

## – GOD’S LOVE FOR HUMANITY – IN MUSIC

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**SUMMARY.** We have witnessed the most accurate artistic expression of the religious feelings, namely the deepest type of love “which never falls away”, God’s love for His creatures. Most of the musicians dared to express their love for God artistically, by means of musical masterpieces, but not every composer could define himself as a creative witness of this very personal and uncovered aspect.

**Keywords:** religious, artistic, humanity, God, masterpieces.

*“What will we give God in exchange for all He has offered to us?  
Just for us has God joined the company of the human beings;  
... on the cross, The One deprived of passion; in death, the Life” (1)<sup>1</sup>.  
“God has gifted people with a grain of His eternity”<sup>2</sup>*

Most of the musicians dared to express their love for God artistically, by means of musical masterpieces, but not every composer could define himself as a creative witness of this very personal and uncovered aspect. **Perotinus** (twelfth-thirteenth century), a pre-Renaissance organist and composer who was educated in Notre-Dame composed **Nativitas** (dedicated to the organ).

In Baroque age, **Dietrich Buxtehude** (seventeenth century) is the most important Northern German organist (of Danish origin), highly appreciated by Bach who had a noteworthy activity as a composer, out of which the **oratorio Day of Judgement** (which was discovered later, in the twentieth century). In the Italian culture, **Arcangelo Corelli** (seventeenth-eighteenth century) composed a series of **concerti grossi** of a sensitivity which could foresee the Bach-like and Romantic trends. Corelli’s stylistic visionary skills were manifest especially in **Concertul pentru noaptea de Crăciun (The Concert for the Christmas Night) op. 6 no. 8**, the strongest moment of the twelve musical works which as components of the famous series of musical

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<sup>1</sup> Petru Damaschinul, Sf., quotation, in: *Lumina de Duminică (The Sunday Light)*, 14/2007.04.08, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Galeriu, Pr. Costantin.

works composed especially for concertos. The concert did not use to have one soloist, but the concert-like features were the result of the dynamics of the musical discourse, with an inner rhythm, which placed the expression between the post-Romantic passion and the eloquence of the Baroque discourse. He was the one who accomplished the genre concerto grosso and had a brilliant pedagogical career, by preserving the values of his art in the mentality of some other great violin players who proved to be creative as well. The elaborate composition of the concertos is certified by the fact that the publication of the well known series of musical works finished only in the composer's early seventies.

**Alessandro Scarlatti** (seventeenth-eighteenth century) composed *Patimile după Ioan (The Passions According to John)* - (1680); he was an important composer of the South of Italy where the Mediterranean *melos* became established by beauty and expressiveness. **Domenico Scarlatti** (eighteenth century) – one of Alessandro's sons – one of the most important harpsichord players and composers of that age – composed the ten voiced *Sabat Mater*, which went back to the time he spent in Portugal (after 1714).

“God’s love is an endless love,  
a love quantified in divine parameters,  
a love which forgives everything and leaves  
God judge everything,  
a love which does not falls away  
no matter how many barriers it has to overcome”<sup>3</sup>

At the age of twenty, **Francois Couperin** (seventeenth-eighteenth century) composed *Misese pentru orga (The Missas for the Organ)* which capitalized the French liturgical tradition in a very complex counterpoint language. **Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina** (sixteenth century) – the most important Renaissance composer – composed *Missa Papei Marcelli (Pope Marcelli’s Missa)*. By this musical work, he saved the music from being proscribed to some regulations of the pontifical Council and proved that a religious music could be both simple, with intelligible lyrics and complex. The musical work was built on the folk theme at the time, called **The Armed Man**, which was the reason why he composed a missa with the same title at a later time. *Stabat Mater* composed for eight voices, with two responsive choruses and the cycle *Cântarea cântărilor (The Song of the Songs)* stood out. **Heinrich Schutz** (seventeenth century) composed an ample religious work, which depicted aspects of Jesus Christ's life, our God and Saviour in *Povestea Învierii (The Story of the Resuscitation)* - (1623) – the first German oratorio

<sup>3</sup> Boca, Ierom. Arsenie, *Omul – zidire de mare preț (Man - a Highly Appreciated Creation)*, Credința strămoșească Publishing House, 2004, p. 131-132.

following an Italian model. In the oratorio ***Cele șapte cuvinte ale lui Hristos pe Cruce (The Seven Words of Christ on the Cross)*** - (1645) we have a synthesis of the Italian style assimilated by the composer in a very expressive and dramatic manner. The oratorio ***Povestea Nașterii (The Story of Birth)*** - (1664) innovated the modern, parlando genre which became mature in ***Patimile după Luca (Passions according to Luca)*** - (1653), ***Patimile după Ioan (Passions according to John)*** - (1666) and in ***Patimile după Matei (Passions according to Matthew)*** - (1666). Claudin de Sermisy (sixteenth century), a French composer also composed a version of ***Patimile după Matei (Passions according to Matthew)***.

Claudio Monteverdi (sixteenth - seventeenth century) composed ***Vecernia pentru binecuvântata Fecioară Maria (The Vespers for the Blessed Virgin Mary)***, a musical work that was dedicated to Pope Paul the Fifth and it was published alongside other choral works, motets and psalms. The one who stated, "The purpose of every great music is to impress the soul"<sup>4</sup> also defined the transition from the Renaissance (he composed his first madrigals at the age of 15) to Baroque age and turned his masterpiece, Orpheus, into a strong argument of the musical and dramatic possibilities of the new style ("seconda prattica"<sup>5</sup>). Monteverdi became the leader of the musical staff San Marco Cathedral in Venice in 1613 and became a priest in the last period of his life. His musical work dedicated to God's Mother combines elements of composition styles in a moment of stylistic confluence: namely, prima prattica and seconda prattica.

*"Let us initiate a love relationship with Him,  
even if this love is endless  
or just on this purpose"<sup>6</sup>.*

But **J. S. Bach's** musical work (eighteenth century) was the essential moment of the axiology of musical history: ***Actus tragicus*** and ***Hristos în mormânt (Jesus in the Tomb)*** are some of his youth **cantatas**, which remind of Christ's passions and death on the cross; both the musical works are composed under the direct influence of Buxtehude's North-German organ style. The following works are the musical works considered to be the most representative of his musical creation: ***Missa în si minor (Missa in B Minor)***, ***Oratoriul de Paști (The Easter Oratorio)***, ***Oratoriul de Crăciun (The Christmas Oratorio)***, ***Magnificat*** and ***Patimile: (The Passions)***. The musical works mentioned above were composed soon after he was assigned the

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<sup>4</sup> \*\*\* , *Classical Music*, J. Burrows publishing House, DK, pp. 80.

<sup>5</sup> He also wrote a treatise in the last part of his life to promote it.

<sup>6</sup> Stăniloae, Pr. Dumitru, *Teologia dogmatică ortodoxă III (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology III)*, Institutul biblic și de misiune al BOR Publishing House, Bucharest, 2003, p. 236.

position of parish clerk of “St. Tomas” Cathedral in Leipzig (1723), which he had not given up until he died due to the good conditions, which were appropriate for the intense manifestation of his talent. The second version, which was composed seven years later, eliminates the four moments in German – the ones that made a direct reference to Christmas. **Patimile (The Passions)** involve the existence of the Evangelist who renders the script of The Saint Gospel accurately as well as the chapters which make reference to The Saviour’s passions (without any reference to Resuscitation as mentioned in the Orthodox tradition), to Peter, Jude and Pilate. The chorus embodies the reactions of the crowd and the Apostles, the lyrical meditation of the soloists in the arias alongside with the choral musical works (which represent the *prayer*, the most intimate and intense moment of music). The musical work **Patimile după Matei (Passions According to Matthew)** was first performed on Good Friday, during the Easter’s Lent, 1729. It was composed for two choruses and children chorus, two orchestras, two organs (the responsive discourse articulates a uniquely dramatic tension), vocal soloists and instrument players; there were seventy-eight numbers. *Aria plângerii lui Petru (The Aria of Peter Weeping)* is the privileged moment, the one where the regret for the whole betrayal, which was to be forgiven by God, is performed by means of a romantic discourse *avant la lettre*. Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy gave back Bach’s masterpiece to the people specialized in music almost one hundred years after its premiere took place (11<sup>th</sup> March 1829). **Patimile după Ioan (Passions According to John)** - (1723) was composed when the musician was very young; it involves the musical manifestation of God’s Passions, of Jesus Christ, our God and Saviour, which explains the musician’s approach of reality in an intimate manner, violent and revolutionary at the same time.

**Patimile după Luca (Passions according to Luca)** were not probably composed by Bach and the libretto in **Patimile după Luca (Passions according to Luca)** was the only one to be preserved. The series of Bach’s oratorios is also revealing in conveying these moments: **Oratoriul de Crăciun (The Christmas Oratorio)** - (1734) consists in six adjoining cantatas (including the profane melodic trends) and **Oratoriul de Paști (The Easter Oratorio)** was founded on the pastoral cantatas Bach had composed during his musical creation which had been composed for the annual Easter holidays. **Oratoriul pentru Înălțarea Domnului (The Oratorio for God’s Raise to Heaven)** - (1735) is founded on the music of one of his cantatas. **Magnificat** and **Missa** have Latin lyrics: **Missa** (1733) is a musical work that was articulated on the script of The Sacred Mass, it has twenty-five numbers divided into four sections; it is Catholic by script, literary by content and Lutheran by the fragments of Bach’s cantatas, out of which some excerpts are included.

In the classical age, **Joseph Haydn** (seventeenth-nineteenth century) composed the oratorio **Cele șapte cuvinte ale lui Hristos (Christ’s Seven Words)** - (1786-1787) which had an orchestral and vocal version as well. And it was followed by the oratorio **Creățiunea (The Creation)** - (1798) which includes the famous excerpt articulated musically *And So It Turned out into Light ... Oratoriul Judecata de Apoi (The Oratorio Day of Judgment)* was not finished. It remained a plan, but we can imagine that the apocalyptic sonority could hardly be equalized by other composers who would have approached the same theme. **Ludwig van Beethoven** (nineteenth century) composed the most controversial musical expression ranging from the most passionate to the most seraphic ones. Out of the latter ones, the end (the second part) of **Sonata pentru pian op. 111 (Sonata for the Piano Op. 111)** is special by conveying a serenity beyond humanity by means of musical devices: by its simple and delicate expression, **Arietta** inaugurated the musical romanticism. **Missa solemnă** was a contemporary of the 19<sup>th</sup> Symphony and his last sonatas (the laboratory of the modernization of the musical language, which developed towards romanticism). It sanctions Beethoven’s recovery from a serious depression caused by deafness, the worsening of his liver and lungs diseases, by his nephew’s ingratitude, Karl, whom the great composer loved as much as his own son for whose custody and education he fought despite his poor financial and health condition. Those who do not love their children, who prevent their birth and ignore should follow the example provided by this man yearning for his love for people and for the art, which conveys this love. Before he died, Beethoven’s brother asked him to take care of his son, which turned into a responsibility of which Beethoven acquitted himself until his death, in an immense love, which did not take into account the young man’s ignorance who used to be spoilt and sardonic. The missa overlaps its common liturgical function, it is a monument of the loving liberty God gifted Man. In the chamber music, the end of **the quartet op. 135**, the last of Beethoven’s quartets is preceded by **Cântec de odihnă, cântec de pace (The Rest Song, The Peace Song)**, developed as a variation theme out of which the echo of a resigned farewell voice can hardly be perceived.

“God does not owe us anything; we shouldn’t forget that...”<sup>7</sup>

During the romantic age, **Franz Liszt** (nineteenth century) – a composer and pianist renowned at European level - composed **Via crucis (1878-1879)**, a musical work in which the composer described the fourteen times Christ

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<sup>7</sup> Thibon, Gustave, *Ignoranța înstelată (The Starred Ignorance)*, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 2003, p. 14.

made a stop on the Way of the Cross. **Hector Berlioz** (nineteenth century) composed *the oratorio Copilăria lui Iisus (Jesus' Childhood)* - (1854) – that expressed a Mediterranean purity, clarity of orchestration and conception. **Franz Schubert** (nineteenth century), during early romanticism provided a special proof of this intention by his unique *oratorio Lazăr sau sărbătoarea Învierii (Lazăr or the Celebration of Resuscitation Celebration)* - (1820), out of which the beginning was kept. **Nikolai Rimski-Korsakov** (nineteenth - twentieth century), a Russian composer, one of the most original orchestra players of the previous century was a self taught musician and proved his best religious musical expression in *the opera Noaptea de Ajun (The Christmas Eve Night)* - (1894-1895), situated at the stylistic junction of the Italian lyrical opera and the rhetorical opera. **Camille Saint-Saens** (nineteenth century) had a similar approach in *Potopul (The Flood)* - (1875) and *Oratoriul de Crăciun (The Christmas Oratorio)* - (1858) – although his religious conceptions did not recommend him for such a spiritual performance. **Ferruccio Busoni** (nineteenth - twentieth century), an Italian German pianist and composer composed at the age of twelve a musical work dedicated to Virgin Mary, called *Stabat Mater* which he also conducted. **Leos Janacek** (nineteenth - twentieth century) composed *Missa glagolitic* (1926), in which he the old Slavonic language was used in a tough musical language, highly "charged" from an ethnical point of view. In the Russian musical culture **Sergey Rachmaninov** (nineteenth – twentieth century) composed the musical work *Hristos a inviat! (Christ Is Alive!)* during his exile period.

During the twentieth century, **Arthur Honegger** (twentieth century), a Swiss composer, composed *Cantata de Crăciun (Christmas Cantata)* - (1953) – his last musical work, which ended in a choral song; this was supposed to be the first part of The Passions. **Olivier Messiaen** (twentieth century) composed *Micile liturghii (The Small Masses)* with a script made by the composer of the heterogeneous elements, which caused surrealist visions. *Cvartetul pentru sfârșitul timpului (The Quartet for the End of Times)* for the piano, violin, cello and the clarinet (1941) – was founded on an apocalyptic vision on the time, which would have an end. The first part, *Liturghia de cristal (The Crystal Mass)* showed the time suspension, prolonged for eternity as well as *Trei mici liturghii ale prezenței divine (Three Small Masses of the Divine Presence)* - (1944) for female chorus, piano Martenot waves and orchestra.. **Krzysztof Penderecki** (twentieth century) composed the musical version of *Kosmogonia* for soloists, chorus and orchestra (1970), which was an order of UNO for the twenty-fifth anniversary of the above organization.

The Romanian sonorous art combined the musical religious conceptions with the imperatives of the orthodox religion. **Anton Pann** (nineteenth century), a Romanian composer and folklorist had a career as a church singer and

teacher at the famous singer's schools. He was preoccupied especially by the urban folklore as a reflection of the mentality of his age in his musical work called ***Versuri ce se cântă la nașterea Domnului nostru Iisus Hristos (Lyrics Usually Performed When Jesus Christ Is Born)*** (1846). Paul Constantinescu (twentieth century), a Romanian composer, violinist and conductor composed the most important musical, vocal-symphonic musical work of religious background, namely ***the Oratorio Patimile și Învierea Domnului (God's Passions and Resuscitation)*** - (1946-1948), ***Oratoriul bizantin de Paști (The Easter Byzantine Oratorio)*** for soloists, mixed chorus and orchestra, was founded on Byzantine scripts in the medieval age. ***Nașterea Domnului (God's Birth)*** (1947) for Soloists, Mixed Chorus and Orchestra shows the same preoccupation of the composer to convey the Byzantine element, of Orthodox tradition within the rhetorical genre. I. D. Petrescu, who was specialized in Byzantines, transcribed these two masterpieces, which were composed during the difficult years, which followed the Second World War. **The Romanian folk music, the carols or the star Songs** are much more difficult to quantify. They are collected by researchers like **Constantin Brăiloiu** (twentieth century), the great folklorist, ethnomusicologist and composer who stood out by his endless passion proved in works published in Bucharest in 1931. These are just a few of the faith musical proofs, which refer to God's life, to Jesus Christ the Saviour.

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