

Sebastian Barbu-Bucur - Ode by the Litia for the Holy Martyrs from Niculitel

Ciprian SAVIN¹

Abstract: Sebastian Barbu Bucur, an excellent byzantiologist from the second part of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, dedicated an important part of his creation to the veneration of the Romanian saints. Among them, there are also the holy Martyrs from Niculitel: Zotikos, Attalos, Kamasis and Fillipos, celebrated on June 4th by the Orthodox Church. Among the prayers dedicated to the martyrs from Dobruja, there is Ode by Litie a prayer that is said during the evening sermon. As musical genre, this churchly hymn is a motet. Regarding the melody, the musical discourse is predominantly diatonic and takes into consideration the structure of the 5th ehu (plagal of the 1st voice). The musical beauty of the prayer is sustained by the conscient way in which the composer uses the specific melodic forms of the voice. The main characteristic of the creation of Sebastian Barbu Bucur is his belonging to the Romanian psaltic trend.

Key-words: psaltic, byzantinologist, professor, composer, martyrs.

1. Introduction

Remarcable personality of the Romanian byzanthiology, the archbishop university professor dr. Sebastian Barbu Bucur in his last years of life played a major role as an active professor at the “Ovidius” University in Constanta- the Faculty of Orthodox Theology- in promoting the musical values of the psaltic songs in the churches in Dobruja. The professor focussed his creating energy after 2001, on two plans. He organized and conducted the psaltic Chorus ”Gherontie Nicolau” of the Faculty, which gave many performances. At the same time, he dedicated his componistical talent to writing religious works as a veneration to the Romanian saints, martyrs of faith from Dobruja: Zotikos, Attalos, Kamasis and Fillipos from Niculișel, Ioan Casian and Dionisie Exiguul, Epictet and Astion and so on.

In his work “Ode by the Litia at the sermon of the Holy Martyrs from Niculitel Zotikos, Attalos, Kamasis and Fillipos” on the voice V, the master tries to pay tribute to the ones who gave birth to the Romanian psaltichie. Recognizable, is the fact that these songs capitalize in an original manner the essence of the Romanian psaltic music using the initial, melodic and rhythmical formulas typical of our melos. These are predominantly diatonic and they strengthen by melos the melodicy of the Romanian language.

In this context, the fact that Sebastian Barbu Bucur carries on the work of his predecisors Filotei sin Agăi Jipei, Macarie the Ieromonah, Anton Pann, Dimitrie Suceveanul, Ioan Popescu- Pașărea, Anton Uncu and other contributors to the Romanian psaltic songs, should be highly appreciated.

¹ Gimnazial School no. 39 „Nicolae Tonitza”, Constanța, psalt_ciprian@yahoo.com

2. *Ode by the Litia...* - Stylistical Analysis

A place destined by the emperors of Rome to the exile and extinguish the Christians especially during the bloody repressions between the years 64 and 324 a. Ch., Scythia Minor-today's Dobruja has preserved until nowadays documents and other archeological testimonies about the martyrization of the first Christians in the 1st and 4th century. Among these, there is also to be found the Necropolis from Niculițel, discovered due to a flood, in 1971. Here have been identified the bones of 31 christian martyrs, either from the period of the repression of Dioclețian (303-304), or from the period of Licinius (319-324). The names of four of them have been found carved in the walls of the Necropolis - Zotikos, Attalos, Kamasis and Fillipos.



Fig. 1. *Fresco inside of the Basilica from Niculițel (Martyrs Zotikos, Attalos, Kamasis, Filippos)*

Sebastian Barbu-Bucur dedicated them special songs among which there is also the chosen work as an example and stylistical analysis. This psaltic work, composed in voice 5th (*plagos protos*) is based in its melodical construction on the typical formulas of the mode, which is normally constructed on *ke (la)*. The composer transposes this work on the final *pa (re)* from reasons which are connected to the vocal ambitus, the melody having a tertiadecima spread (*la-fa2*), being between V-10.

The religious psaltic musical genre *Ode...* is held during the morning and evening sermons (matins and Evening service). The father professor Petre Vintilescu states: „it is a churchly song, heard during the orthodox sermons in all the three periods of the churchly year: Octoih, Triod and Penticostar. It is also known as Doxstarion, a word which derives from the first verse - Praise the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Its solemn character, the content of the text being that of praise the Divinity and at the same the time to the Holy or to the martyr who dedicated his deeds to the serving of the Holy Trinity” (Vintilescu, 2006). The number of the melodical lines is between 10 and 12. The rythmical system in which the melody is conceived is stiraric. As a musical form this churchly hymn is a motet.

The first melodical line corresponds to the introductive formula of the poetical genre: *Slavă Tatălui și Fiului și Sfântului Duh (Praise the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit)*. The musical role is that to the melody on the final *pa (re)* with the help of the initial melodical formulas typical of the ehu, which are built by the slowly going on of the melodical line and

the musical durations - typical of the stiraric rythmical system- are 1:2 (quadruple whole note/ octuple entire musical note).



Fig. 2. Praise the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit

Noticeable is the division of the verse in two phrases, separated by a caesura and the melodic cadence on the final *pa (re)* or on the reciting chord 1 - *ke (la)*.

Melodically, the character of the first verse is being kept - predominantly slowly going on, the “highlitning” with the help of the structure of the melody, of the versification of the text, the most attention being given to the tonical accents of the words and to the separation of the melodic lines, either through caesuras, either through inbetween cadences built on the final or on the two reciting chords *di (sol)*- the reciting chords 2 and *ke (la)* - reciting chord 1 (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. Your souls without a sin have dwelt

The musical beauty is strengthened by the science with which the composer underlines the dramatism of the text by using the ftorals.

The diatonic ftoral for *pa (re)* The diatonic ftoral for *zo (si)*



Fig. 4. To the wise martyrs

Fig. 5. *And through your agony, you have become one*

Fig. 6. *With His sufferings, and now be joyful*

If the first example (Fig. 4) has consequently only the random appearance of the mobile step *zo (si)* which becomes in an accidental passage *zo (si bemol)*, the next two examples (Fig. 5 and 6) lead us towards a chromatical modulation in voice VI, where the sound *vu (mi)* becomes *vu ifes (mi bemol)* and *ni (do)* becomes *ni diez (do diez)*, which creates two chromatical intervals of the tone and semitone (enhanced second). The floral of *di (sol)* transponded on *pa (re)* has the following structure:

1 st	<i>pa (re)</i> <i>ni diez (do#)</i>	1 st	<i>di (sol)</i> <i>ga diez (fa#)</i>
1 T + 1st (2+)		1 T + 1st (2+)	
1st	<i>zo ifes (si b)</i> <i>ke (la)</i>	1st	<i>vu ifes (mi b)</i> <i>pa (re)</i>

Fig.7. *The scale of the voice VI transponded on pa (re)*

The highest point of the melody shows up in the third section of the work, belonging to the words Christ, God. This musical phrase of the hymn expresses our attitude which by praising the martyrs of faith from the initial Christianity centuries, praise a s a matter of fact the Holy Father.

The general scala of the hymn is:

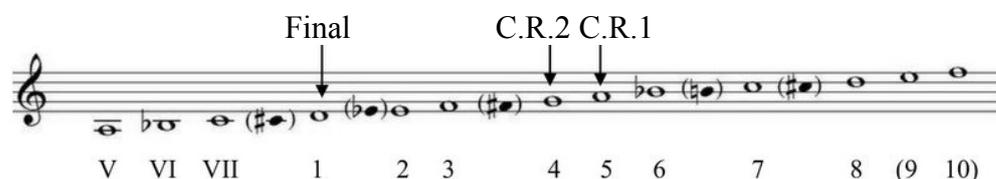


Fig. 8. *The general scala of the hymn*

3. Conclusions

The whole musical conscience of the master Sebastian Barbu Bucur, as it is to appear in his creation, underlines the esthetical attitude of the composer who understands to promote the Romanian expression of the psaltic songs, enriching thus the orthodox lithurgical musical thesaurus.

Regarding this aspect, Elena Chircev states that: „the compositions of the Father arhid. dr. Sebastian Barbu Bucur, done directly on Romanian lyrics, creatively give value to all that had been done along the two centuries, by succeeding to gather together the most pregnant features of the traditional psaltic style covering it in an original cloth, in which the meaning of the psalt is united with the refinement of the authorized researcher”. (Chircev 2012, 337-338)

Transcribing the work in a liniar notation, I have faithfully tried to respect his cultural and musical belief. The composer is deep into the worshipping of the Orthodoxy, by covering the sung prayer with profound Romanian feelings.

4. References

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