

## PSALM BY THE RIVERS OF BABYLON AS PART OF SIGISMUND TODUȚĂ'S CHORAL OUTPUT

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**SUMMARY.** The first choral setting of Psalm 136<sup>2</sup> belongs to Gavriil Musicescu. To be more precise, *By the Rivers of Babylon* concerto bears an explanatory note, as follows “*from the repertoire of the choir in Ismail, Basarabia*” - the composer's birthplace; Musicescu had in 1858 – 1872, a profound professional relationship with this choir, which means that this setting is not an original work<sup>3</sup>.

**Keywords:** Sigismund Toduță, psalm, Babylon, choral output, Gavriil Musicescu.

Together with the other four concertos to be sung in the choir balcony, (*Concert la Nașterea Domnului [Concerto for the Birth of Our Lord]*, *Concert la Învierea Domnului [Concerto for the Resurrection of Our Lord]*, *Concertul coral nr. 1 - Cine se va sui în Muntele Domnului [Choral concerto no. 1 - Who shall go up to the mountain of Yahweh]* and *Concertul coral nr. 2 – Înnoiește-te, Noule Ierusalime [Choral concerto no. 2 – Renew yourself, new Jerusalem]*), the concerto *By the Rivers of Babylon* shows the artistry by means of which the composer Gavriil Musicescu has given the Romanian composition school the right to become part of the universal schools<sup>4</sup>.

74 years from the publishing of the first edition of *Imnele Sfintei Liturghii pentru cor mixt și pian (Divine Liturgy Hymns, for Mixed Choir and Piano)* in 1900, where *By the Rivers of Babylon* concerto was published, Sigismund Toduță opens a new window on Romanian composition, through an original, avant-garde approach on the same *Psalm 136 – By the Rivers of Babylon*, composed in Cluj Napoca in 1973 and published in 1993.

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<sup>2</sup> We often meet with an inconsistency as to how the Psalms are quoted, according either to the Occidental or Orthodox Churches editions of the Holy Scripture. There is a one number difference as a result of the way psalms were included in the Holy Scripture canon – according to the Septuagint or in the Holy Synod editions. In the Romanian language Bible, psalm 9 and 10 united and formed psalm 9; psalms 114 and 115 built up psalm 113; psalm 116 was split in half, thus forming psalms 114 and 115, and psalm 147 builds up psalms 146 and 147. There is always a one number difference between psalms 10 – 147, between Occidental and Romanian editions.

<sup>3</sup> Musicescu, Gavriil, *Imnele Sfintei Liturghii pentru cor mixt și pian (The Hymns of the Divine Liturgy for mixed choir and piano)*, second edition, Bucharest, 1927, pp. 47 and 170.

<sup>4</sup> *Concert la râul Vavilonului (Concerto By the Rivers of Babylon)*: a minor; *Adagio, Allegretto, Allegretto, Andante, Allegretto, Allegro, Maestoso, Adagio, Allegretto, Maestoso, Allegro, Moderato, Andante* - a total of 13 sections (Gavriil Musicescu, *Imnele Sfintei Liturghii...*, (*The Hymns of the Divine Liturgy...*), p.170-182.

For Gavriil Musicescu, the piece came as necessary in the Divine Liturgy, as it musically marks the need of repentance during Lent; for Sigismund Toduță, this “shelf work”<sup>5</sup>, a virtuosity piece, marks the composer's rebellion and his will of breaking loose, as his spirit and art were “enslaved” in the totalitarian regime where music was done for the “praising of the beloved leader and of the party”. The fact that this work came to be known only much later is a sign that it could not have been either published or sung before 1989<sup>6</sup>.

In the following, I will approach the choral setting of *Psalm 136* by Sigismund Toduță, the maestro of Cluj-Napoca's musical school, as seen by a church choir conductor, in those aspects, which make it resemble a drama.

### 1. A Historical View on the Text of *Psalm 136*

The original, Hebrew text of *Psalm 136* does not have a subtitle, but, in the translation of *The 70 (Septuagint)*, we find the note *Psalm of David through Jeremiah*<sup>7</sup>. In the Alda and Compluta editions, it appears with the subtitle *Psalm of David for Jeremiah*<sup>8</sup>. In the Romanian language editions of the Holy Bible, approved by the Holy Synod, the subtitle is only *Alleluia*<sup>9</sup>. The psalm's authorship is hard to set. It cannot at the same time be “of David” and “of Jeremiah”, because the two prophets lived in different times (around 600 years apart). If David wrote it, then the body of the psalm is genuinely “prophetic”, because he anticipates the captivity of the people in Babylon<sup>10</sup>. We can infer that it was written after the return from the exile, as it uses past tense verbs (there *we sat... wept* at the memory of Zion). The author is probably someone who lived in the exile and witnessed the humiliation borne by the Hebrews in Babylon. Even if Prophet Jeremiah lived during the period of the exile, he was not taken into captivity, but remained in the Holy Land until he was exiled by the Hebrews in Egypt.

<sup>5</sup> Cristescu, Constanța, *Dileme ale creației corale de filieră bizantină din Transilvania și Banat (Dilemmas in Byzantine-inspired choral works in Transylvania and Banat)*, in: *Cronica muzicală on-line*, December 4, 2008.

<sup>6</sup> In the first edition of V. Cosma's *Lexicon* (1970), S. Toduță is entered at „choral music” chapter with the *Liturgy for four equal voices* (1938) alone; in the last edition of the same author (2006, vol. IX), a supplement is made: *Liturgy [no. 1] of Saint John Chrysostom in the style of church melodies of Blaj* (1937), mixed choir; *Psalm 23* (1935), mixed choir; *Psalm 97* (1938), mixed choir and organ. As we can see, *Psalm 136 – By the rivers of Babylon*, kept well hidden until after 1989, is missing from the reference material of the greatest Romanian lexicographer.

<sup>7</sup> Timuș, Gherasim, Dr., *Note și meditațiuni asupra Psalmilor (Notes and Meditations on Psalms)*, Bucharest, 1896, p. 456.

<sup>8</sup> Deissler, Alphonse, *Le Livre des Psaumes*, Paris, pp. 273-275.

<sup>9</sup> *Biblia sau Sfânta Scriptură (The Bible or the Holy Scripture)*, printed with the approval of the Holy Synod, EIBMBOR, Bucharest, 2003.

<sup>10</sup> The Babylon, called Senaar in the Bible (Genesis 10:10; 11:2; 14:1), means the water meadow of Mesopotamia, a surface of 10.000 square miles between Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The old capital Babel is at 90 kilometers South of the present Bagdad, and the territory of the old Babylon included several other famous cities: Ur, Uruk, Larsa, Nippur, Kish, Sippar etc. (Brown, Raymond E. - Fitzmyer, Joseph A. - Murphy, Roland E., *Introducere și comentariu la Sfânta Scriptură (Introduction and Comments on the Holy Scripture)*, Vol. I, translated by P. Dumitru Groșan, Galaxia Gutenberg, 2005, p. 455.)

The neo-Babylonian or Chaldean Empire reached its summit in the time of Nebuchadnezzar (605 – 562 BC). As early as 605, the king controlled Asia, Egypt and Palestine. In 604, after the New Year celebration in Babylon, he reached Palestine, where he conquered Askalon and part of Judah. In the winter of 598-597, after gaining victories in the North of Arabia, Nebuchadnezzar himself led his armies against Jerusalem. Then the noblemen and a part of the population were first deported in Babylon (IV Kings 24: 1-20; II Chronicles 36: 9-10). Mid-January 588, Nebuchadnezzar began his second siege of Jerusalem, which he conquered at the end of July 587 (IV Kings 25: 1-30; II Chronicles 36: 13-14; Jeremiah 39: 1-7). He destroyed most of the city, including the temple of Solomon, and the greater part of the population was deported to Babylon. Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, was caught, taken to Ribla, in Syria, where he was made to witness the killing of his sons, then his eyes were taken out and he was taken, in chains, in Babylon (Jeremiah 52: 7-11).

*Psalm 136* is a lyrical synthesis of the humiliation that the people of Israel lived in the Babylonian exile. The splendid cult and its equally splendid songs, as known during David's and Solomon's time, faded out<sup>11</sup>. Not only was the Israelite independence broken, but also the very heart of the Biblical life was aimed at and hurt: “[Nebuchadnezzar] carried off all the treasures of the Temple of Yahweh and the treasures of the palace and broke up all the golden furnishings which Solomon king of Israel had made for the sanctuary of Yahweh, as Yahweh had foretold. He carried all Jerusalem off into exile” (IV Kings 24:13); “He burned down the Temple of Yahweh, the royal palace and all the houses in Jerusalem” (IV Kings 25: 9).

The Babylonian armies indeed tore down what was seemed to be the very essence of religion – and as, such, what seemed to be indestructible: the Temple of Jerusalem and its ritual, the possession of the Promised Land and the privileges of the Davidian dynasty. The „Israelite” was to be called, from now on, “Hebrew”. Important literary and prophetic texts turned now into apocalyptic writings (Greek *apokaluptein* = “to unveil”, “to reveal”), as is the case with Ezekiel, Jeremiah and Daniel<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> David, also called “*the sweet singer of Israel*” (II Kings 23: 1) made a rule that part of the Levites to serve before the Shrine, to extol, glorify and praise Yahweh, God of Israel (I. Chronicles 16: 4). The 4000 singers (1 Chronicles 25: 1-31), led to the altar by Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun and by their sons, divided into 24 classes, accompanied the divine service, in turns, during the whole of the day, with music, which was played with cymbals, lyres and harps. In the time of Solomon, the music at the temple had an even higher place. At the sanctification of the temple of Solomon, the great musicians, dressed in mink, stood at the East point of the altar, with cymbals, lyres and harps, along with the 120 priests who blew the trumpet. In the Babylon exile, the music stops; this is why the Psalmist says: “*By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept... How could we sing a song of Yahweh on alien soil?*” (Ps. 136: 1-4).

<sup>12</sup> Brown, Raymond E., *op. cit.*, pp. 647-648.

## 2. How Psalm 136 Is Used in the Orthodox and Greek Catholic Divine Liturgy

In the Orthodox and Greek Catholic Church, *Psalm 136* is sung during the Matins (Oútrenya) of three consecutive Sundays in the period of the “Triod” (a Lent period, from the Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee to the Great Saturday): The Sunday of the Prodigal Son, The Sunday of the Divine Judgment and the Sunday of the Banishing from the Garden. As a repentance psalm, the Church does not refer to it as a historical account of the Hebrew people’s time in Babylon, but it rather gives it symbolic meanings. It addresses its sons as ones who are “in exile” because of committing sins, “in exile” in the sense of “far away from God”, but who are still able to remember Zion. “Babylon”, the “alien soil”, is the world where the Christian is enslaved by its pleasures and, even worse, comes to love what enslaves him, namely, sin.

In the Orthodox and Greek Catholic Church cult, *Psalm 136* is part of the Polyeleos (Greek = “much mercy”) category. The name is inspired by *Psalm 135*, (The servants of the Lord), where every verse repeats the phrase „for His faithful love endures for ever”<sup>13</sup>.

Three sections of the Polyeleos are sung, depending on the particular ritual:

- “The Servants of the Lord” Polyeleos (Psalms 134 and 135), for the services celebrated at important holidays and saint feasts
- “My Heart is Indicating” Polyeleos (Psalm 44), for the holidays dedicated to Virgin Mary
- “By the Rivers of Babylon” Polyeleos (Psalm 136), for three Sundays of the “Triod” period, as enumerated<sup>14</sup>.
- The nine verses of Psalm 136 are divided in 12 stanzas, after splitting up verses 3, 6 and 7<sup>15</sup>. Even though the ritual injunction establishes the Polyeleos as part of the Matins or the Oútrenya, this beautiful piece became a source of inspiration for choral music composers, which wrote similar works to be sung during the Divine Liturgy, at the moment when the priests take the Holy Communion.

## 3. Melodic Sources and Manuscript Versions of Toduță’s Psalm 136

The monodic form of Psalm 136 is of Greek Catholic origins; written on musical staff on a three-page manuscript that bears the composer’s name, it was discovered by musicologist Constanța Cristescu among Sigismund Toduță’s manuscripts at the Cluj Napoca Foundation. A mention of this monodic melody as being of Greek Catholic origins is found in Celestin Cherebețiu’s

<sup>13</sup> Details on the Polyeleos in: Barbu Bucur, S., *Lexicon pentru cursurile de paleografie muzicală bizantină (Byzantine musical paleography Lexicon)*, Conservatoire Lithography, Bucharest, lit., P. Moldoveanu, N., *Mic dicționar de termeni muzicali bisericești (Small dictionary of church music terms)*, in: „Anuarul Facultății de Teologie Ortodoxă”, Bucharest, 2008, p. 471.

<sup>14</sup> *Catavasier sau Octoiul Mic (The Book of Katavasier or Little Oktoechos)*, EIBMBOR, 13<sup>th</sup> edition, pp. 235-243.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 239-240.

volume *Mânecatul (Utrenia)* - Blaj, 1930, pp. 17 – 20. It was the only evident explanation, as the old manuscript was not signed and didn't bear any indications as to its printing place or publishing house. As it appears, musicologist Constanța Cristescu<sup>16</sup> anticipated this moment.

In the archives of Sigismund Toduță Foundation in Cluj Napoca there are two manuscript versions of Psalm *By the rivers of Babylon*. Maestro Toduță worked on both of them, and both are dated 1974.

The first version is a lithograph, published by „Gheorghe Dima” Music Academy in Cluj Napoca under the guidance of composer Hans Peter Türk, one of Toduță's closest assistants.

The second manuscript was recently donated to the Foundation by composer Vasile Herman, who had worked with the maestro on the musicological volume *Musical forms of the Baroque in the works of J.S. Bach*<sup>17</sup>.

By comparing the two manuscripts, one can observe different technical particularities in the following sections:

Ex. 1

1) bars 14 – 18, voice overlapping and melodic variations

m.[13]

AII

În săl - cii am a - târ - nat har-pe le noas -

AII

În săl - cii am a - târ - nat har - - - pe le noas -

Ex. 2

bars 23 – 24, different cadenzas

M.[23]

TII

ne'au \_\_\_ ce - rut, ne'au \_\_\_ ce - rut

TII

ne'au \_\_\_ ce - rut, ne'au \_\_\_ ce - rut

<sup>16</sup> Cristescu, Constanța, *Asupra sursei de inspirație a psalmului "La râul Babilonului" de Sigismund Toduță (On the Source of Inspiration for Psalm "By the Rivers of Babylon" by Sigismund Toduță)*, in: *Studii și materiale muzicologice (Studies and musicological materials) bought by the Romanian Composers' and Musicologists' Union between 2005-2006*, book on CD, Bucharest, 2006, p. 27-58.

<sup>17</sup> Toduță, Sigismund, *Formele muzicale ale Barocului în operele lui J.S. Bach (Musical Forms of the Baroque in the Works of J.S. Bach)*, vol.1/1969, vol.2/1973 (assist. H.P. Türk), vol.3/1978 (assist. V. Herman), Editura Muzicală, Bucharest.

STELIAN IONAȘCU

m.[23] *Manuscris*  
 BII ce - rut, ne'au ce - rut  
*Hans Peter Türk*  
 BII ce - rut, ne'au ce - rut

Ex. 3

2) bars 25 – 31, important variations in ornamentation and melody

m.[24] *Manuscris*  
 BI rut glas cân - târi, a - li - lu - ia, a -  
 BII rut glas de cân - târi, cân - târi, a - - li -  
*Hans Peter Türk*  
 BI rut glas de cân - târi, a - li - lu - ia, a -  
 BII rut glas de cân - târi, a - li - lu -

Compared to the lithograph version, the one kept by Vasile Herman uses more ornaments, thus more markedly displaying the Byzantine melismatic character. Both versions are valuable and can be performed, for which reason I reproduced the varying sections from the Herman manuscript, unknown to conductors.

**4. Theatrical Aspects in the Choral Setting of Sigismund Toduță**

Psalm 136 *By the Rivers of Babylon* for a *capella* mixed choir, composed by Sigismund Toduță, is, “on first sight and hearing”<sup>18</sup>, a complex work with multiple roots and sources of inspiration:

- on the one hand, the Byzantine tradition, obvious in the modal character of the music, in the melodic line with characteristic inflexions formulas, and in very well preserved the lexis, even in specific regional variants;

<sup>18</sup> Toduță, Sigismund, *La râul Babilonului (By the rivers of Babylon)* for mixed choir a cappella, “Gh. Dima” Music Academy, 1993, date written on the last page, Cluj 4.XI.1974 (lithograph score). Performance of the „Transilvania” Philharmonic Cluj Napoca Choir, conductor Cornel Groza, on CD 7 from *Antologia Muzicii Românești – Creații corale românești*, 2007, Star Media Music – UCMR-ADA – SRR, Nr. RO1AF145011335.

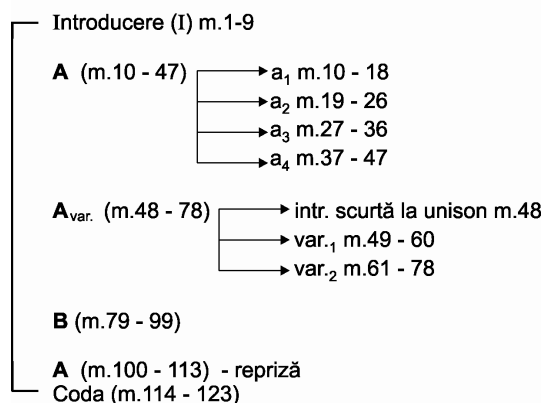
- another possible source is Transylvanian folk music, judging by the use of certain rhythmic types such as syllable-centred or *parlando rubato*;  
 - there is also a contemporary Occidental style of writing, very elaborate, observed in extended vocal techniques such as *glissando* or *Sprechgesang*, multi-layered structures with manifold voice divisions, subtle tone colour combinations and a daring harmonization which, carefully planned, displays varied solutions of harmonizing the melodic line in a bold manner.

We witness therefore a blend of tradition and modernity, of genuine monodic chant and an original choral setting, which places the composer among those who knew how to deal with a traditional church melody in a highly professional, mind-opening manner. A variety of techniques are used, from monody to heterophony, from unison monody to polyphony-accompanied monody. The complexity of this piece is evident also from the fact that the resulting musical syntaxes are not simply of classical form, but they come from a superposing of syntaxes, polyphony of homophony and other combinations, such as juxtaposing chord structures with imitations, in a *crescendo* of musical discourse leading to the climax – the cry of despair and the curse.

Beyond the strophic form that the text of Psalm 136 generates (12 stanzas), this work is a blend of classical music forms and a mosaic-shaped architecture, in a symphonic, rhetoric-like treatment.

**Ex. 4**

**Structura formală:**



[ I ] The 10 bar introduction has a monodic structure and is sung by alto – tenor (phrase 1), soprano – tenor (phrase 2), in octaves. The modal structure of the monody<sup>19</sup> that finalizes the first verse of the Psalm can be included in a mode drawn on note *a*, with two tetrachords: one minor, the

<sup>19</sup> Constanța Cristescu suggested a modal evaluation of it in her study *Asupra sursei ...*, (*On the source...*) op. cit., p. 35-36. Please read the pages from this study and carefully think over the modal-tonal structure.

other, major-minor, on the brink of tonality. From the very beginning, we notice that the macro-structure is determined by the „bricks” which are used in building this piece. The minor-major antithesis is a principle of unity of opposites (*coincidentia oppositorum*)<sup>20</sup>, a principle which will continue during the whole course of the piece. We can still notice that the melodic discourse never loses its freshness.

## Ex. 5



[A] a<sub>1</sub> After this quiet exposing of the first verse, on an octave-based melodic structure, the theme is taken over by the soprano voice, still keeping its modal character, while the other voices come with variation elements which totally rule out all possibility of redundancy in Toduță's work. The writing technique is as following: the alto comes with a free counterpoint, a kind of „countersubject” which appears at the same time with the subject, as an accompanying voice. Because the accompanying voices (alto, tenor and bass) do not appear in the form of a homophonic chord structure, but rather accompany the soprano in a polyphonic manner, this structure can be called *polyphony-accompanied monody*. It is quite surprising that the tenor and bass voices will insist on a minor tetra chord-based melody with the sharps removed, while the alto voice has the element of complexity – an accompanying melody built on new modal, tetra chord structures. Sigismund Toduță will come up with a piece where tetra chord structures appear superposed, conjunctive or disjunctive, and which can be grouped as follows:

## Ex. 6



[a<sub>2</sub>] Sigismund Toduță uses a “total chromatics”, not in the style of Schoenberg, where the sounds are autonomous, but as a result of achromatising the tetra chords with their conjunct notes, (“bridge” notes), which develop original tono-modal structures. More to the point, we can speak about a partial “total chromatics”, the only note “in absentia” being *c sharp*, which

<sup>20</sup> Cusanus, Nicolaus, *Coincidentia Oppositorum II*, Bilingual edition, Editura Polirom, 2008, 460 pp.



will nevertheless appear as an element of surprise and refreshment. The ear had gotten used with this musical course, and, starting with bar 20, *c sharp* brings an element of novelty. The composer plays with these information theory elements and tries to always keep his listener awake: he now insists on this *c sharp*, inexistent so far.

We now discover new variation elements. The main theme, to be recognized on the whole course of the piece, is displayed on different modal centres, whose incipit link the structures on a descending fifths relation: B (bar 1) – E (bar 19) – A (bar 25) – D (bar 37). The composer keeps away from routine, a routine, which would install if he repeated without variation and maintained the original strophic monody. The routine and automatism are broken by the voices coming in polyphony (bar 19); the same melody is sung by alto I and bass II in canon. After 5 bars, the “canon” is synchronized and after that, symmetrically, the polyphonic discourse returns, in a two-beat distance *stretto*: polyphony – synchrony – polyphony in bars 19 – 27.

**Ex. 7**

The image shows a musical score for two voices: Alto I and Bass II. The score is divided into two systems. The first system, starting at measure 19, is labeled 'CANON'. The Alto I part has a treble clef and the Bass II part has a bass clef. Both parts play the same melodic line, but the Bass II part is delayed by five measures relative to the Alto I part. The lyrics for the first system are: 'Că a - co - - - lo, - - - cei - - - ce ne'au ro - bit, ne'au ce - rut, ne'au...'. The second system, starting at measure 24, is labeled 'SINCRONIE' and 'CANON'. The two parts are now in phase. The lyrics for the second system are: '- ce - rut glas de cân - târi a - li - lu - ia etc...'. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

[a<sub>3</sub>; a<sub>4</sub>] complies with a monody accompanied by a clear homophonic structure (alto – monody, tenor and bass, in divisions – accompaniment).

**[A<sub>var</sub>]**

From bar 28, the first theme is varied. The psalmody variations and the theme with variations are traditional ways of work, but the composer approaches them in a modern, personal style. This theme with variations begins with a monodic antecedent, same as in [A] – but on a shorter scale (2 bars) – and then, using the same unity of opposites principle, alto and bass carry on with the subject, while complementarily, the other voices form a solid sonorous block. The dramatic character is emphasized by the rhythmic complexity between accompanied monody and a counterpoint-like, syncopated chord-structure (bars 51 – 57). We witness a play between rhythmic-melodic “complementarity” and “opposition”. The moments of musical accumulation, to be found in the background (bars 51 – 54) are transformed into moments of dilution (bars 57 – 70), by means of an isorhythmic construction on a pedal for alto and bass voices.

When all possibilities seemed exhausted, Sigismund Toduță proceeds to change between voices, beginning with bar 60: soprano and tenor take over the melody, while alto and bass (in divisions) sing the triad, chord accompaniment. From bar 61 the composer uses extended vocal techniques (*Sprechgesang*). A new “unity of opposites” is shown due to the superposing of two levels, where alto sings a sound with a precise pitch and bass a sound with an undefined pitch (*Sprechgesang*). In bars 68 – 69, we notice the first forms of variation in simultaneity. The bass sings the theme, superposed on a melodic, quasi-similar line at the soprano, a reason for which we can speak about a latent heterophony. For eight bars, an isorhythmic, chord-based structure accompanies the bass voice and leads to a melodic soprano voice climax ( $a^2$ ) which coincides with the golden section of the work (bar 76).

**[B]** Bar 79 opens a new section (B), different from what was heard before. Verse 7 from Psalm 136 is quoted through a *parlando rubato* (recto tono) recitative, Gregorian style like. From bar 80 onwards, a new sense of space is noticed, obtained by superposing two separate levels: the recto tono of feminine voices and male voices in divisions, which sing in short, semitone melodic cells, reminiscent of a trumpet call<sup>21</sup>. In bar 82, the choir is divided into 12 voices. Horizontally, the ear perceives a constant quaver beat, resulting from the vertical musical beats, presented alternatively and complementarily in well-organized, sonorous blocks for each section of the choir. From the bar 83 onwards, the extended vocal techniques will return in a segment based on the words “they said,” (“they shouted”, in the Romanian version of Psalm 136). The very cry is transformed (voice and glissando). Between bars 85 – 99, the complementary rhythms between soprano – tenor 1 and the other voices bring our attention back to the dramatic character, using new verses to match it: “Down with it!” (With Jerusalem). For 14 bars, we witness a deeply disturbing katabasis (“Down with it! Raise it to the ground!”).

**[A]** In bar 99, the composers bring section [A] back as a reprise (“*Daughter of Babylon, doomed to destruction*”). The tone colour density grows, so that in bars 103 – 107 we first discern three sonorous levels (soprano 1 –

<sup>21</sup> Due to poor means of expression (the lack of musical instruments), Sigismund Toduță is well aware that the music of the Hebrews was strongly coloured with instrumental accompaniment. This is why he imitates them and even suggests the dance movements, through a series of feminine voices jublations. The *ostinato* motif and the quick quaver discourse quite well makes up for the instruments that the people of Israel owned (*ugav, maşrochita, chalil, şofar, chaţoţera* – wind instruments; *chinar and nebel* – string instruments; *tof, țelțelim, menaanin, şalişim* – percussion; details in : Popescu Mălăiești, I., *Curs de introducere în Vechiul Testament (Introductory lecture in the Old Testament*, Bucharest, 1929-1930, pp.321-353; Ionașcu, Stelian, *Cântarea religioasă și vocal - instrumentală la evrei, în Biserica Ortodoxă Română și Biserica Romano-Catolică (Religious vocal-instrumental music of the Hebrews)*, in: *Glasul Bisericii*, (1998), nr.5-8, pp. 131-143; Barbu Bucur, Sebastian, *Cântarea de cult în Sfânta Scriptură și Sfânta Scriptură în Cântările Bisericii Ortodoxe (Church Music in the Holy Scripture and the Holy Scripture in the Music of the Orthodox Church)*, in: *Studii Teologice*, (1988), issue 5, pp. 86-100.

PSALM BY THE RIVERS OF BABYLON AS PART OF SIGISMUND TODUȚĂ'S CHORAL OUTPUT

soprano 2; alto 1 – alto 2; tenor – bass 1 – bass 2); then, in bar 110, we notice in fact *two* choirs, each with their own mission: the feminine voices sing in an isorhythmic quaver beat as in a whirling dance (“Daughter of Babylon”) and the male voices call to attention another text (“doomed to destruction”). This “jubilation” section resembles the instrumental counterpoint of Baroque music in the style of Bach – proportionately speaking, of course. It is no wonder that another composer who excellently dealt with working on Byzantine melody used this technique: Paul Constantinescu. In a short section of the *Christmas Byzantine Oratorio*, the composer turns to this dialogue of superposing male and feminine voices, which, in terms of semantics, speak of the “antiphony” of the choir of angels and choir of men who praise together the Conception of the Son of God.

Ex. 8

P. Constantinescu - fragment din "Oratoriul Bizantin de Crăciun"

S  
bu - cu - ră - te, bu - cu - ră - te, bu - cu - ră - te, bu - cu - ră - te, bu - cu - ră - te, bu - cu - ră - te,

A  
bu - cu - ră - te, bu - cu - ră - te, bu - cu - ră - te, bu - cu - ră - te, bu - cu - ră - te, bu - cu - ră - te,

T  
pli - - - - nă de Dar, de Dar,

B  
pli - - - - nă de Dar, pli - - - - nă de

S. Toduță - fragment din *La râul Babilonului*

S I  
fii - că a Ba - bi - lo - nu - lui,

S II  
lui, fii - că a Ba - bi - lo - nu

A  
fii - că a Ba - bi - lo - nu - lui,

T  
ne'ai pu - sti - it

B  
ne'ai pu - sti - it

**[Coda]** After this powerful display of music and dance, of battle cry, despair and revenge, we are met, for a few moments, with total silence. Bar 114 marks the coda, like a reminiscence of the reprise. On a pedal on soprano voices, the other voices end the piece with the refrain “Halleluiah” by augmenting the duration of the notes (quavers, crotchets, dotted crotchets, whole notes) and a final chord lacking its third, a-modal, quite frequent in the cadenzas used by Toduță in his two Divine Liturgies.

At the end, I would like to emphasize a few techniques, which are obviously preferred in the theatrical aspects of Toduță's choral setting of Psalm 136. Their detailed description will be the object of a further study.

- I have already talked about the principle that lies at the core of the whole piece – *the unity of opposites*; both at micro- and macro-structural levels, the composer has an epektatic vision, „from beginnings to beginnings”, and is not for a moment monotonous. There are sonorous levels distinct but complementary at the same time (bars 85 – 96), mirrored melodic line (bars 106 – 109), combinations of verticality and divergence (bars 80 – 82), major - minor alternation, syntax alternation and many other elements which all have the same goal: to avoid monotony;
- respecting the main melodic form: antecedent (verse 1) – consequent (verse 2) – cadenza (refrain);
- strict imitations having the meaning of well-defined sonorous signals: bar 16, the soprano imitated by the bass in bar 17; in bar 17, the bass imitates the soprano; *stretto* strict imitations in octaves (bars 19 – 26) between alto 1 – bass 2;
- *ostinato* motif (bar 39 – 42 – tenor); *Dies Irae*<sup>22</sup> (the Day of Wrath) is, with Sigismund Toduță, a free melodic formula and suggests the tragic quality of the tearing down of Jerusalem (bars 85 – 88);
- the parallel fifths discourse and the return to unison as defining elements of a modal structure: bars 29 – 37; bars 43 – 45 (bass – tenor). The paraphony in fifths suggests the enhancement of the vertical tetra phonic principle;
- the tendency to arrange the melodic discourse in tetra chords (segments  $\alpha, \beta, \gamma, \delta$ ) is an ingenious method to enhance the tri-phony principle;
- the principle of the mutual attraction of sounds, often met in Byzantine music, when a sound is altered with a sharp as the melody ascends and comes back to its natural when descending (bar 48; bar 56);
- the change of sonorous levels by alternating unisons: alto – bass (bars 49 – 59) and soprano – tenor (bars 60 – 69) reveals a refined technique of enhancing choral multiple tone colour;

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<sup>22</sup> \*\*\*, *Dicționar de termeni muzicali (Musical Terms Dictionary)*, Editura științifică și enciclopedică, Bucharest, 1984, pp.139 - 140.

- extended vocal techniques (glissando, talking voice, shouting voice);
- the technique of Byzantine jubilation, by making the voice perform passages reminiscent of instrumental music (m. 106 – 113);
- semitone attraction leading to chromatics (bars 60 – 64);
- the phrases are carefully planned according to the prosodic principle; the dramatic character is emphasized in the exact moments when the text of the psalm requires it: “if I do not keep you in mind”, “may my tongue remain stuck to my palate”, “Remember, Yahweh,... how they said 'Down with it'”;
- complex chord structures built by verticality the defining elements of psalm modes, such as chord  $\alpha^{23}$  (g sharp – b – d sharp – g) in bar 60, bar 111 or the “hisar” chord<sup>24</sup> (a – g sharp – a – g flat) bars 80 – 82; bar 89, bar 94 or sonorous block structures which sometimes spend the whole of the chromatic total.

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<sup>23</sup> Terényi, Ede, *Armonia muzicii moderne (1900-1950) (The Harmony of the Modern Music 1900 - 1950)*, "Gh. Dima" Music Academy, Cluj-Napoca, 1983, p. 65.

<sup>24</sup> Cristescu, Constanța, *Ipostaze liturgice ale unor leitacorduri toduțiene, (Liturgical Hypostasis of Toduțian leit-chords)*, in: *Muzica*, Issue. 2/2007, p. 64 - 74.

STELIAN IONAȘCU

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