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Nicolae GHEORGHÎĂ

Musica Sacra (6)

This special issue is a remarkable contribution to the research of the musical melange (both sacred and secular) in the Greek-speaking and Ottoman world in the Wallachia and Moldavia Danube Principalities and in the Balkans, in direct relation with the imperial authority of the Istanbul Court and, by extension, with the mixed musical practices present in the former capital of Byzantium or born around the Black Sea (for instance, the sacred Georgian tradition) and in the Habsburg Empire, over three centuries (17th-19th).

It contains studies by scholars and leading researchers of international renown, both theoreticians and performers of the musical traditions they investigate. The interdisciplinary perspective, on a profound anthropologic and sociologic layer, by which Walter Zev Feldman radiographs oral musical productions of the Balkans (based on linguistic and religious dominant groups, through the lens of his own, as well as his contemporaries', research) and as far as the historical Moldavian regions in the North-East of present-day Romania, and which are directly linked to those Western and from the Middle East, reveals the remarkable complexity and exceptionality of sonic interactions taking place in the Balkans of the past centuries.

On the other versant and in the same cultural, political and geographical context, there are the Orthodox musical cultures, mainly oral up to one point. It must be mentioned that, from the periods here examined, the 19th century – “the century of nations” – is also the time of great reforms impacting, almost simultaneously, all these religious musical traditions and, over a significant segment, those secular ones too. Changes are fast and intense and consist, among others, in updating the semiography, in clarifying modal structures, in theoretical and applied conceptualisations

finalized by the publication of many musical treatise, translations and modernisations of liturgical texts etc. In this context, the appearance of the Byzantine musical printing press in Bucharest in 1820 was a turning point in the unitary, compact and large-scale promotion and dissemination of Byzantine Church monodic repertoire in the entire Orthodox world. The following years and decades will see new Byzantine notation printing presses in Paris, Vienna, Constantinople, Trieste, Smyrna, Thessaloniki, Venice etc., but in urban centres in Wallachia and Moldavia too, the musical output of these latter including both sacred chants and non-religious repertoire of Phanariot and Ottoman extraction, present in manuscripts as early as the end of the 18th century.

Professor Thomas Apostolopoulos' study analyses Phanariot poetry in symbiosis with the music preserved in Byzantine musical codices, in the historical-cultural context of Wallachia and Moldavia: and the territories of modern Greece and, in general, in the Orthodox Balkans, for an extended period of time under Ottoman administration. Apostolopoulos also talks about the Phanariot poetical production and its subtle connection to similar practices of Greek poets temporarily living in the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires, but also in the Romanian Principalities, and how it is influenced by the Enlightenment and, in particular, by the ideas and ideals promoted by the French revolution.

The next study, penned by Kyriakos Kalaitzidis, examines closely the Phanariot musical phenomenon, focusing on 27 works based on poems by the celebrated Athanasios Christopoulos and music by the equally famous Nikêphoros Kantouniarês, both of them active, for some time, also in the Romanian Principalities. A typical example of what Kalaitzidis calls "Balkan anthropogeography", the works of the two, transcribed in modern Byzantine notation as well as in staff notation, are brought, for the first time, to the attention of the general public and of those interested in these original repertoires, musics that took Phanariot, Constantinople and Romanian salons by storm for more than a century.

Zaal Tsereteli's research discusses another remarkable and long-lived musical tradition, a sacred one this time, documented in musical manuscripts starting with the 10th-12th centuries, which got to the threshold of the 19th century in a plurivocal form known today as Georgian polyphonic chant. Tsereteli questions in detail this dominant aspect of orality, how mediaeval Georgian chants of six *heirmoi* were written down in European notation, and how much of this mediaeval sound is still there in the 19th-century polyphonic transcriptions.

The *Book reviews* section boasts ethnomusicologist's John Plemmenos complex analysis-review of the CD's booklet of *I compositori greci del maqâm ottomano / The Greek Composers of the Ottoman Maqâm*. In-depth comments and investigations make Plemmenos' text a remarkable journey in the diversity and complexity of musical practices at the turn of the 19th century, the world of composers and performers at the Ecumenical Patriarchate and their ties with the musicians of the Istanbul Court, many of them of Greek origin.

English version by Maria Monica Bojin