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SUMMARY. The Liturgy represents for the Christian-Orthodox community the moment with the most significance in the church services. As a musical genre, it is approached by a number of Romanian composers, especially after 1989, the year of the establishment of democracy in Romania. Among the creators who approach this genre is Dan Voiculescu, who composed *Modal Liturgy for equal voices* in 1996 and was dedicated to Sigismund Toduţă. Our paper analyses this composition which is based on modal-diatonic writing, harmonic-polyphonic arrangements with a modal shade alternating with passages in unison, and in which melodic constructions depart from the model of Palestrina's polyphonic writing.

Keywords: Composer Dan Voiculescu, religious, modal liturgy, polyphony.

Introduction

The 20th century brings a series of socio-political events that will also affect the development of Romanian music. Many musicians of this period manifest themselves in different ways – composers, conductors, pedagogues, musicologists – to whom the choir represents a way of expression that is continuously improving and in which national specificity is becoming more and more important. Within the Romanian music we can identify the unity in diversity or "out of many, one" (*E pluribus unum*), both in traditional music (folklore, Byzantine chanting) and in cult art".³

It is well known that the Romanian music is based first and foremost on the old folk music of the native country, and secondly on the Byzantine music and the psalms – the latter being the source of inspiration for religious music.

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³ Şerban Nichifor, Repere într-o analiză holistică a postmodernismului muzical, Synopsis I, (Landmarks in a Holistic Analysis of Musical Postmodernism, Synopsis I), National University of Music, Bucharest, 2006, p. 4.

In the second half of the 20th century, the Romanian modern school of composition is in close contact with the new techniques belonging to the European trends, coinciding with aleatoric music, serialism, punctualism, without straying from folklore. The new generation of composers, especially after the fifth decade, also applies to avant-garde trends in the sphere of archetypal music, minimalism, spectralism, heterophonic music, morphogenetics, or imaginary music. Among them we mention Vasile Herman, Anatol Vieru, Tiberiu Olah, Liviu Glodeanu, Ede Terényi, Nicolae Brânduş, Cornelia Tăutu, Hans Peter Türk, Adrian Iorgulescu, Şerban Nichifor, Sorin Lerescu, Dan Voiculescu and others.

Historical context

From a political point of view, the second half of the 20th century represents a period of great changes that will also affect the Romanian cultural and artistic activity. After 1970 the neo-Stalinist period sets in in Romania, a time in which more and more citizens' rights are restricted. Censorship is a common practice of that time, affecting the Romanian musical composition directly. In the volume *Romanian Music between 1944-2000*, Valentina Sandu-Dediu speaks about this "ideological pressure"⁴, noting that it was represented "by the censorship operated by the *Union*'s commissions for the sorting of musical and musicological creation, favoring simplistic synonymous with accessibility, decorativism, eclecticism, folklore."⁵ One of the forbidden themes is religion. Valentina Sandu-Dediu states: "There are many cases in which, in order to get rid of any care, the composer called his work «For peace» or something similar, so that he could handle the musical substance, which was possibly modeled in avant-garde techniques and had nothing to do with the announced title."⁶

The year 1989 marks the establishment of democracy and, therefore, freedom of speech, without stumbling blocks. At the compositional level, there is a tendency to approach the religious genres and, implicitly, the liturgy. Dan Voiculescu will compose the *Modal Liturgy for equal voices*, about which musicologist Bianca Ţiplea Temes states: "An isolated example of diatonicism is the *Liturgy for equal voices*, written in 1996 and dedicated to Sigismund Toduţă. It is a religious work, sketched through the transparent use of modes, unisons and ison sections, with definite references to the Palestrinian style."⁷ The work is written "in memory of Sigismund Toduţă", knowing that his

⁴ Valentina Sandu-Dediu, *Muzica românească între 1944-2000*, (Romanian Music between 1944-2000), Musical Publishing House, Bucharest, 2002, p. 13.

⁵ *Idem.*, p. 18.

⁶ *Idem*, p. 74.

⁷ Bianca Ţiplea Temeş, "In Memoriam Dan Voiculescu, Coda to A Book Without End", in Studia UBB Musica, LIV, 2, 2009, p. 16.

personality has deeply marked Dan Voiculescu, in his entire creation. In this sense, Mirela Zafiri characterizes the composer's style, as follows: "From the modal melody line and the pioneering polyphonic piano, very aerated, to the complex, expressive harmonies, in a chromatic style that shakes the classical tonality balance, we can guess the polyphonicist initiated by the school of Sigismund Toduță."⁸

Regarding the great representatives of the liturgical genre in Transylvania and Banat, musicologist Constanta Cristescu states: "[...] masters such as Ion Vidu, Timotei Popovici, Augustin Bena, Gheorghe Dima, Sigismund Toduţă and recently Dan Voiculescu devoted part of their time to adapting the choral compositions of the local variants of liturgies and traditional church songs, some of them from memory, in compositional versions that have the aura of a masterpiece [...]."⁹

Stylistic analysis on Modal Liturgy

Although most of the liturgies are dedicated to mixed choirs or male choirs on equal voices, this work is written for female voices – as women are participating more and more actively in the ecclesiastical sphere in the last century. It includes the important parts of the *Liturgy of the Catechumens* and the *Liturgy of the Faithful*: *Great Litany*, *Antiphons*, songs of the *Small Entrance*, *Hymn of the Trisagion (Holy God)*, *Lytany of Fervent Supplication*, *Cherubic Hymn*, the chants of *Great Entrance*, *Holy*, *Holy*, *We Praise Thee*, *The Hymn of the Theotokos*, *Blessed is the One*, *We Have Seen the Light*, *Blessed be the Name of the Lord*, replies sung after the prayers of the *Dismissal*.

Within the *Great Litany*, there are 12 melodic variants for the short and profound prayer *Lord, have mercy*, representing replies given by the chorus to the various requests of the priest. The symbolism of number 12 is worth mentioning, which is linked to God's choices: the 12 tribes of Israel, the 12 apostles, etc. The melodic line of the soprano of the first three variants is constructed in the form of a circle arch that seems to suggest an embrace that encompasses all parishioners participating in prayer (e.g. 1).

⁸ Mirela Zafiri, *Dan Voiculescu, ultimul interviu* (Dan Voiculescu, the last Interview), 2009, in http://www.poezie.ro/index.php/essay/13909999/index.html (accessed 20.01.2019).

⁹ Constanța Cristescu, Dileme ale creației corale de filieră bizantină din Transilvania și Banat (Dilemmas of the Byzantine Choral Creation from Transylvania and Banat), 2008, in http://www.cimec.ro/Muzica/Cronici/ConstantaCristescu3.htm (accesed 25.01.2019).

E.g. 1



Lord, have mercy, first version

First Antiphon begins with the Prayer of Praise to the Holy Trinity, being presented harmonically in the first 6 measures by all three voices and continuing with an imitation that will underpin the musical development until the end of this part (e.g. 2).



Fragment from the First Antiphon

The quintessence of the psalm 102, corresponding to the text which the work continues with, appears imitatively in the external voices in the first phase, by one measure distance, and in measure 15 the distance between the theme and the response will condense at two beats, equating with the climax and also the *sectio aurea*. This imitation presents the insertion, in melodic profiles, of the *cross motif* (ex. *B-A-C-H*; *C-D-H-C*), often encountered in Bach's compositions.

Even if a sinuous profile of songs with small intervals is kept, the melodic lines are rhythmically dynamized by shorter durations (*diminutio*), leading us to the thought of a total spiritual communion with the depth of this prayer that takes place in the first person.

There is a predominance of modal language, in the climate suggested by an oscillation between Dorian and Aeolian on D, by the mobility of H (which often appears lowered with a semiton) or by the use of phrygian cadences at the end of some phrases, by creating a leading tone on second step (*Es*) in the penultimate chord (e.g. 2).

The Second Antiphon presents a confessional prayer of the faith in Jesus Christ, the love of the One-begotten, to whom we pray for the salvation of the soul. From a musical point of view, this part is composed for two voices, on the thimble of an ostinato. The element that creates the stylistic unity is, therefore, the rhythmic one, the composer using, along this part, 19 times (*anaphora*) the rhythmic formula outlined below (e.g. 3):

E.g. 3



Ostinato rythm in the Second Antiphon

The climax is attained by the words: You were crucified, O Christ God, suggesting through the ascending intervals, man's striving for the mercy of the Son of God, a cry of help for the sinner who awaits forgiveness of sins (e.g. 4). If, in this work, Dan Voiculescu has particularly used the ascending-descending step-by-step motion, this verse begins with a leap of perfect ascending fourth, to which Serban Nichifor finds his explanation: "From the perspective of hermeneutics (involving the bringing of who creates in the state of the one who created), [...] the following diastematic-philosophical association can be established: the ascendant

(extroverted) fourth regains my past in the future."¹⁰ Analysing the literary and musical text at the same time, it is suggested to the public that through the sacrifice of the crucifixion mankind has been forgiven for the sins of the past, present and future.



The climax of the Second Antiphon

The *Third Antiphone*, which presents through *The Blessings* a series of rules for respecting a spiritual life in order to enter the kingdom of God, is based on a melodic discourse characterized by the great purity of the songs, with frequent returns on the same sound, with references to a declamatory character. A musical sound economy is predominant, without much chromatisms, *ison*¹¹ is used, and the song is subordinated to the expressiveness and beauty of the text (e.g. 5).

In the first verse there is a predominant diatonism, no chromaticisms, except for *B note*, used for creating the phrygian cadence. An *ison* is also used throughout the verse, at the third voice on *A* from small octave.

From a harmonic point of view, the other two voices sometimes impose major seconds "collisions", tritone, or stops of upper voices in common note in an intervalic ratio of minor seventh or major ninth to the note of the third voice (e.g. 5). All these aspects demonstrate the mark of the modal within the intonational framework of this work.

¹⁰ Şerban Nichifor, *Perspectiva fenomenologică* (The Phenomenological Perspective), *op. cit.*, p.1.

¹¹ Pedal accompaniment.



Fragment from the Third Antiphon

The second verse is harmonized only for two voices, without the soprano. The text is: *Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted*, which can be explained by the fact that men will receive forgiveness if they repent for their sins. In the first three measures, the third voice evolve in a *recto-tono* recitative, reminiscent of the rhythmical ison. The second voice is gradually descending (*catabasis*), consistent with the meaning of the text.

The third verse is based on a mode with mobile steps (*C-C#, F-F#, G-G#*), without these appearing consecutively at the same voice, so chromatic halfs are avoided (e.g. 6). The musical tension is created by stopping on two semicadenences, the first one being in the fourth measure, with a stop on the seventh altered chord and the second appears in the last measure of this verse, with a stop on the fifth step.



The mode with mobile steps from Blessings, the third verse

The sixth verse contains the text: *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God*, who urges man to purify himself from the sins that burden the heart and the soul, because only by holiness can they see the image of the Lord. In order to reproduce the message of these verses, the

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composer processes the thematic motif found in the third verse, in a different harmony that still preserves the harmonic skeleton and the presence of the two semicadences. The voices join one another, alto imitating the musical piece exposed in the first two measures by soprano, and the second voice will begin after seven measures, in unison with the third voice. This *gradatio* will reach a melodic climax at the end of the verse, when the soprano touches the G^2 on the word *God* (e.g. 7).



The sixth verse of *Blessings*

The simplicity and economy of composing resources are those that characterize the seventh verse, in which the second voice sings the *ison* on the G^1 , and the first voice interprets a melody with Byzantine touch, suggested by the ornaments with grace notes and by the frequent changes of measure in accord with prosody and accents in the literary text.

The text has primacy, so there are often changes of measure, the musical rhythm results from the distribution of the syllables accentuated within the words. The modal atmosphere is created by means of third elliptical chords, especially encountered as the first or final chord of each verse.

E.g. 7

Composer Dan Voiculescu applies the technique of imitative polyphony in the *Trisagion – Holy God Hymn*, too. The text of the prayer is: *Holy God, Holy Strong, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us*, which is sung three times. The first 13 measures are built on a two measure-piece that will be imitated by all voices (e.g. 8).



The imitation scheme of the first 13 measures

Repeated displays of the theme lead to a tension build-up that reaches a climax in measure 13, where the soprano touches G^2 , the third time of singing the verse *Holy Immortal*, words that remind people about the virtue of the Holy Spirit of being immortal.

Another imitative fragment starts at soprano 2 in measure 17 with an anacrusis, reverted by one measure distance concomitantly by the other two voices, and in measure 21, over a new return of the imitation theme to the lower voices, the soprano brings a melopoeia in long durations, with aspect of *ison* – equating with *sectio aurea*. Subsequently, the music begins to strain, with moments of *ison* or stops for a long duration by all voices (e.g. 9).

E.g. 9



Imitation overlays în Holy God Hymn

For composers of the second half of the 20th century, Byzantine music is a source of inspiration for the text, ornamentation, rhythm, metrics, melodic formulas, as well as for the specific cadences. The next song, which also corresponds to the beginning of the Liturgy of the Faithful, is the Cherubic Hymn. The definition for this is: "the ecclesial song that unites the angels' sabbaths and humankind to glory the Savior who comes into liturgical procession between us at the Great Entrance of the King of Heaven in Jerusalem of our hearts and in Jerusalem of Heaven, by Liturgy."¹² It is a prayer of sacrament, with great meaning, which reminds men to leave aside their material assets of this life, to prepare for the reception of the Emperor Jesus Christ through the Holy Communion. In this work the composer capitalizes on the psaltic melody through a horizontally melodic discourse, ornamented with grace notes and harmoniously sustained by the isons (e.g. 10). Some musicologists consider that ison is a sacrament melody, a symbol of God, which is present throughout life, in opposition to the melody that "renders the human side in its aspiration to the transcendent, expressed through praver and praise."13





The beginning of Cherubic Hymn

The second part of the *Cherubic Hymn* is usually a distinct part and is called *That we may receive the King of all*. This is based, again, on the model of imitative polyphony, on a dialogue of voices that gives the piece energy. The theme exposed to the alto is interpreted at a distance of two measures, at the perfect ascendant fourth by soprano 2 and then by soprano 1, again at to two measures and a small seventh ascending, unlike in the original theme. By overlapping imitations there are certain gaps in the syllables of the text (e.g. 11).

¹² https://doxologia.ro/liturgica/taine-ierurgii-slujbele-bisericii/imnul-heruvic (accesed 27.02. 2019).

¹³ Nicolae Teodoreanu, "Isonul în tradiția muzicii psaltice din România" (Ison in the Tradition of the Psaltic Music in Romania), in *Muzica (Music)*, 2017/3, p. 73.



The scheme of imitative polyphony in the first 12 measures

The theme behind the imitation has a predominantly gradual move, reaching a climax on a perfect fifth, on the word *King*, the most important word in the verse, which refers to the Savior Jesus Christ. Each imitation is made on the text *That we may receive the King of all* and, gradually, it is expounded (*anabasis*) to God, which is also suggested by the fact that it starts from the sound of *A* from the small octave, and the last imitation begins with the sound B^1 and reaches a culmination on F^2 .

In the next part – *Holy*, *Holy*, *Holy*, we find another expressive process: the pause (e.g.12).





Fragment from Holy, Holy, Holy

As Valentina Sandu-Dediu states, it is one of the figures "who preserves its structural and semantic importance over time [...], having its expressive role in a sound art."¹⁴ In this musical work, pause interrupts music (e.g. 12), like a sigh (*suspiratio*), to underline the word *Osana* ("saves").

The Hymn of the Theotokos – the worshiping dedicated to the Virgin Mary, demonstrates a harmonious blend between the text and the melody that has to render the meaning of the text in order to be understood and contemplated by men. Being the embodiment of maternal love, the Holy Mother prays constantly for the forgiveness of the/all sins and the salvation of men. The melodic lines fit into the Byzantine ethos, have warm sounds that urge prayer. A distinctive feature of Byzantine music is the lack of measurement bars and, therefore, of the meter, excelling the accents of the words. In Voiculescu's work, we find both framed and not framed parts, perhaps for ease of interpretation by modern musicians who are very accustomed to such writing (e.g. 13).

E.g. 13



The first musical phrase from The Hymn of the Theotokos

One is Holy, which is the choir's response to the priest's address: *Holy things are for the Holy* once again points out that "no one has holiness, for it is not the result of human virtue, but we all have it from and through Christ."¹⁵ From the introduction, the modal atmosphere is revealed,

¹⁴ V. Sandu-Dediu, *Studii de stilistică şi retorică muzicală* (Studies of Stylistics and Musical Rhetoric), National University of Music Bucharest, 1999, p.22.

¹⁵ Sf. Nicolae Cabasila, *Tâlcuirea dumnezeieştii liturghii* (Interpretation of the Divine Liturgy), Pr. prof. dr. Ene Branişte (transl.), 3rd edition, The Publishing House of the Bucharest Archdiocese, 1989, p. 53.

as a result of the alternation of unison to the sound A^1 with three stops on chords, first on *D Major*, the next on *F major*, and the last being a third elliptical chord. Also, by the mobility of the F note (which oscillates between F and F#), it is plowing between major mode – mixolidian on D and the minor mode – dorian.

The next song is based on the following text: *Blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord; God is the Lord and hath appeared unto us*, verses taken from Psalm 117, which glorify Lord Jesus Christ. The polyphony and the appearance of the themes occur reversely to how it was in *That we may receive the King of all*, meaning from soprano 1 to alto (*catabasis*). The theme contains four measures, and the composition technique used by Voiculescu is *stretto* (e.g. 14). This section is in Aeolian mode and at the end we find the phrygian cadence.

E.g. 14



The scheme of imitations din Blessed is he

The confession made by the congregation after the Holy Communion: We have seen the true light, we have received the heavenly Spirit, it is musically vestured by Dan Voiculescu in a modal way, predominantly in phrygian mode on A, even though in this section there is a remarkably greater number of chromatisms, especially in the first measures. In addition, some clichés can be identified, such as the use of *ison*, third elliptical chord at the beginning and end of the play. For creating novelty and dynamism, the composer again resorts to the imitative technique, by resuming by all voices, thematic fragments of a measure.

At the end of the liturgy we find the song *Bless be the Name of the Lord*, on the text of the second verse of Psalm 112. Within this hymn of joy, bringing three blessings to God, isorhytm and diatonic scale predominate. In order to create the modal archaic, the composer uses *ison*, free harmonic series, and elliptical third chords. In the final cadence, however, the picardy third is used. This major chord produces an emotional effect of hope and joy.

Conclusions

The leading and construction of the melodic vocal lines emanate a strong religious sentiment as an example of combining consonances and dissonances, voices of equal importance and subordinate to the liturgical text that will be interpreted with a clear diction.

In Modal Liturgy modal-diatonic writing prevails, the harmonicpolyphonic arrangements with a modal tint alternating with the passages in unison. Generally, the melodic constructions go from the model of Palestrina's polyphonic writing, with a small-scale evolution, and progressively, with simple melodic lines, unloaded. Palestrina's music was the basis of many volumes of theoretical research, including Fux's treaty. Here are some general principles of Palestrinian style, such as: "the flow of music is dynamic, thus avoids static and rigidity; the song should not, as far as possible, contain periodic jumps, and if a jump does occur, it must necessarily be solved by a stepwise movement in the opposite direction: dissonances must avoid the accentuated times, and if they still appear, they will be resolved immediately a.s.o."16 The voices meet in unison or separate, progressing through imitations or counterpunctive procedures. Dan Voiculescu realizes a synthesis between archaic tendencies and architectural solutions and newer methods of creation. Thus, the unison, which is characteristic of the interpretation of church music from ancient times, combines with the harmonies specific to the Romanian Orthodox music. beginning with the nineteenth century. One of the traits characteristic of our folk or cult music is heterophonic vesting. A form of heterophony is the *ison*. present in this liturgy. About the composer's style, musicologist Bianca Tiplea Temes notes: "Dan Voiculescu reactivates old patterns through a modern harmonic language. The bivalence of his discourse converges to a semantic pluralism that pleads for the complex fusion of discursive levels as a viable solution to contemporary creation."¹⁷

The documentary materials belonging to Mirela Zafiri, *Dan Voiculescu* - *the last interview and the commemoration of the master Dan Voiculescu*, portray a remarkable personality of the Romanian cultural life, not only from the hypostasis of a composer, pedagogue or musicologist. Other aspects are mentioned, which facilitate the formation of an opinion on the types of human relationships he develops. Dan Voiculescu possesses a multitude of essential qualities of a valuable man, among which we can list modesty, elegance,

¹⁶ Valentina Sandu Dediu, Alegeri, atitudini, afecte. Despre stil şi retorică în muzică (Choices, Attitudes, Emotions. About Style and Rhetoric in Music), Second Edition, Didactic and Pedagogical Publishing House, Bucharest, p. 65.

¹⁷ Bianca Ţiplea Temeş, "Dan Voiculescu la 70 de ani, aniversat în absență" (Dan Voiculescu at 70, celebrated in absentia) in *Muzica*, 3/2010, p. 127.

creativity, originality, faith, sensitivity. "His music expresses feelings and thoughts in an ineffable form, harmony, balance, hope, faith and the most precious, love, the pure expression of a soul comforted and snowed with dreams, drawn from intense feelings, possessed by a lyricism transfigured in melodic and various and contrasting harmonies, the sparks that lit and kept the flame and the joy of bringing souls closer to revelation than any human wisdom and philosophy."¹⁸ At the same time, the composer Octavian Nemescu states: "First, Dan Voiculescu was a great gentleman. He had [...] a mode of dress and a moral behavior of fine elegance, which today, unfortunately, no longer wears. He was the exponent of another age."¹⁹

The writer and researcher George Călinescu, approaching from several angles of sound art, emitting extremely original opinions about music and its creators, tries to answer, above all, fundamental problems such as "What is music?", What place does music play in the spiritual life of man?" The headpiece states: "In arts, in general, emotional and intellectual understanding are one and the same thing, because the idea is expressed by a shaking of the whole soul at the highest level."²⁰

The immediate impact of music is indisputable of an emotional nature, this being the starting point for understanding music. George Bălan said: "The process of understanding only progresses if you succeed in extending the consciousness of the echoes of music after extinguishing the sounds and synthesizing the multitude of soul states in music and lived by your own sensibility."²¹ The same musicologist also makes the following observation: the simple emotional reaction can not generate a somewhat serious aesthetic appreciation, the valuable goods crystallize through profound processes."²² Thus, knowing these aspects of Dan Voiculescu's daily life, we can draw nearer to the essence of music, to deepen its semantics to our spiritual consciousness.

Translated by Laura Greavu

¹⁸ Mirela Zafiri, Să ne bucurăm şi să ne rămână bucuria (Let us rejoice and keep our joy), 2010. https://no14plusminus.wordpress.com/tag/comemorare-dan-voiculescu/ (accessed 27.01.2019).

¹⁹ Octavian Nemescu, "In memoriam Dan Voiculescu", în Actualitatea muzicală (The Musical Actuality), 10/2009, p. 24.

²⁰ George Călinescu, *apud* Iosif Sava, *Prietenii muzicii* (Friends of Music), Albatros Publishing House, Bucharest, 1986, p. 262.

²¹ George Bălan, *Curs de estetica şi filosofia muzicii* (Course of Aesthetics and Philosophy of Music), "C. Porumbescu" Music Conservatory, Bucharest, p. 237.

²² George Bălan, *Sensurile muzicii* (The Meanings of Music), Tineretului Publishing House, Bucharest, 1965, p. 25.

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