1918 through the union of the Kingdom of Romania (made up of the historical Romanian principalities Wallachia and Moldavia), Transylvania, Banat, Bessarabia, and Bucovina. The “Great Union”, as the historical event is known, suggested the idea of a cultural-artistic unity at the level of these Romanian provinces, including that of the religious music, in spite of obvious specific musical traits which existed in Transylvania and in Banat specifically;³

2. Secondly, the rise of the Romanian Orthodox Church to the rank of Patriarchy in February 1925. In regards to our subject, this meant on the one hand the union of the Orthodox communities in the three historical provinces under one unique ecclesiastical administration – that of the Romanian Orthodox Church, and on the other hand the configuration of a new strategy of organising the higher theological education, a strategy which also includes the idea of establishing an Academy of Religious Music;

3. Thirdly, there is the establishment of cultural institutions of various educational levels throughout the country, which will more or less willingly propel interwar cultural and artistic life. For example, in December 1920 the Society of Romanian Composers was established, led by George Enescu (1881-1955) as president and by ethnomusicologist Constantin Brăiloiu (1893-1958) as general secretary. This created the general organisational context and the main strategic directions of the professional activity of “musical note scribes”, which also involved those passionate about religious music;⁴

² ***, “Lege pentru recunoaşterea şi organizarea Academiei de muzică religioasă de pe lângă Sf. Patriarhie ortodoxă din Bucureşti,” *Monitorul Oficial*, no. 114, 27 May (1930): 3757-3770. See also Elisabeta Milea, “Academia de Muzică Religioasă” (PhD thesis, *Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu*, 2015), 16.

³ On this issue, see the excellent book by Costin Moisil, *Construcţia unei identităţi româneşti în muzica bisericească* (Bucharest: Editura Universităţii Naţionale de Muzică Bucureşti, 2018), especially the chapter “Probleme de identitate în muzica bisericească ortodoxă din Transilvania.”

⁴ For the history of this institution see Octavian Lazăr Cosma, *Universul muzicii româneşti. Uniunea Compozitorilor şi Muzicologilor din România (1920-1995)* (Bucharest: Editura Muzicală a Uniunii Compozitorilor şi Muzicologilor din România, 1995).

4. Last but not least, we have the extensive inquiry which was started among musicians in the *Muzica* magazine in a less intense fashion in 1916, but which became much stronger in 1920-1921. It addressed the issue of creating a national musical composition school, based on Western compositional language and techniques, adapted to the rich, native folk background and to the Byzantine monody, a school which would later on claim religious composition as well.

This is the context and the general framework in which the Academy of Religious Music in Bucharest would try to exist and to define itself starting with the year of its inauguration, 1928, and until 1948, when the communist regime would dissolve it, along with other 40 schools of ecclesiastical singers and of Orthodox theological seminaries, which would be followed by those of different confessions.⁵ During this time, the Academy became a generous environment which held intense debates over important themes for the understanding of the concept of the “Romanian school of music,” as specialists refer to it, be it compositional or musicological, a concept within which ecclesiastical music held a very important position.

In the following part, I will discuss two major themes which have rendered particular the activity of the Academy of Religious Music within the complex construct of the identity of the national music and the endeavour to discover a “Romanian solution” for Church music:

1. The “homogenisation”/standardization of Church Music („uniformizarea muzicii bisericesti”)

May we have a sole church music, just like we have a sole voice! (Patriarch Miron Cristea).⁶

As musicologist Costin Moisil noted, the knowledge of Byzantine monodic chanting and of the Western multipart vocal music (with Russian, German or French compositional influences and techniques) had become something normal for the musicians in Moldavia and Wallachia even before the year 1900.⁷ The antagonism between the two types of musical syntax (monody, and polyphony/harmony accordingly), created at the same time as ruler Alexandru Ioan Cuza’s reforms,

⁵ Nicolae Gheorghită, “Nationalism through Sacred Chant? Byzantine Musicology Research in Totalitarian Romania,” *Studia Musicologica. An International Journal of Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences* 56(4) (2015): 327-341. Republished in Nicolae Gheorghită, *Musical Crossroads: Church Chants and Brass Bands at the Gates of the Orient* (Bucharest: Editura Muzicală, 2015), 135-153.

⁶ ***, “Raportul General al Secțiunii culturale pe anul 1934, către adunarea eparhială Nr. 4716/1935,” *Actele Desbaterile și Hotărârile Adunării Eparhiale în sesiunea ordinară din anul 1935* (Bucharest: Tipografia Cărților Bisericești, 1935): 23-24.

⁷ Costin Moisil, *Geniu românesc vs. tradiție bizantină. Imaginea cântării bisericesti în muzicologia românească* (Bucharest: Editura Muzicală, 2016), 21.

during the seventh decade of the 19th century, as well as the debate between tradition and modernity (monody *versus* harmony) were steps which had seemingly been overcome in that age.⁸ In this context, the Academy seemed to embody the ideal framework for the successful cohabitation of Western and psaltic music, and the "homogenisation" or standardisation („uniformizarea") of ecclesiastical music, however complicated and difficult to achieve, had to happen in the high educational establishment of the Mother Church. George Breazul, one of the important professors of the Academy, who was also "borrowed" like many other specialists from the Royal Academy of Music and Dramatic Art in Bucharest (today National University of Music Bucharest), underlined that the aforementioned academic space had to set aside "the tendency toward adversity between the two forms of music; the two dimensional types (melodic and harmonic) and the two Church music styles have to get along and to merge in the spirit of the unity of the work of art and within the equilibrium of the Church."⁹

It seems that Breazul (1893-1961) too, much like another renowned individual on the musical scene of the age, Ioan Popescu-Pasărea (1871-1943), wished to see this act of the "homogenisation"/standardisation of the Church music in terms defined today by musicologists and theologians as "a communion which is implied by the very existence of the Church". Thus, the theme of the standardisation applied in the case of the Church answers a "deeply theological and ecclesiastic need".¹⁰

How must this "homogenisation"/standardisation be made, however, and to what extent was the Academy of Religious Music successful in this endeavour?

As I have mentioned before, for religious choral compositions, the unique footprint that was long-sought-after meant the fructuous merging of the native element and of modernity, of the Romanian traditional psaltic chant and of Western compositional techniques. Constantin Brăiloiu, one of the founders of Romanian musicology – along with George Breazul, Ioan D. Petrescu (1884-1970) and Dimitrie Cuclin (1885-1978) –,¹¹ who was for a brief period of time rector of the Academy of Religious Music, appreciates the choral Church compositions of the revered composer Dumitru Georgescu Kiriac (1866-1928), who studied at the Conservatory and at the Schola Cantorum in Paris, as "faultless models of Byzantine style polyphonic

⁸ Moisil, *Geniu românesc*, 21.

⁹ George Breazul, "Necesitatea înființării unei academii de muzică bisericească" (II), *Cuvântul*, Bucharest, year III, no. 825, 1 August (1927): 1.

¹⁰ Vasile Grăjdian, "Uniformizarea cântării în Biserica Ortodoxă Română," in *Volum omagial – Pr. prof. dr. Nicu Moldoveanu la 70 de ani*, eds. Vasile Stanciu & Stelian Ionașcu (Bucharest: Editura Basilica, 2010), 134.

¹¹ Speranța Rădulescu, *Peisaje muzicale în România secolului XX* (Bucharest: Muzeul Țăranului Român-Fundația Al. Tzigara-Samurcaș, 2001), first part, 1900-1944, p. 43.

composition".¹² Of all the musician's works in this particular genre, Brăiloiu particularly championed the *Îngerul a strigat* [*O Άγγελος έβόα, The Angel Cried*] musical piece for mixed choir, based on the homonymous hymn of the venerable father of the Romanian psaltic school from the beginning of the 19th century, Hieromonk Macarie (1750-1836). This work is claimed by the master of the Academy as the composition which "has stood as the grounds of a real Romanian Palestrinian style".¹³

As for the psaltic repertoire, the same ethnomusicologist, along other contemporaries of his, thought that the restoration of the monodic chant of the Romanian Orthodox Church has to be based on a repertoire "as cleanly Romanian and Byzantine as possible".¹⁴ Moreover, he suggests that the standardisation of the Byzantine chanting should be applied not only in Romania, but that it should also be extended to the other Orthodox peoples, "taking as basis the actual Greek repertoire" (a view which was probably taken from Bourgault-Ducoudray), similar to how the Catholic Church had decided to unify the Gregorian repertoire.¹⁵

Only sparingly expressed, the ideas regarding the "homogenisation"/standardisation of the national Church music of the two important musicologists of the time, George Breazul and Constantin Brăiloiu, but which were also acknowledged by other important musicians of the time,¹⁶ centralise the intentions which the Academy of Religious Music had assumed ever since its establishment and which had to be translated into practice. In spite of the political and historical turmoil of the interwar period, and in spite of a permanent financial crisis which threatened the existence of the establishment, even after its inclusion in 1940 as a simple specialisation into the Royal Academy of Music and Dramatic Art, the initiative of Patriarch Miron to publish "homogenised"/standardised versions of Church chants under the direct patronage of the Academy paid off.¹⁷ Some of these publications had come out before

¹² Constantin Brăiloiu, "Muzica bisericească (I)," radio conference in Bucharest, 1942, in Constantin Brăiloiu, *Opere*, ed. Emilia Comișel, vol. 6, first part (Bucharest: Editura Muzicală, 1998), 238.

¹³ Constantin Brăiloiu, "Colinde de Paști-Muzica bisericească," radio conference in Bucharest, 1931, in Brăiloiu, *Opere*, ed. Comișel, vol. 6, first part, 233.

¹⁴ Brăiloiu, "Colinde de Paști-Muzica bisericească," 233.

¹⁵ Brăiloiu, "Muzica bisericească (I)," 238.

¹⁶ Ion Popescu-Pasărea, "Starea cântării bisericești în Bucovina," *Cultura*, year XXIII, no. 1-2, January-February (1936): 3. For a detailed discussion of nationalism and the role played by "homogenisation"/standardisation in Romanian liturgical music, see Costin Moisil, *Construcția unei identități românești în muzica bisericească* (Bucharest: Editura Universității Naționale de Muzică București, 2018). See also Moisil, *Geniu românesc*, 75.

¹⁷ Such endeavours existed ever since 1926 and were carried out at the suggestion of the Patriarch. "For instance, I advised the choir master from the Patriarchy, Mr. Cucu (Gheorghe: 1882-1932, *our note*), to harmonise the following Church song collections for the general use of the people: 1) *The Chants of the Lamentations* during the Holy Week. How many millions of believers scout the Holy

1928 (the year when the Academy was founded), while others would come out at the request of the same Founding Father (Primate) of the Romanian Orthodox Church, through the organisation of a national contest in 1938. Financially sponsored, the contest was open to all professionals of the branch, and its purpose was to select someone for the publishing of two Church chant collections, one monodic and one for a mixed choir.¹⁸ I must mention that in spite of the fact that the archive documents show a significant compositional production, it is unknown which of the works have been rewarded, or what their fate was afterwards, as they were never published.

2. The transcription of the Church chants

“Back to the old, because they were better!...” (Patriarch Miron Cristea).¹⁹

The problematics of transcribing the Byzantine musical semiography into Western staff notation has become another intensely debated subject in Romanian interwar

Church during the Holy Week? How blessed they would feel to be able to listen to these well-performed pieces. People would gather as if to listen to the famous “Miserere” in the West. 2) An *Anthology of Church Chants and Carols* performed by three equal voices. 3) A *Liturgy for a Mixed Choir* approved by the Holy Synod and brought forth a long time ago to the Ministry of Arts, a liturgy which has many parts that are already being sung and which adorn the divine service. 4) So I did ask the gentle ecclesiastical composer Kiriak (Dumitru Georgescu, *our note*) to set up a light but melodic liturgy, starting from the traditional music for children and for the people, so that children can learn it in school, so that the people will steadily get used to it until the whole village ends up singing in the Church. This *Liturgy for the children and for the people* is ready. It is waiting to be printed. I found out that the former Minister is Alex.[andru] Lapedatu and at our request, the gentle Minister adjudicated 50.000 lei for the printing. I recommend the printing of this collection of Church music by our gentle Minister, as well as its circulation within schools, high schools and among the people, because it is made up by two men who are well taught in Byzantine Church music and because it is made at my advice, which takes into account the artistic culture of the people and, through this, the nobility of their souls.” ***, “Faceți ceva și pentru arta poporului,” *Apostolul*, year III, no. 7, 1-15 April (1926): 50-51.

¹⁸ According to the archived documents, the first collection was supposed to encompass “all liturgical, traditional chants, in one voice and Western staff notation. The basis of this repertoire must be the simplification of our Church music, as clean as possible and inspired from the best versions of our Church chants, which can be found in our old documents. And besides that, there should be: the doxologies and the ecclesiastical pieces to chant the celebrations of the year. The collection which was approved by the committee of specialists becomes the property of The Academy of Religious Music of Bucharest, which will print the necessary editions.” The second collection included “the chants of Saint John Chrysostom’s liturgy with the usual additions required to Saint Basil of Caesarea’s liturgy and with *the Ever-holy* for mixed choirs – the songs must not be absolutely free compositions, but rather inspired by the melody specific to our Church of the Eastern Orthodoxy.” The National Archives of Romania, *Miron Cristea Fund*, File no. 9, f. 20-21.

¹⁹ Cf. Miron Cristea *apud* Ion Popescu-Pasărea, “Spiritul profan în cântarea corală bisericească,” *Cultura*, year XXVI, no. 10-11, October-November (1937): 96.

musicology and the specialists came almost exclusively out of the Academy of Religious Music. The subject at hand has a long history²⁰ and raises the following question: from which musical semiography to make the transcription into staff notation: from that of the "Three Teachers" (the so-called "New Notation" or Chrysanthine notation) or from the one before the Reform of 1814 (the "Old Notation")? Ioan Popescu-Pasărea, one of the most experienced and multi-skilled psaltic music chanters in the first half of the 20th century, brought this subject forth not only in the *Cultura* magazine, which he led, but also in his course, which was entitled *Theory of the Psaltic [Music] and Modern Music Theory* ("Modern" refers to Western music theory, *our note*) – *comparison and transcript*. He held this course at the *Psaltic Music* department within the Academy. His didactic and compositional expertise in this field makes Pasărea assert that the Western musical notation is not able to highlight all of the refinements of the psaltic music, neither when it comes to the ornamental level, nor when it comes to the diastematic (interval) level. To honour his proverbial tolerance, Pasărea proposes a compromise solution: the transcription in Western staff notation only of the simple chants (the syllabic ones, most likely) and less of the others.²¹ It is important to mention that in the same context, Pasărea only speaks about Chrysantine notation, most likely the only Byzantine semiography which the musician was familiar with.

The new rector, father Ioan D. Petrescu, who followed Brăiloiu, did not have a similarly tolerant opinion on contemporary psaltic chanting. He was a pupil of Amédée Gastoué at the Gregorian music courses in the Schola Cantorum in Paris and the founder of Byzantine musicological research in Romania.²² As a world-renowned scholar with a very well-developed sense of polemics, Petrescu, who had a renowned contusive style, sees psaltic music as "a hybrid construction of elements of a vulgar chanting, following the fantasies of various jolly psaltic chanters."²³ He also considered "contemporary Oriental music ... a barbaric mistake",²⁴ "the last stage of decadence",²⁵ and thus as being significantly inferior to medieval Byzantine chanting. For the renowned palaeographer, the transcription in Western notation is possible and welcome, as the scholar developed his own system of transcription of medieval

²⁰ Ioan D. Petrescu, "Transcrierea muzicii psaltice în Biserica Ortodoxă Română," *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, LV, 1-2 (1937): 22-29.

²¹ ***, "Problema transcrierii muzicii psaltice," *Cultura*, year XXV, no. 9-11, September-November (1936): 19.

²² Titus Moisescu calls him "ctitor al Școlii românești de bizantinologie muzicală" [founder of the Romanian School of Musical Byzantinology]. T. Moisescu, *Monodia bizantină în gândirea unor muzicieni străini* (Bucharest: Editura Muzicală, 1999), 8.

²³ *Apud* Moisescu, *Monodia bizantină*, 32-33.

²⁴ Antim Monastery Archive, File no. 2/1940, 81. *Apud* Milea, "Academia de Muzică Religioasă," 102, footnote 272. See also Moisescu, *Monodia bizantină*, 26-27, 31.

²⁵ *Apud* Moisescu, *Monodia bizantină*, 26-27, 31.

Byzantine semiography, overtly different from the one adopted by Egon Wellesz, Carsten Høeg and Henry J. W. Tillyard²⁶ (the representatives of *Monumenta Musicae Byzantinae*), especially when it comes to the theory of medieval modes.²⁷ His research is however well-regarded by Amédée Gastoué, Lorenzo Tardo and by Oliver Strunk.²⁸

On a local scale, the academic concerns of rector Petrescu are encouraged and supported by Patriarch Miron (and less by the adepts of the psaltic chanting), particularly for this opening towards the scientific research of the sources of Church music and for returning to the origins, to “always keeping alive the awareness of the Church staff so as to not modernize the songs, but to hold on at least to the tradition as we inherited it from the best stall singers that we have had, purifying the old means of teaching Psaltic of any possible unacceptable changes.”²⁹ Through conferences and over 14 concerts held by Petrescu mostly at his church (Saint Visarion), which were constantly attended by the first leader of the Romanian Orthodox Church, his accomplishments and those of the Academy were brought forth to the cultural elite of Bucharest. In time, the aforementioned concert events also included transcriptions and arrangements of Byzantine music chants remastered by Ioan D. Petrescu following the “Greek manuscripts” from the ninth to the eighteenth century. They also included Gregorian music and Renaissance compositions of authors such as Palestrina, da Vittoria etc., but also contemporary composers (Paul Constantinescu, for example), a fact which highlights the intention and the formative direction the rector engraved into his Academy. According to some archived documents, the rector even wished to organize an international congress dedicated to religious music, which would have been hosted by the Academy, but which never came to fruition.³⁰

When compared to the adepts of psaltic music (“the Romanian singers”), who were generally grouped around the opinions expressed by the *Cultura* magazine and

²⁶ “Cercetările mele se deosebesc în multe privințe, și, în deosebi, asupra modurilor, de cercetările prof. Wellesz, Høeg și Tillyard” [My research is different in many ways from the research of Professors Wellesz, Høeg and Tillyard, especially when it comes to Byzantine modes]. *Apud* Moiescu, *Monodia bizantină*, 27.

²⁷ Ioan D. Petresco, “*The Hymns of the Sticherarium for November*, transcribed by H. J. W. Tillyard. *Monumenta musicae byzantinae*, Transcripta II, Copenhagen, 1938,” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* (1939): 156-170. See also, Ioan D. Petrescu, “Aspecte și probleme ale muzicii bizantine medievale,” *Studii de muzicologie* 1 (Bucharest: Editura Muzicală a Uniunii Compozitorilor din Republica Socialistă România, 1965): 101-123.

²⁸ Regarding the reception of his theory on Byzantine modes in Western musicology, see the analysis in Moiescu, *Monodia bizantină*, 15, 20-25.

²⁹ ***, “Cuvântarea I.P.S. Patriarh Miron ținută în martie 1937 la ultima audiție de cântări bisericești antice, în Biserica Sfântul Visarion,” *Apostolul*, year XIV, no. 9, 1 May (1937): 131-132.

³⁰ National Archives of Romania, *Dudu Velicu* Fund, File no. 1300, f. 78-80.

around its “shepherd”, Popescu-Pasărea, father Petrescu, as seen before, vehemently denies not only the theory and the practice of contemporary psaltic music seen by them as being “traditional and national”, but also the existence of the chromatic and enharmonic genres, pleading for a decreasing of the ornaments in singing and for a return to the pure diatonic nature of the old Byzantine chant.³¹ Reactions started appearing right away: Petrescu was considered to be a “simple ignorant” and an amateur when it comes to psaltic chanting, a supporter of the Gregorian interpretation “fervently seeking to prove the emotional unavailability, from a religious point of view, of the psalm chants and the ‘superiority’ of the plain, colourless line of the Gregorian music, which His Reverence liked to call ‘authentically Byzantine’”. He seemed to be one of those who introduced “the foreign singing” in his church and who wished to remove psaltic music from the Academy.³²

Starting with 1944, along with the onset of the communist regime, the surrealist delusions of the hateful are not late to show up. Therefore, for instance, Ioan Croitoru (1884-1972) – former teacher of the Academy of Religious Music, eager to obtain a position within the new establishment, writes in a notice towards the ministry: “What is the purpose of the Gregorian chanting and Gregorian palaeography department in the analytic programme of a Romanian Conservatory?” The response offered to the ignorant question by the rector, the composer and member of the academy Mihail Jora (1891-1971) is in itself brilliant: “What could the purpose of the French or English department be in a Romanian faculty of philology?”³³

Instead of conclusions

More than 40 years after the disestablishment of the Academy of Religious Music by the Communist regime in 1947, the institution was reopened in 1990, as a section within the same *Ciprian Porumbescu* Conservatory (today’s National University of Music Bucharest) – a section which still, to this day, offers students a major in Byzantine and Gregorian chant. Professor Sebastian Barbu-Bucur (1930-2015), a world-renowned scholar and remarkable performer – is the person most associated with the recovery of this important academic qualification. A monk with musical and

³¹ Ioan D. Petrescu, “Manuscrise psaltice grecești din veacul al XVIII-lea,” *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, year LII, no. 3-4 (1934): 180-188.

³² Marin I. Predescu, “O senzațională reclamație,” *Cultura*, year XXVIII, no. 6-7 (1939): 39-40. The details regarding the dispute between Ion Popescu-Pasărea (and those who write in the magazines *Cultura* and *Predania*), and Ioan D. Petrescu, can be followed in Moisescu, *Monodia bizantină*, 28-41. See also, Moisil, *Geniu românesc*, 82-86.

³³ Octavian Lazăr Cosma, *Universitatea Națională de Muzică din București la 140 de ani*, vol. II (1904-1945) (Bucharest: Editura Universității Naționale de Muzică București, 2008), 543-544.

theological studies in Romania and Thessaloniki (with professor Dimitrios Sourlantzis: 1920-2006) as well as research stays of over four years in the libraries of the monasteries of Mount Athos, Professor Sebastian Barbu Bucur attempted to recover a tradition of the performance of Byzantine music that was going extinct in Romania, throughout the Communist years, as a result of ideological purges, particularly the 1958 removal of every monk and nun over the age of forty from the monasteries and the life of contemplation. These men and women were forced into the labour market so as to, thus, better serve the construction of socialism.

How relevant are today the ideas and preoccupations of the interwar generation, who, in one way or another, were linked to the Academy of Religious Music with regards to the “purity” of Romanian Orthodox song and its “homogenization”/standardization throughout the entire country? To what extent does the master-disciple relationship – a key component of Orthodox spirituality in transmitting knowledge and acting as an element of institutionalization within predominantly oral cultures, like the Byzantine one – still functions today, when online sources of information, in their multitude, are instantaneous, sometimes puzzling, and of an overwhelming diversity?

Yet, the critical spirit that had once galvanized the Medieval Byzantine chant research community – in the polemics between Ioan D. Petrescu and his fellow countrymen, or, at an international level, between Tillyard, the other representatives, and the *Monumenta Musicae Byzantinae*, seems today to fade away in candid indifference towards the research accomplishments in the field, which are seldom reviewed or announced, even in the case of significant musicological works. At least this is the situation in Romania.

Is this, I wonder, a good sign?

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