

PHILOKALIA IN MUSIC

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SUMMARY. I thought a view on music history based on the 30 stages of *The Ladder* written by Sf. John, exposing the most important musical masterpieces, associated with spiritual values. Through a good spiritual education, through musical values we can achieve the ideal of the true music (not merely aesthetic): the good taste, the authentic feelings, beliefs and attitudes. *The ladder of the virtues* (Philokalia volume. IX) is one of the most representative and important writings of the Orthodoxy.

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Patriarch Daniel of Romania stated that "the culture of the soul is the soul of culture". In order to sustain and continue such a wonderful statement, we consider that the music has the gift to communicate to the listener, under certain conditions, true spiritual values. I propose a new vision on the music history that joins the scientific approach to the spiritual one: these two directions are complementary. I consider it to be the only valid way to present completely the music history.

I thought about the 30 stages of "The Ladder of the Virtues" written by Sf. John (Philokalia volume. IX), associating the most important musical masterpieces with spiritual value criteria. Through a good spiritual education, through musical values we can achieve the ideal of the true music (not merely aesthetic): the good taste, the authentic feelings, beliefs and attitudes. Spiritual and cultural education should orbit around the concept of the authentic value: "morality cannot be found without values"² (John Clay, conscience and morality).

The value is an eternal, timeless, supra-individual element, which requires certain constraints beyond situations, beyond the horizon of utility, capable of being an effective lead of morality. The value is marked by the novelty, by the generality (that oppose time, the temporality), by chance and change. The most important element of the educational process is based on the value capable of transmitting information and spiritual feelings of the highest quality.

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² Humă, Ioan, *Conștiință și moralitate (Conscience and morality)*, Ed. Jumeana, Iași, 1981, p. 151.

"Culture is worth only if it rises to the spirituality and if itself becomes spirituality", said the bishop Bartolomeu Anania. The relationship between religion and culture has preoccupied many thinkers of the world, because the true culture (marked deeply by the authenticity and value) is inevitable linked to the affirmation of faith, an ideal that has normative role at the spiritual level (not just at the aesthetic level). Not only the religious culture, but culture in general is organized on some important themes which is claimed from the Christian sources (The Holy Scripture, the sacred tradition, the ecclesial activity): tied with religious education, culture affirms the highest values someone can imagine in the human activity.

The components of the religious education (which constitute the excellence of the spiritual values) involves all the layers of personality, through the universality and effectiveness of their development in human personality: the cognitive component (which is formed gradually and that depends heavily on the degree of culture of the people), the affective component (related to the mechanism of balancing the inner universe, capacity offered completely only by faith) and the volitive element (which involves transforming the knowledge in practice: "the way from ears to the heart", the longest way on the earth (Father Arsenie Boca).

"The ladder of the virtues" (Philokalia volume. IX) is one of the most representative and important writings of the Orthodoxy, of all humanity. I preferred to keep the original names of the chapters of "The ladder of the virtues" because I wanted to place the music in the shadow of the spiritual coordinates. These steps of self-perfection are embodied by the "thirty chapters: steps of a ladder that climbs from the lowest point to the highest spiritual level"³.

We can consider the explanation of the beginning of the book as a direct exhortation: "this book shows clearly the best way to enter your name in the Book of life. Those who follow these words will go on the road without danger. This book shows us the ladder from the earth to the Holy of Holies and presents us the loving God. Jacob saw this ladder and he stepped over the passions listening to these words. Let's start with faith this climb, up to the heaven, beginning the first step on earth, but ending in the face of our loving God" („cartea de față arată în chip limpede cea mai bună cale celor ce voiesc să-și înscrie numele în cartea vieții. Căci citind-o pe aceasta, o vom afla călăuzind fără rătăcire pe cei ce-i urmează și păzindu-i nevătămați de nici o poticnire. Ea ne înfățișează o scară întărită de la cele pământești la Sfintele Sfintelor și ni-L arată pe Dumnezeu iubirii rezemat pe vârful ei. Această scară socotesc că a văzut-o și Iacov cel ce a călcat peste patimi, când se odihnea după nevoința lui. Dar să începem, rogu-vă, cu râvnă și cu credință acest urcuș înțelegător și suitor la cer, al cărui început e lepădarea de cele pământești, iar sfârșit e Dumnezeu

³ Scărarul, Sf. Ioan, *Scara dumnezeiescului urcuș (The Ladder of the Virtues)*, Philokalia vol. IX, Ed. Instit. biblic și de misiune al B. O. R., București, 1980, p. 43.

iubirii⁴). St. John imagined this ladder to the heaven as a way of improving himself, a way for everyone: "this ladder will teach you all the virtues" („Scara să te învețe totalitatea bine alcătuită a virtuților”⁵. „Cel ce înaintează, să înainteze în Domnul”⁶).

We correlated each step of the ladder to a certain representative musical masterpiece. I considered how the music manages to materialize - in each case, on every step - the truths of faith presented in every chapter by St. John. I quoted arguments from the Holy Scriptures of the New Testament, without the risk of recording personal comments (on which I would not have any competence) and from the Philokalia (the writings of the Holy Fathers). I think that any vision about music and art, which would be taken from a different angle of view (a strict, restrictive aesthetical perspective), is an insufficient way to present the expressivity of the artistic act. The whole world lost the real essential significance of art, of music: being a special way to the perfection to which we were invited.

Fig. 1



The Ladder of the Angels

⁴ Scărarul, Sf. Ioan , *op. cit.*, p. 41.

⁵ *idem*, verse 18, p. 431.

⁶ *idem*, verse 3, p. 387.

Here's a list of steps, representing the related musical works:

SAINT JOHN THE LADDER

"The ladder on which we go up from the earth to the Holy of Holies.
It's beginning is in our hearts. It show us the loving God as the final point. This
ladder is the best way to enter in the Book of life.

1. The withdrawal from the world („lepădarea de viața deșartă și retragerea”): Samuel Barber - *Adagio for string orchestra*
2. The forgiveness of sins („despățimirea”): Johann Sebastian Bach – *The orchestral Suite no. 3 in D major (Aria)*
3. The loneliness („înstrăinarea”): Fryderyk Chopin – *Piano prelude in e minor*
4. The obedience („fericita și pururea pomenita ascultare”): Valentin Timaru - *Symphony 3, Miorița*
5. The repentance („pocăința cea făcută cu grijă și deplin arătată”): Johann Sebastian Bach - *The Passion of the Christ according to St. Matthew (Peter's complaint Area)*
6. The remembrance of dead („pomenirea morții”): Richard Wagner - *Tristan and Isolde's Prelude*
7. The crying that brings joy („plânsul de-bucurie-făcător”): Johann Sebastian Bach – *Prelude in b flat minor*
8. The kindness („nemânieră și blândețea”): Anton Bruckner - *Te Deum*
9. Keeping the evil in mind („ținerea de minte a răului”): Giuseppe Verdi - *La Traviata*
10. The gossip („clevetirea”): Serghei Rachmaninov - *Concerto no. 2 for piano and orchestra*
11. The speech and the silence („multa vorbire și tăcerea”): Fryderyk Chopin - *Concerto no. 1 for piano and orchestra*
12. The lie („minciuna”): Antonio Vivaldi - *The Spring, Concerto for violin and orchestra*
13. The laziness of the soul („lenea sufletească”): Ludwig van Beethoven – *Symphony V*
14. The covetousness stomach („pântecul atotlăudat și tiran”): Franz Liszt – *"Dante" Symphony*
15. The purity, the chastity („curăția și neprihănirea nestricăcioasă, agonisită de cei stricăcioși prin osteneli și sudori”): Jules Massenet - *Thais (Meditation)*
16. The love for money, the poverty („jubirea de arginți și neagonisirea”): Aurel Stroe – *Melodrames pour le Livre de Job*
17. The lack of good sense, the death of the soul before the death of the body („nesimțirea, moartea sufletului înainte de moartea trupului”): Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky – *"Pathetic" Symphony*

18. The sleep, the prayer and the common religious song ("somnul, rugăciunea și cântarea în obște"): Dinu Lipatti - *Concertino for piano and orchestra in classic style*
19. The vigil („privegherea trupească”): Georg Friedrich Händel - *Messiah*
20. The false fear („frica lașă, nebărbătească”): Johann Sebastian Bach - *Toccata and Fugue for organ in d minor*
21. The false glory of the pride („slava deșartă”): Franz Liszt – *Faust Symphony*
22. The mindless pride („mândria cea fără minte și fără stăpânire”): Carl Orff - *Carmina Burana*
23. The thoughts of blasphemy („gândurile negrăite ale hulei”): Hector Berlioz - *The Fantastic Symphony*
24. The kindness, the simplicity („blândețea, simplitatea și nerăutatea agonisite prin sângele înțeleaptă”): George Enescu – *Prelude in unison (Suite for orchestra)*
25. The humility („preaînalta smerită-cugetare”): Ciprian Porumbescu – *The ballade for violin and orchestra*
26. The distinction of thoughts, passions and virtues („deosebirea gândurilor, patimilor și virtuților, dreapta socoteală bine deosebitoare”): Johannes Brahms – *Symphony IV*
27. The silence of the soul and the body („sfințita liniștire a trupului și a sufletului”): *The music of the Triodion Period*
28. The prayer, the mother of all virtues („fericita rugăciune, sfințita maică a tuturor virtuților”): Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart - *Requiem (Larimosa)*
29. The purity, the resurrection of the soul („nepătimirea, cerul pământesc; desăvârșirea și învierea sufletului”): Ludwig van Beethoven - *Concerto no. 4 for piano and orchestra*
30. The three best virtues, love, hope, faith („legătura treimii virtuților: dragostea, nădejdea, credința”): Johann Sebastian Bach - *The Passion of the Christ according to St. John*

Translated by Petruța Măniuț Coroiu

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