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ON SERBIAN CHURCH MUSIC
IN ROMANTICISM AT THE CROSSROADS
OF IDEOLOGY AND CULTURE

Serbian church music in the epoch of Romanticism was determined, among other things, by the coordinates of two elements: polyphony and contemporary notation. The expression "chanting by notes" did not refer to monophonic melodies written in notes, but primarily to chanting harmonized songs, the use of notation being defined not by its mnemonic role – the functionality of monophonic transcriptions was, among other things, conditioned by this factor – but by the need for communication. The appearance of multivoiced singing in the Serbian Orthodox Church in the first half of the 19th century was not isolated from other Orthodox Balkan peoples.[1] The synchronism of historical events – the weakening and final withdrawal of Turkish domination – defined certain common traits, among which were the stressing of national characteristics and creation of a related cultural climate.

The increase of the interest in multivoiced sacred compositions conditioned by the forming of a different taste in Serbian bourgeois class is closely related to the establishing of choral societies. The majority of these societies, particularly the oldest ones, were founded within the Church and at the beginning their repertoires featured multivoiced sacred music.[2] Similar circumstances existed in the history of Romanian and Bulgarian sacred music. For the sake of comparison, let us be reminded that the Pančevo Serbian Church Choral Society was founded in 1838 by the Church community in order to introduce *notno pjenije* (note singing) into the Pančevo Church of Ascension. In the same year, the same society, with their leader Pavle Radivojević performed the multivoiced Liturgy.[3] In Romania, on the other hand, the first document indicating the existence of a choir date from 1836: "then in *Curtea Veche* in Bucharest a 'choir of the singing

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[1] Up to now, the most significant contribution to the elucidation of the beginnings of multivoiced singing in Serbian church music was given by Danica Petrović in the article: Počeci višeglasja u srpskoj crkvenoj muzici (The Beginnings of Polyphony in Serbian Church Music), *Muzikološki zbornik*, Ljubljana, 1981, 2.

[2] Cf. Tatjana Marković, Crkvene kompozicije na repertoaru srpskih pevačkih društava do 1914, (Sacral Compositions on the Repertoires of Serbian Choral Societies), *Zbornik Matice srpske za scenske umetnosti i nauku*, Novi Sad, 1994, 15, 98.

[3] Mihovil Tomandl, *Spomenica Pančevačkog srpskog crkvenog pevačkog društva*, Pančevo, 1939, 16.

company' was founded and sang at church on important festivities."[4] Some four decades later, in 1879 to be exact, "a Bulgarian Nikolaj Nikolov was the choirmaster in the Sveta Nedelja cathedral in the new Bulgarian capital Sofia. Similar choirs were set up in other towns of the country."[5]

During the first stages of the development of multivoiced singing among Orthodox Balkan peoples, there are also some similarities as far as their repertoires are concerned. Although there are no surviving records on the repertoire of the Pančevo Choral Society in its first days,[6] we know that its master, Radivojević was educated in Odessa and Kiev and that he brought from Russia "a multitude of printed and manuscript 'notes' of mostly ecclesiastic content."[7] It is therefore possible to assume that during the first years of the development of the Society its repertoire featured works by Russian authors. The tradition of Russian church music (which was projected onto the history of Serbian liturgical music on various levels) underwent reinterpretation in Greek ("In 1871 the first music conservatory was founded in Greece Alexander Catacouzenos, professor of the conservatory, devised a new way of harmonizing church hymns 'inspired by the Byzantine melodies but following the art of the Russian church'... By 1875 the church had become aware of the great popularity of harmonized hymns and permitted them to be chanted at the Athens cathedral during celebrations of royal and national feasts")[8], as well as in Bulgarian sacred music ("History of modern Bulgarian ecclesiastical music... is a specific combination – in terms of both singing repertory and style of performance – of the traditions of Balkan and neo-Byzantine singing and the rich choral singing repertory which was mainly developed by the Russian composers from the 18th and 19th centuries").[9]

The presence of multivoiced singing in Serbia has provoked "interest to preserve the old, monophonic church song,"[10] as demonstrated by its use in choral compositions. The reception given to two liturgies by Kornelije Stanković, written and performed in Vienna in 1851 and 1852, was not very enthusiastic due to the insufficient prominence of national elements.[11] The experience

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[4] Nicolae Belean, Religiose Chormusik in der orthodoxen Kirche im Banat – Rumänien, the paper presented at the International congress *Die Kirchenmusik in Südosteuropa, historische und typologische Studien zur Musikkultur einer europäischen Region*, held on May 19–23, 1998 in Timisoara; in print.

[5] Elena Tončeva, The Bulgarian Liturgical Chant (9th–19th Centuries), *Rhythm in Byzantine Chant*, Acta of the congress held at Hernen Castle in November 1986, A. A. Bredius Foundation, Hernen 1991, 160–161.

[6] Danica Petrović, op. cit., 112.

[7] Mihovil Tomandl, op. cit., 11.

[8] K. Romanou, A New Approach to the Work of Chrysanthos of Madytos: The New Method of Musical Notation in the Greek Church and the ΜΕΓΑ ΘΕΟΡΗΤΙΚΟΝ ΤΗΣ ΜΟΥΣΙΚΗΣ, *Studies in Eastern Chant* volume V, New York, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1990, 98–99.

[9] Elena Tončeva, op. cit., 160–161.

[10] Danica Petrović, op. cit., 111.

[11] Stana Đurić-Klajn, *Istorijski razvoj muzičke kulture u Srbiji* (Historical development of Musical Culture in Serbia), Beograd, 1971, 54.

of notating monophonic chant in Karlovci and its subsequent harmonization for the four-part chorus influenced the modification of Stanković's attitude toward this problem: ten years after the performance of the first liturgy, the composer emphasized the necessity of the presence of traditional melodies in multivoiced compositions: "Very little is accomplished if a master speaks with his voice and in the manner he feels himself, be it the warmest of feelings... Let the value of art singing be from the art's point of view great, yet something even greater is demanded: that it should come from people, only then it can be what it ought to be."[12] Similar views were held by, for instance Vasa Pušibrk and Tihomir Ostojić.[13]

The belief in the power of religious, esthetical, emotional and artistic effect of "folk liturgical singing" raises this principle to the level of an imperative. The respect for tradition is analogous to the Byzantine attitude toward church melodies conditioned by theological ideas about the divine origin of these melodies. By means of celestial hierarchy, the melodies were transmitted to prophets and saints: in such a way, the human ear is vouchsafed heavenly music.[14] In accordance with the Christian interpretation of Platonic view of art, the Byzantine composer (and not only composer, but also other Byzantine artists) does not perceive himself as a creator, but rather as someone who discovers and transmits the divine idea. Hence melodic formulas as the musical reflection of that idea cannot be changed: even when ornamented in the most lavish way, they must remain recognizable. The traditionalistic motives of Serbian composers in the 19th century did not arise out of the view of the immutability of divine legacy – which is easy to understand since we have some general idea about some circumstances related to the origin of Serbian folk liturgical chant, including the names of chanters that played an important role in that process – but out of the imperative of pointing out the national identity. Deep respect is prominent in Stanković's attitude toward traditional melodies: chanting is qualified as "a precious treasury," which the composer, according to Demelić, endeavored to preserve in "the purest form" and "unimpaired."[15] Let us

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[12] Kornelije Stanković, preface to *Pravoslavno crkveno pojanje u srbskog naroda*, (Orthodox Chant with Serbian People), Beograd – Novi Sad, Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti, Narodna biblioteka Srbije, Novi Sad, Matica srpska, 1994, 4.

[13] Each melody in church, which is not of the folk origin is alien to Serbs, it may merit his praise sometimes, but to please the Serb's ear and warm up and win the Serb's heart it will never do." Vasa Pušibrk, preface to *Staro karlovačko pjenije u srpskoj istočnoj pravoslavnoj crkvi* (Old Karlovci Chant in Serbian Eastern Orthodox Church) by Tihomir Ostojić, Novi Sad, 1887, 1.

"To song Randhartinger's 'Cherub's Songs' alongside *Angel vopijaše* (Angel Cried) would be the same as putting a Gothic spire on a Byzantine temple." Tihomir Ostojić, Negujmo crkvenu pesmu (Let us Cherish the Church Song), *Orao* (kalendar), 1893, 59.

[14] Cf. Egon Wellesz, Melody Construction in Byzantine Chant, *Actes de XIIe Congrès international d'Études Byzantines*, Beograd, 1963, 143; Studije o crkvenoj muzici srpskog Oktoiha, *Ćirilometodski vjesnik*, Zagreb, 1934, 1–2, 1–2.

[15] Nonetheless, comparisons of Stanković's monophonic transcriptions with his harmonizations have shown that even he did not always adhere to the principle of the 'inviolability' of traditional tunes and that he occasionally modified them, mainly with the intention of providing harmony and fitting them into the regular metric divisions. Cf. Dimitrije Stefa-

also mention that Stanković idealistically believed that the spiritual unity of Orthodox peoples could be achieved not only through the common faith but also through the common church music.[16] As he though Serbian church music to be far more beautiful than music of all other peoples, he sought in it the basis for the common chant. Elements such as insisting on the significance of traditional melodies, tendency to the unification of Orthodox church music and, as we will see later, the utterly simple musical solutions which sometimes verge on the negation of authorship for the sake of identification with "folk liturgical chant" comply with Žižek's definition of ideology *"per se,"* representing, therefore "a composite of ideas, beliefs, concepts... destined to convince us of its 'truth'."[17]

Is there a similar attitude in works that do not obey the above mentioned principles? We will look for the answer in Marinković's *Liturgy*, a work that partially rests on traditional chanting thus creating a different system of relations. A small number of songs make use of monophonic liturgical melodies in their entirety (as, for instance *Krestu tvojemu* /We Bow to Thy Cross/); considerably larger is the number of those with more or less obvious motivic associations with folk church tunes (e.g. *Jedinorodni sine* /Only-Begotten Son/, *Svjati Bože* /Holy God/, *Jelici vo Hrista* /You are Baptized into Christ/ and so on), while for some parts the link with traditional melodies cannot be established (e. g. *Jektenije* /Litanies/, *Dostojno jest* /It is truly Meet/).[18]

Liturgy, as the central form of divine service, contains rich visual and textual symbolism as well as the one of action and movement; that symbolism follows in a continuous succession all the deeds of Jesus Christ: his coming to the Earth, death, resurrection, ascension.[19] Besides, in many parts of liturgy symbols are characteristically multi-layered. The symbol as an intermediary and representation of the holy, designates in certain conventionalized or standardized forms "the reality which cannot be expressed, nor communicated in the categories of 'this world', that is in a sensual, empirical and visible manner. The symbol is such reality... that is inherent in all matter of God which man has ceased to feel and recognize in this fallen world'... Hence in

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nović, Prilog proučavanju notnih autografa, arhivskih i drugih dokumenata o Korneliju Stankoviću, (A Contribution to the Study of Music Autographs, Archive and Other Documents on Kornelije Stanković) *Kornelije Stanković i njegovo doba*, (Kornelije Stanković and His Time), Beograd, Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti, 1985, 131; Ana Stefanović, Novi prilozi poređenju karlovačkog i beogradskog pojanja na primeru Osmoglasnika Kornelija Stankovića i Stevana Mokranjca (New Contributions to the Comparison of Karlovci and Belgrade Chant in the Example of Octoechos of Kornelije Stanković and Stevan Mokranjac), *Razvitak*, Zaječar, 1991, 1–2, 88–89; Ivana Perković, Srpski Osmoglasnik u periodu između 1850 i 1914 godine (Serbian Octoechos in the Period between 1850 and 1914), master's thesis, manuscript.

[16] "He wanted to create *general church chant for the whole orthodox world*... and thought there was a *general source from time immemorial*". (Fedor Demelić, Kornelije Stanković, *Letopis Matice srpske* 110, Novi Sad, 1886, 210).

[17] Slavoj Žižek, The Spectre of Ideology, *Mapping Ideology*, London, 1995, 10.

[18] The problem of the comparison of traditional and Marinković's melodies was dealt with by Kosta Manojlović in the article Josif Marinković, *Zvuk*, Beograd, 1935, 7 and in some unpublished notes. Quoted according to Vlastimir Peričić, *Josif Marinković*, Beograd, 1967, 144.

[19] Lazar Mirković, *Pravoslavna liturgika*, drugi, posebni deo, Beograd, 1982 (third impression), 67.

Liturgy everything is real, but it is not the reality of this world and not in the fallen and split-up time of that world, but in the new and collected time (of the Holy Spirit)."[20] In other words, liturgical symbolism is the articulation of a different system of reality.

At the beginning of liturgy, following the grand litany and the first antiphon, the song to be sung is *Jedinorodni sine*, introduced in the 6th century. As the beginning of liturgy symbolically relates to the beginning of the life of Christ on Earth, the song *Jedinorodni sine* is associated with the time of his baptism in the Jordan river when "The father's voice testified clearly and eternally that he was his... Son, one of the Holy Trinity."[21]

In Stanković's *Liturgy,* the melody *Jedinorodni sine* belongs to the second troparion mode (melody in minor, typical of all songs Stanković notated in this mode, unlike later notations which are in major). With Marinković, the elements of the melody are noticeable at the very beginning as well as in the central part of the song (the word *nepreložno* – "without change"), while other parts of the melodic flow develop relatively independently. The formal aspect of Stanković's work follows the forming principles of traditional chant, while Marinković's concept is ternary form. In Stanković's *Liturgy Jedinorodni sine* remains in the principal key of f-minor, and the simple harmonization is based almost exclusively on tonal degrees. Marinković, on the other hand, beside the principle f sharp minor uses A, E and B major and g sharp minor, secondary degrees, altered chords, including some harmonic solutions already familiar in his other compositions (the dominant chord with the suspended fourth which resolves only after an inserted chord of the dominant's dominant, bars 31–32).[22] As opposed to Stanković's homophony, with Marinković we find a series of imitational entrances, alternating with homophonically treated segments. Finally, in Stanković's work we do not come across a predetermined dramatic plan nor psychological "nuancing" related to text, while Marinković's music builds various expressive shades that follow textual implications, which becomes particularly obvious in dramatic culmination coinciding with the text: *raspnijsja že Hriste Bože, smertiju smert popravij* (and wast crucified, Oh Christ our God, by Thy death destroying death) accompanied by modulation in g sharp minor, the beginning of the segment in unison, strong dynamic contrast (*ff – pp*) and contrast in texture.

Before we answer the question posed above, let us have a look at the Great Litany in Marinković's *Liturgy* in comparison with Mokranjac's *Liturgy.* The Great Litany, as a special form of responsorial prayers consisting of a series of supplications and choral answers (*Gospodi pomiluj* – Kyrie eleison) "shows that liturgy is not only a memory of Christ's deeds, but also a prayer for various human needs."[23] In short, in the first three supplications peace is asked for, the next three are for the church, patriarch and congregation, then for the town, for the abundance of worldly fruit, for those who travel, who sail, for the sick and suffering, for captives and eventually for delivery from affliction, for protection and the mercy of God. The

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[20] Archpriest Aleksandar Šmeman, Evharistije kao sveta tajna Duha Svetoga, *O liturgiji,* zbornik tekstova, Beograd, 1997, 275.

[21] Lazar Mirković, op. cit., 68.

[22] Cf. Vlastimir Peričić, op. cit., 145.

[23] Lazar Marinković, op. cit., 66.

response in Mokranjac's *Liturgy* is a traditional short *recitando* against the background of the plagal cadence, while in Marinković's work – also recitative – the answers are grouped according to tempo, meter, harmony, dynamics and the treatment of the choir, at first three times three, and then in the fourth exposition the chain is interrupted and relatively independent answers appear. By this procedure Marinkovićs enhances the grouping of supplications according to their meaning and this is particularly prominent in the first two groups (each having three members). It is not necessary to draw any special attention to the symbolism of numbers, which is, to use the terminology of Yuri Lotman, in accordance with the paradigmatic type of culture.[24] According to the principle of the said type of culture whereby "the whole system possesses a certain single Meaning, which passing various stages finds its way through various constructive layers," Marinković's music is revealed as one of the levels of meaning isomorphous with other levels. At the same time, that music establishes a special relation with the text, underlining some of its meanings, thus assuming the role of an "interpreter." Unlike Stanković's reflection on the existing layers, Marinković's attitude is like liturgical symbolism included in the production of a different reality. If we accept Žižek's standpoint that "any description (determination) is at the same time the moment of a plan of argumentation" in connection with Marinković's approach we may speak of ideology *per se*.[25] In comparison with Stanković's author's withdrawal, we are dealing here with the other pole of the above-mentioned type of ideology, with its branch which counts on individual creative potentials. The common denominator of both these poles is found in the communication model, which serves a higher goal. (The example from Mokranjac's *Liturgy* was needed only as a point of reference for Marinković's work; since the scope and character of this paper do not allow any further considerations of Mokranjac's work, to define it within the "spectrum of ideology *per se*" will be a task for some other occasion).

The implication of the meaning of the crossroads, given in the title, that is the crossroads as the symbol of opposites with the ambivalence of beneficial and harmful phenomena, can pilot the course of reflection into a completely different direction.[26] The character of changes in Serbian church music in the course of the forming of the Karlovci chant and later, when multivoiced singing and singing by notes were introduced, has lately been the object of diverse interpretations. On the one hand, the appearance of multivoiced singing is viewed as the key impulse in the future streams of the development of church music and on the other, as a consequence of "spiritual decontamination" leading to the assimilation of Serbs into European bourgeois culture.[27] Therefore, the above considerations can serve as the starting point for future elaboration of the same subject.

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[24] Jurij Lotman, Ogledi iz tipologije kulture (Essays in the Typology of Culture), *Treći program*, Beograd, 1974, 4, 485–86.

[25] Slavoj Žižek, op. cit., 11.

[26] *Rečnik simbola* (The Dictionary of Symbols), edited by Krsto Milovanović and Tomislav Gavrić, Beograd, Narodno delo, 1904, 407–8.

[27] Srđan Jaćimović, O autentičnom u muzici srpske crkve (On the Authenticity in the Music of Serbian Church), *Iskon*, 1997, 4, 66–67.

EXAMPLE No. 1

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EXAMPLE No. 2

(Mokranjac)