

CROSSROADS

**ARISTOTLE UNIVERSITY OF THESSALONIKI - FACULTY OF FINE ARTS
SCHOOL OF MUSIC STUDIES**



**IMS REGIONAL ASSOCIATION
FOR THE STUDY OF MUSIC OF THE BALKANS**



**GREECE AS AN INTERCULTURAL POLE OF
MUSICAL THOUGHT AND CREATIVITY**



**INTERNATIONAL MUSICOLOGICAL CONFERENCE
JUNE 6-10, 2011**

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

THESSALONIKI 2013

International Musicological Conference

**Crossroads | Greece as an intercultural pole of
musical thought and creativity**

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
School of Music Studies

International Musicological Society (I.M.S.)
Regional Association for the Study of Music of the Balkans

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Edited by

**Evi Nika-Sampson, Giorgos Sakallieros,
Maria Alexandru, Giorgos Kitsios, Emmanouil Giannopoulos**

Thessaloniki 2013

Proceedings of the International Musicological Conference

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Edited by Evi Nika-Sampson, Giorgos Sakallieros, Maria Alexandru, Giorgos Kitsios & Emmanouil Giannopoulos

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***Great Chant* in the Liturgical Practice of the Serbian Orthodox Church**

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Abstract: In the Serbian traditional liturgical music, *great chant* is the term which appeared in the 19th century, implying very melismatic melodies of certain liturgical hymns. Probably the examples of melismatic music had existed also in former centuries, but that can be determined only partially, considering the analysis of texts from liturgical books which show that repeated vowels in text actually signified melismatic melodies. In the last quarter of the 19th century, certain clergy, teachers and good connoisseurs of traditional chant, as well as the students of the Seminary in Sremski Karlovci, wrote down collections of *great chant* in the modern European notation.

Our aim is to present the existing collections and liturgical hymns which had both, their syllabic and developed melismatic versions, as well as to analyze the melismatic melodies themselves.

Great chant is a term which appeared in the 19th century, as a specific branch of the new *Serbian Popular Church Chant* which developed during that period, incorporating very melismatic melodies of certain liturgical hymns. It is likely that examples of melismatic music had also existed in earlier centuries, but that cannot be wholly verified. The analysis of texts from liturgical books of the period shows the occurrence of repeated vowels which may have signified melismatic melodies.¹

Besides studies on the subject of Serbian church music in which the issue of the *great chant* tradition was treated as part of a broader thesis (such as in studies by Dimitrije Stefanović, Danica Petrović, Ivana Perković-Radak, Milica Andrejević, Predrag Đoković), there also exist several specialist studies on specific aspects of Serbian *great chant* (for example the study by Vesna Peno).² Unfortunately, there is no comprehensive study or analysis which exists of *great chant* as a body of music in the Serbian tradition. My aim in this paper is to outline the collections of *great chant* we possess, and to analyze the melismatic melodies themselves. In furtherance of this goal, I have given emphasis to indicating:

- 1) the sources for the research (written collections and audio recordings)
- 2) the content of the collections of *great chant* we possess (the function of the *great* hymns, their place in the liturgy service)
- 3) the musical features of the *great* hymns (their melodic structure, and the relationship between texts and their melodies)

¹ Cf. Димитрије Стефановић, „Појање старе српске поезије“, in *Стара књижевност*, ed. Ђ. Трифуновић, *Српска књижевност у књижевној критици*, I (Београд: Нолит, 1972), 124–125.

² Look at the bibliography, section 5.

1. The sources

Most of the written collections which contain the melismatic hymns originate from the second half of the 19th century. That is the time when Serbs in Austro-Hungaria became musically literate. Important centers in which chant was preserved and developed were The Grammar School (1791) in Karlovci and The Seminary in Karlovci (1794), The Teaching Training College in Sombor (1778) and The Great Serbian Grammar School in Novi Sad (1810).

Oral transmission was the main way of teaching chant. Accordingly, the role of the melographers who noted chant was very important, both for teaching and research purposes.

The pioneer among melographers of Serbian church chant was Kornelije Stanković, the first Serbian composer who studied musical theory and history as a true scholar. He notated hundreds of pages of hymns from the Octoechos, General, Special and Festal chant and harmonised them for a mixed four-voice choir.³ In order to preserve original church melodies, his harmonisation was quite simple. During my research on the manuscripts by Stanković, I've also found several *great* hymns among his choir arrangements (among them are one Eastern Stichera, *great* sessional hymns on The Holy Theophany, The Annunciation of the Theotokos, Holy and Great Saturday and Pentecost, *great* photagogika for Our Holy Father Nicholas, Holy and Great Thursday and the Resurrection of Christ).

Stanković's work was followed by its disciples from the end of the 19th century throughout the 20th century. Church chant was notated by certain clerics, teachers and pupils of the Seminary in Sremski Karlovci and secular schools. Some of them were Serbian musicians who notated the singing of good chanters, and others among them wrote down in notation their own chanting:

Melographers	Chanters and melographers
Kornelije Stanković, composer	Gavrilo Boljarić, priest and Nikola Tajšanović, chant teacher
Tihomir Ostojić, philologist, literary historian, singing teacher	Jovan Živković, professor of the Karlovci Seminary
	Jovan Konstantinović, catechist, professor

³ Three books of the *Orthodox Church Chant of the Serbian People* (liturgical hymns notated and harmonised by Kornelije Stanković) were printed in Vienna during composer's short life, in 1862, 1863 and 1864. In the year 1922, the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts published his *Serbian Karlovci Chant – Beatitudes*, Mode I–VIII. Seventeen books of hymns harmonised for four voices and about three hundred sheets of unison melodies of Karlovci chant, notated by Stanković, are to be found in the Archives of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Belgrade, Historical Collection No. 7888. Extensive work of preparing these manuscripts for publishing in the Collected Works of Kornelije Stanković is in progress.

Stevan St. Mokranjac, composer	Nenad Barački, priest, chant teacher
	Jovan Kozobarić, priest
	Lazar Lera, teacher
	Branko Cvejić, priest
	Stefan Lastavica, Bishop of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the U.S.A.
	Damaskin Grdanički, Metropolitan of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Zagreb

Table 1. Famous melographers of Serbian church chant.

Audio recordings are another specific source for learning and researching Serbian *great chant*. It is important to present the first audio record of Serbian church chant, a collection of gramophone records, published in 1933, collectively called *The Nursery of Serbian Orthodox Church Chant*. The idea to make up this collection came from teacher and brilliant chanter Lazar Lera, who sung and compiled most of the hymns. Within this collection is a very special section which constitutes the *great* chants (liturgical hymns, hymns at vespers and matins).⁴

2. The content of the collections

The main function of the richly developed melodies contained in the collections was to glorify the solemnity of festal services or to provide accompaniment during a service, while the priest reads a silent prayer or takes part in some other activity at the altar.⁵ The selection of melismatic hymns in collections is usually in accordance with liturgical chanting practice of the 19th century itself. That is the reason why it is quite similar in collections of different melographers. For the sake of clarity, I have made a list of the *great* hymns which occurred most frequently in collections (**Table 1**) and of the

⁴ Cf. Милица Андрејевић, „Звучни снимци српског православног црквеног појања“, *Свеске Матице српске. Грађа и прилози за културну и друштвену историју*, св. 45 (Нови Сад, 2006), 75–87.

⁵ Cf. Јован Живковић, *Нотни зборник црквених песама*, IX–X and Лазар Мирковић, *Православна литургија*, Свети архијерејски Синод СПЦ (Београд, 1995), 274.

melodies which were notated only by some of the melographers (**Table 2**) and so appear less frequently.⁶

Services	Hymns
Vespers	<i>O Joyful Light</i>
Matins	Sessional hymns
	Megalynarion
The Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom	Cherubic Hymn
	Hymns to the Theotokos (<i>It is Truly Meet</i> or <i>Irmoi of the Feast</i>)
	Communion hymns
	At an Episcopal Liturgy: <i>Ton despotin, The King of Heaven</i>
The Liturgy of St. Basil the Great	<i>Amen, Lord have mercy, To Thee, o Lord</i>
	<i>Holy, holy, holy (the Eucharistic Prayer)</i>
	<i>We praise Thee</i>
	Irmos

Table 2. Most common hymns in collections.

⁶ Look at the list of sources in section 4.

Services	Hymns	Melographers
The Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom	<i>Bless the Lord, O my soul</i>	Stanković, Ostojić, Kozobarić, Konstantinović
	<i>O come, let us worship</i>	Boljarić-Tajšanović, Konstantinović, Barački
	<i>Ye all that are baptised</i>	
	<i>At the prayers of the Theotokos</i>	Ostojić, Kostić-Petrović, Konstantinović, Barački
	<i>O Son of God</i>	
The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts	<i>Now the heavenly powers</i>	Ostojić, Boljarić-Tajšanović, Kostić-Petrović, Mokranjac, unknown author from Karlovci, Lera
	<i>O taste</i>	
Vespers	<i>Lord, I have cried</i>	Konstantinović
	Stichera Aposticha, Stichera at the Lity	Unknown author
Matins	Sessional hymns	Stanković, Ostojić, Boljarić-Tajšanović, Kostić-Petrović, Mokranjac, unknown author from Karlovci, Lera
	Irmoi	
	Photagogika	Unknown author

Table 3. Great hymns in certain collections.

3. Features of the great hymns

In contrast to the syllabic, *short* chants, which are built up of melodic formulas typical of modes of the Octoechos, the *great* hymns can be partitioned into several sections. These individual sections may follow a specific musical arrangement or not as the case may be. Among the initial and the ending section there is often a modulating part which introduces new musical material.⁷ Series of melodic sequences repeated in strict succession or applied with variations within a cohesive structure demonstrate the

⁷ Cf. Предраг Ђоковић, *Српско црквено појање. Теоријске основе и практична примена*, Master Study (Нови Сад: manuscript, 2010), 10.

significance of the architectural principle in the building of *great* chants.⁸ Very frequent repetition of melodic motives almost completely negates the identification of melodic formulas of the modes of the Octoechos. In some cases they are built up from formulas of several modes, but in others composed as completely distinctive melodies. For this reason, the *great* hymns are not always categorized into the melodies of certain mode.

Comparative analyses show that there are very similar, sometimes even identical written records of the same hymns in different collections. As the *great* chants are very complex and musically highly developed, it is no wonder that melographers had recourse to copy precisely note for note entire hymns from the collections of their contemporaries or the elder melographers. In certain cases, it is noticeable that they made only slight changes to the record that served them as a model.⁹

Let us look at the hymn *O Joyful Light* in the collections of different melographers. **Example 1** presents the record by Jovan Kozobarić, which is similar to versions by many other melographers. The chant written by Kostić and Petrović (**ex. 2**) stands out with its different rhythmical characteristics. The diminution of note values in the second example might be interpreted as a signal for faster singing. Nevertheless, it is possible that the diminution is only about the „rhythmic ear“ of the person who notated the melody and that the interpretation speed of the song was actually the same or similar.

Musical example 1. *O joyful Light* (the first part), Jovan Kozobarić, *Karlovci Great Church Chant*, Sremski Karlovci, 1893, p. 7 (Institute of Musicology SASA).

⁸ Cf. Vesna Peno, "Great Chant in Serbian Tradition – on the Examples of the Melody *It is truly meet*", *Зборник Матице српске за сценске уметности и музику* 40, (Нови Сад: Матица српска, 2009), 19–38.

⁹ Cf. Ђоковић, 12.



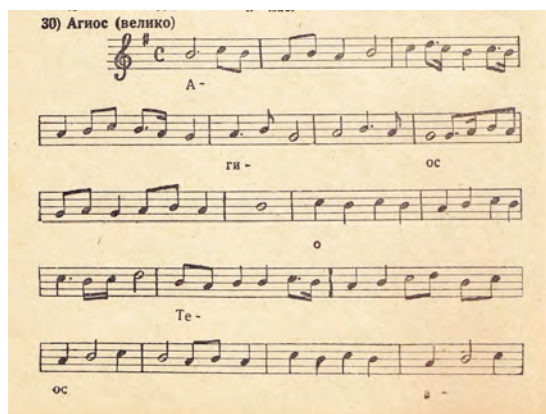
Musical example 2. *O joyful Light* (the first part), Petar Kostić, Jefta Petrović (editors), *Church "Great Chant"*, lithographed at the Press of A. Fuchs, Novi Sad 1889, p.134. (Institute of Musicology, SASA).

It is important to emphasize that the Serbian Orthodox church cherishes the tradition of reading, not singing of this prayer. That is why we might assume that melographic records of this hymn testify to the tremendous impact of Greek chant on the Serbian chanting tradition.

The significance of the impact of Greek chant is also affirmed by the presence of Greek chants in the collections of Serbian chanters. There are several *Greek Cherubic Hymns*, as well as examples of *Trisagion* hymns in the collections used for this study (see ex. 3-4).



Musical example 3. *Cherubic Hymn* (the first part) Jovan Kozobarić, *Karlovci Great Church Chant*, Sremski Karlovci 1893, p. 141, 142 (Institute of Musicology, SASA).



Musical example 4. *Agios*, Jovan Kozobarić, *Karlovci Great Church Chant*, Sremski Karlovci, 1893, p. 48, 49 (Institute of Musicology, SASA).

Numerous Serbian collections may be distinguished by a special feature of Greek tradition: that is the use of the intonation formula (*neanes*) at the beginning of the hymn *Holy* from the Eucharistic Prayer (ex. 5) and the communion hymn *On the Mountain of Sinai*.



Musical example 5. *Neanes - Holy, Holy, Holy*, from the Eucharistic Prayer (a part), Gavriilo Boljarić, Nikola Tajšanović, *Serbian Orthodox Chant According to the Old Karlovci Usage*, Book 4, Sarajevo 1889, p. 48 (Institute of Musicology, SASA).

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In his *Textbook for church chant and canon*, the priest Branko Cvejić wrote about the functionality of *great chant* and the layman's reaction to it in the first part of 20th century.¹⁰ He pointed out that, beside the fact that long chants provided accompaniment while the priest read certain prayers, *great* hymns made services last longer. Nevertheless, he stressed that people liked to stay in church as long as possible, so that they also liked melismatic hymns. He also remarked that some *great* hymns which were habitually sung in earlier times were not familiar to chanters of the mid 20th century.

¹⁰Бранко Цвејић, *Уџбеник црквеног појања и правила*, рукопис у Народној библиотеци Србије, РМ-32 (Београд, 1950), 11.

Sixty years after Cvejić's remarks, it is obvious how the fast pace and attitude of contemporary modern life reflects on the chant tradition as well – both among laymen and chanters themselves. In the churches which cherish Serbian chant nowadays dominates the short, *small* chant. Furthermore, that short, small chant is often abbreviated further. It is not a rare occurrence to hear chanters how they cut melodic patterns out of individual hymns, striving to accelerate the flow of the entire service. So in contemporary times, the neglect and setting aside of the tradition of *great*, melismatic chant is growing. Only Megalynarion, some Cherybic hymns and Communion hymns of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, hymns of The Liturgy of St. Basil the Great, *Now the heavenly powers* and *O, taste* at The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts are being sung in their *great* version. It is almost impossible now to hear *great* Sessional hymns, Irmoi, Photagogika or in full those special parts of Liturgy which used to possess a longer and more developed variant. However, even in today's times there do exist individual connoisseurs and admirers of this specific chanting tradition who strive in their work to inspire the younger generations of singers, or at least the researchers.

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