PERFORMANCE PRACTICES OF TRANSYLVANIAN LATIN IN ECCLESIASTICAL MUSIC

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SUMMARY. The question of Ecclesiastical Latin pronunciation continues to be a subject of debate in the performing arts circles. While Latin is often labeled a "dead" language, one may argue that it remains vividly alive through performances – whether in liturgical or concert practices. For this reason, the pronunciation of Ecclesiastical Latin is not only an academic concern but an essential aspect of vocal authenticity within established religious aesthetics. Although it is widely acknowledged that no regional form of Ecclesiastical Latin mirrors the Classical Latin pronunciation of antiquity, the question today is whether performers should follow the scholarly reconstruction of local practices or adhere to Papal standardization. This is also the case with Transylvanian Ecclesiastical Music, which, based on historical evidence proves its alignment with the Hungarian-Germanic practices. Today, the performer's pronunciation of Latin in Transylvania is often a hybrid language, blending Germanic and Italianate features. Using the International Phonetic Alphabet, this paper analyzes the fixed forms of the *Ordinarium Missae* comparing the German pronunciation suggested by Valentin Lanzrein with the Italian pronunciation model instructed by Michael de Angelis as per Vatican's requirements, while describing the Transylvanian performing practices in its main communities: Hungarian, Saxon and Romanian. Ultimately, this study argues the local need for development of specialized vocal performance programs focused on Western sacred repertoire, a curriculum distinct from those centered on opera and Byzantine music.

Keywords: IPA, *Ordinarium Missae*, Transylvania, Ecclesiastical Latin, vocal performance, historical performance practices

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1. Performing Ecclesiastical Latin

Why would performers study the pronunciation of a "dead" language such as Latin? The voice, as a medium of expression, embodies historical memory through performances, carrying with it the cultural, linguistic, and spiritual context of the repertoire. An example of this embodiment can be found in the Vienna Boys Choir, whose performances of complete settings of Masses by Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms reflect not only high levels of musicianship and vocal skill, but also a strong knowledge of liturgical context. Through training, their Germanic pronunciation of Latin becomes inseparable from their liturgical literacy, showing how performing Ecclesiastical Latin can retain vocal authenticity and meaning when informed historically and theologically.

The spirit of one's voice, whether innate or cultivated through training, can transpire as an identifiable vocal feature. In fact, by reexamining the act of listening, as Nina Sun Eidsheim proposes, we become aware that we do not merely hear race; we also hear one's spirituality. What "we perceive through sound is not objective or neutral, but rather culturally constructed, historically contingent, and politically loaded"[3].

In search for comparable performing models, one may find performances artistically unconvincing, although commonly portraited as acceptable practice. Vocal, artistic, and aesthetic authenticity require a deeply rooted inner dimension, one that must be actively sought and cultivated. This inner dimension - whether understood as spiritual or as a sense of root or "origin of place" constitutes a necessary foundation for authenticity in vocal performance. Without it, the music risks being rendered lacking its essential meaning.

1.1 Historically Informed Practice and the Centralization of Liturgical Latin

Performance practices refer to general principles that guide musicians in interpreting a piece of music according to its style, historical context, composer's desire or genre. Historically informed performance practices indicate the practices that aim to perform music as it would have been in the time it was composed. Ecclesiastical Latin defines a specific vocal and musical tradition that highly varied throughout time and region. These practices have evolved over centuries and may differ based on specific religious denominations, local traditions, and the presence of various cultural influences as it is the case with the region of Transylvania in Romania.

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[3] Eidsheim, Nina Sun. "The Micropolitics of Listening to Vocal Timbre" In Postmodern Culture Journal, Vol. 24, No. 3, 2014 (accessed November 20th, 2024).

Up to 20th century, Latin's pronunciation reflected local linguistic habits in schools, choirs, courts and universities. Composers such as Bach, Telemann expected a Latin in the vernacular style of their region[4]. Erasmus's treatise *De Recta Latini Graecique sermonis pronuntiatione* (*On the Correct Pronunciation of Latin and Greek*), first published in 1528 encourages the use of reconstructed Classical Latin. Erasmus exposed various national pronunciation of the Latin, which he found unacceptable[5] hoping for a gradual improvement through the application of his 1528 book. However, both French and English seem not wanting to change the national ingredient of their own Latin pronunciation[6]. Even though Erasmian Latin became standard in Northern European Universities, the Catholic Church retained the Italianate ecclesiastical pronunciation, which is still used in Vatican today. As a response to the Protestant Reformation, the Council of Trent, which took place from 1545 to 1563 initiated the standardization of Church Latin, codified the Latin Mass, and published in *Missale Romanum* of 1570 under Pope Pius V establishing Latin as the universal liturgical language of the Roman Catholic Church[7].

The Council of Trent did not dictate how Latin should be pronounced, priest and choirs continued to pronounce Latin using vernacular-influenced styles. The pronunciation of Latin in the church wasn't formally standardized until 20th century under Pope Pius X. Between 1903-1914, under the music reform and chant restoration of Pope Pius X, the Vatican reedited the chant books: *Graduale Romanum* and *Liber Usualis* and encouraged a single "Roman" pronunciation - essentially Italianate Latin[8]. By the mid 20th century teachers, clergy and choir directors were being trained to use Italian-style Ecclesiastical Latin. Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music in Rome continues to teach this standard to seminarians and musicians. The USA, a music hub of the 20th century quickly aligned with the music reform of the Catholic church, while Europe had a slower pace in changing its regional customs.

More recently, in November 2012, Pope Benedict XVI published a *motu proprio Latina Lingua* to establish *Pontificia Academia Latinitatis* in Vatican with the purpose of reintroducing Latin to civil society and schools, based on Pope Pius X centralization of Latin using the Italian pronunciation[9].

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[4] Lanzrein, Valentin. Cross, Richard. *The Singer's Guide to German Diction.* Oxford University Press, 2018, pp. 237.

[5] Allen, W. Sydney. *Vox Latina. The Pronunciation of Classical Latin.* Cambridge University Press, 1978, pp. 107.

[6] ibid., pp. 106.

[7] Pope Paul VI, *Missale Romanum, Promulgation of the Roman Missal*, April 3rd, 1969, cf. Apost. Const. *Quo primum*, July 14th, 1570. papalencyclicals.net (accessed July 20th, 2025).

[8] Pope Pius X. *Papal Letter to the Cardinal Vicar of Rome – December 8th, 1903*, *Tra Le Sollecitudini (On Sacred Music).* papalencyclicals.net (accessed July 20th, 2025).

[9] Pope Benedict XVI, *Motu Proprio Latina Lingua*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2012 vatican.va (accessed August 10th, 2025).

Meanwhile, Vienna Boys Choir continues its singing local tradition with the use of Germanic pronunciation. Historically informed performances of early French music compositions in Latin such as *Leçons de Tenebrae*, traditionally sung during *Tenebrae* services - evenings of Wednesday, Thursday and Friday of the Holy Week - use the Hebrew letter followed by the Latin text from the Book of Lamentations, *Lamentationes Jeremiae Prophetae*. *Leçons*' phonetics blend French sounds such as nasal vowels, or the [y] sound of *u* vowel with Italian Ecclesiastic Latin sounds. Although it is widely acknowledged that no regional form of Ecclesiastical Latin matches the Classical Latin pronunciation used centuries earlier in academic settings, the question today is whether performers should follow the scholarly reconstruction of local practices or adhere to Papal standardization, using the Italian Latin?

1.2 Tracing Transylvanian Ecclesiastical Latin Usage

Transylvania, a region with a mixture of ethnicities has initially a history of Catholic and later Protestant liturgical music. From 1002 until 1526, Transylvania was part of the Kingdom of Hungary, during which time the region was Christianized mainly in the Roman rite. When the Mongol invasion took place in 1242, the Hungarian kingdom colonized Saxon settlers. After 1526, when Hungary fell under the Turks and Transylvania became an autonomous principality, the Saxon areas became Lutheran respecting the Lutheran Reformation from the Germanic regions, while some Hungarian communities became also Lutherans, Calvinists and Unitarians. Roman Catholic churches were transformed, wight-washed embracing the new denomination. During the period of its Principality (1526-1683) the Roman Catholics remain without a bishop, each community following its own vernacular Latin tradition. When King Saint Stephen of Hungary created Roman-Catholic dioceses, and administrative units for the church – of which the oldest is Diocese of Transylvania from 1009, today's Archdiocese of Alba Iulia – Latin language became not only a cultic language but also an administrative language.

In the mid of 13th century, during the Kingdom of Hungary, the founding of Milcov diocese in today's Romanian Moldova brought with it Christianization of the Cumans and Pechenegs who were taking refuge from the Mongol invasion. Later, these populations were displaced within the Hungarian territory. The Milcov bishopric was maintained by Dominican monks from Italy, who, alongside the Franciscans - throughout history and to the present day - have undertaken Catholic missionary work in Moldova. This is the reason why the Ecclesiastical Latin used here differs from Transylvanian's Latin. Maintaining ties to its missionary origins (Passau, Bavaria), Transylvania

used the Latin pronunciation of the Holy Roman Empire of the Germanic Nation throughout the Middle Ages and during the restoration period after 1683.

Less known in today's Transylvania is the work of Ioannes (János) Sylvester (cc. 1504 – cc.1552), who was born in Szatmár county (at that time in East of Hungary, today Seini, Romania). Sylvester was a humanist from Leonard Cox's Erasmian circle, professor of Latin, Greek, Hebrew, whose work was extensive "on the improvement of his mother tongue in Erasmus's and Luther's spirit"[10]. His book *Grammatica Hungarolatina* was first published in 1539, as a "prestudy to the great task, the Hungarian New Testament"[11].

When János Kájoni (1629-1687) came to the cultural landscape of Transylvania during the principality period (1526-1683), although of Romanian origin[12], he had his name in both Hungarian and German languages (Johannes Caioni), while also being latinized (Joannes Kajoni). At a young age, he entered the Catholic monastic order at Sumuleu Ciuc – still one of the most significant Hungarian Catholic pilgrimage sites today. János Kájoni is largely remembered and celebrated within the Hungarian culture rather than Romanian, and he stands as a representative figure of the Catholic musical tradition through his musical and liturgical contributions as well as his secular collections. Kájoni's *Cantionale Catholicum* (1676) contains 247 ecclesiastical hymns in Latin and 545 in Hungarian, while the 826 pages introduce a motto in Hungarian which translates: "I wanted to serve my beloved country and give others the opportunity to praise God without hindrance through this small work of mine"[13]. Among other languages used in his *Codex* of 346 musical pieces, the Ecclesiastical Latin used here survived today primarily within Hungarian-speaking communities. "Even as more than a third of historical Hungary was either directly occupied by the Ottoman Empire or under Ottoman suzerainty for much of the 17th century, this music (in his review of Kájoni's Codex *Vietorisz*) falls distinctly within the scope of Western practice"[14].

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[10] Sylvester, Ioannes. *Grammatica Hungarolatina.* Hungarian Academy of Science, Argumentum Publishing House – István Bartók, Budapest, 2006, pp. 7.

[11] ibid., pp. 8.

[12] Domokos, Pál Péter. *",,édes Hazámnak akartan szolgálni…".* Szent István Társulat, Budapest, 1979, pp. 102.

[13] Kájoni János, *Cantionale Catholicum*, https://library.hungaricana.hu/hu/view/RMK_I_1188-RM_I_4r_0316/?pg=5&layout=s (accessed August 27th, 2025)

[14] Pomerantz, Ian. "Delights from Baroque Carpathia". In *The Boston Musical Intelligencer*, May 12th, 2021, https://www.classical-scene.com/2021/05/12/delights-carpathia/ (accessed July 1st, 2025)

Johannes Honter's activity (latinized Honterus, 1498-1549) also falls during the period of principality of Transylvania. A humanist schoolmaster with extensive knowledge in Latin and Greek, Honterus kept in touch with Martin Luther and may have known of Desiderius Erasmus's book. He wrote schoolbooks in Latin printed in Brasov, Transylvania. His *Odae cum Harmoniis ex diversis Poëtis in usum Ludi literarii Coronensis decerptae* (1548) is such an example, setting music on Latin text of ancient authors as Horatio, Vergil, Boethius, Prudentius, Ambrose, Borbonius, Lactantius as well as of humanists' contemporaries of Honterus[15]. Although Ecclesiastical Latin was going to be slowly changed into German language of the time - the New High German of 1350-1650[16] as per Martin Luther's reform, preserving the relationship with the German church, would assure that the Latin used by Honterus in schools phonetically had Germanic influences. This evidence can be heard today in the performance practices of the Transylvanian Saxon communities. Trained at the University of Viena and having worked in Germanic speaking regions (Basel), Honterus published in Brasov his *Compendii grammatices libri duo* as a Latin grammar for students, eleven years after Erasmus' 1528 book written for the restoration of Latin's classical pronunciation, but in the same year as János Sylvester's *Grammatica Hungarolatina*.

Meanwhile, the cultic language in the extra-Carpathian regions was Slavonic, which was later changed to Romanian. Being under Habsburg rule for 176 years (1691-1867), and later under Austro-Hungarian rule (1867-1918) Transylvania belongs to Romania since 1918, after the collapse of Austro-Hungarian Empire at the end of World War II. Transylvania has a Romanian cultural history of only 107 years.

Liturgical Latin texts and music are shown in the following Transylvanian towns dating as early as 1300's, according to the Usuarium database[17], a Hungarian digital library for the study of Latin Liturgical History in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period.

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[15] Hanke, M. Ecaterina. "The Collection *Odae cum harmoniis* by Johannes Honterus". In *Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Brasov*, VIII, Vol. 10 (59). No. 2, 2017.

[16] Lanzrein, Valentin. Cross, Richard. *The Singer's Guide to German Diction*. Oxford University Press, 2018, pp. 5.

[17] https://usuarium.elte.hu/books?q=Romania (accessed June 27th, 2025).

Table 1

Origin	Date	Genre	Manuscript/Title	Usuarium ID
Alba Iulia	1462	Breviary	OFM Güssing Cod. 1/34	1201
Cisnădie	1300-1400	Missal	Parohia Cisnădie (no shelf mark)	4778
Gheorgheni	1428	Missal	Parohia Gheorgheni	4779
Oradea	1460	Breviary	BAV Vat. lat. 8247 (Vatican manuscript)	6500
Sibiu	1300-1400	Missal	Brukenthal Sibiu 9.V.1.	3384
Sibiu	1394	Missal	Brukenthal Sibiu 665	3383
Sibiu	1430	Missal	Brukenthal Sibiu Mss. 3.V.1 (shelfmark uncertain)	3385

List of Ecclesiastic Latin texts in Transylvanian towns according to Usuarium

The Batthyáneum Library from Alba-Iulia, who cares the name of its founder, the Roman-Catholic bishop Batthyány Ignác (Ignatius) contains manuscripts, incunabula, printed books and the famous Codex Aureus. The core of Batthyany's Library represents 8000 volumes bought by the bishop from Christoph Anton von Migazzi, archbishop of Viena[18]. These non-local Transylvanian sources along with the local ones are no longer in the property of the church, research access being regulated by the Romanian Ministry of Culture.

2. Roman-Catholic *Ordinarium Missae* and Phonetic Practices

The Roman Catholic *Ordinarium Missae* refers to the set of fixed texts within the Roman Catholic Mass that remain unchanged throughout the liturgical year, regardless of a particular holyday. These texts form the core of the musical and spoken liturgy and are often set on music by composers throughout history. The five main parts of the *Ordinarium Missae* are named in Latin: *Kyrie* - the prayer asking for mercy; *Gloria* - the hymn of praise omitted during Lent and Advent; *Credo* - the declaration of faith, also called the Nicene Creed; *Sanctus* and *Benedictus* - the acclamation during the Eucharistic Prayer and, *Agnus Dei* - the prayer for mercy and peace, sung during the breaking of the bread. Meanwhile, *Proprium Missae* changes depending on the liturgical calendar and includes *Introit*, *Gradual*, *Alleluia*,

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[18] Schatz, Elena-Maria. Stoica, Robertina. *Catalogul Colectiv al Incunabulelor din România.* CIMEC – Institutul de Memorie Culturala, 2007, pp.15.

Offertory, and *Communion*. Some practices in Transylvania include the *Proper* chanted in Gregorian or vernacular forms, while the *Ordinary* is sung occasionally polyphonically, particular during feast season.

2.1 The Fixed Structure of the Missa: IPA-based Pronunciation Analysis and Liturgical use in Transylvania

The following section will discuss the Ecclesiastical Latin with Germanic and Italianate pronunciation for the fixed forms of the *Ordinarium Missae*: *Kyrie*, *Gloria*, *Sanctus- Benedictus* and *Agnus Dei* and it will explain how these are used in Transylvania. The IPA symbols are those recommended by Valentin Lanzrein for German Latin in his book *The Singer's Guide to German Diction* (2018) and by Michael de Angelis for Italian Latin or Romano Latin as per Papal centralization of Ecclesiastical Latin. Father Michael de Angelis, an Italian-born, Ph.D. Professor of Latin, Italian and Liturgy at the Immaculate Conception Seminary, at the Seton Hall College, at the Newark Diocesan Institute of Sacred Music, and Rector of St. Joseph's Church in New Jersey published in 1937 *The Correct Pronunciation of Latin according to Roman Usage with Phonetic Arrangements of the Texts of the Ordinary of the Mass, Requiem Mass, Responses at Mass and Hymns* in response "to a general demand on the part of scholars, teachers, choirmasters, organists and singers who desire to obtain the option of a qualified authority on the much-debated question of the true Roman pronunciation of Latin"[19]. At that time the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) symbols were not extensively used as they are today, and the phonetics are explained through the American English sounds, using words syllabification and uppercase letters for the accented syllable, also providing word samples in American English. His work was so effective that even today the region uses Italian Latin in all musical works, in disregard to the composers' origins[20].

Promoting *unus cultus, unus cantus, una lingua*, the book shows documents and letters between the Pope and its Cardinali, urging the need to "pronounce Latin more romano"[21] all throughout the world. Pope Pius X wrote in a 1912 letter to the French Archbishop of Bourges, Louis Ernest Dubois that "the question of the pronunciation of Latin is closely bound up

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[19] De Angelis, Michael. *The Correct Pronunciation of Latin according to Roman Usage with Phonetic Arrangements of the Texts of the Ordinary of the Mass, Requiem Mass, Responses at Mass and Hymns*. G.I.A. Publications, Inc. Chicago, 1965, Nicola A. Montani's note, pp. 3.

[20] Lanzrein, Valentin. Cross, Richard. *The Singer's Guide to German Diction*. Oxford University Press, 2018, pp. 237.

[21] De Angelis, Michael. *The Correct Pronunciation of Latin according to Roman Usage with Phonetic Arrangements of the Texts of the Ordinary of the Mass, Requiem Mass, Responses at Mass and Hymns*. G.I.A. Publications, Inc. Chicago, 1965, pp. 5.

with the restoration of the Gregorian chant […], the accent and the pronunciation of Latin had great influence on the melodic and rhythmic formation of the Gregorian phrase and consequently it is important that these melodies should be rendered in the same manner in which they were artistically conceived at their first beginning […] Finally the spread of the Roman pronunciation of Latin should continue with the same zeal and consoling success which has marked its progress hitherto […]"[22]. Meanwhile, Michael de Angelis talks about that even the Italian Latin "was not uniform", having "*substrati* particularly in the cities along the coasts, in the Lazio district and in upper Italy", where influences of Greek and Gallic were present. He, then compares how the Italian phonetics differ between Neapolitan, Sicilian or Tuscan regions, just as English differs in different parts of the world or within one country[23]. Despite these mentions, Michael de Angelis advocates for the Vatican's Ecclesiastical Latin in both music performance and liturgical services.

Valentin Lanzrein, a German lyric diction professional, strongly promotes the use of German Latin for all German composers, especially when written for German performers and audiences, arguing that German composers' word syllabification of Ecclesiastical Latin is a strong indicative that German composers expected the German Latin phonetics. "Bach in the autograph of the *B Minor Mass*, often did not make any separation [syllabification] at all and simply wrote over the bar line, but, when forced to, because of a new line or new page, he made the separation *sus-cipe* in the *Gloria*, and *as-cendit*, *des-cendit* in the *Credo*"[24].

Table 2

Latin	German Ecclesiastical Latin Pronunciation in IPA according to Valentin Lanzrein	Italian Ecclesiastical Latin Pronunciation in IPA according to Michael de Angelis
Kyrie eleison	[ˈkyːrie leˈlɛ͡isɔn]	[ˈkiːˌriːɛ ɛˈlɛɪ.sɔn]
Christe eleison	[ˈkrɪs.te leˈlɛ͡isɔn]	[ˈkriːs.tɛ ɛˈlɛɪ.sɔn]
Kyrie eleison	[ˈkyːrie leˈlɛ͡isɔn]	[ˈkiːˌriː ɛ ɛˈlɛɪ.sɔn]

Kyrie – IPA of German and Italian Latin

[22] ibid., pp. 4.
[23] ibid., pp. 7.
[24] Lanzrein, Valentin. Cross, Richard. *The Singer's Guide to German Diction.* Oxford University Press, 2018, pp. 238.

The main two differences are: (1) *Kyrie* is pronounced with a [y] sound in German Latin, the equivalent of the long, close *ü* vowel in German, while in the Vatican's version is pronounced with an [i:] the equivalent of a long, close *i* vowel in Italian; (2) Lanzrein indicates a glottal separation between the two words as per German pronunciation rules for words starting with a vowel and proceeded by a word ending also with a vowel sound. The accent of the words is the same and is marked with [ˈ] in front of the accented syllable.

Another fixed form in the *Ordinarium* is *Agnus Dei*, also usually short in length and sung three times.

Table 3

Latin	German Ecclesiastical Latin Pronunciation in IPA according to Valentin Lanzrein	Italian Ecclesiastical Latin Pronunciation in IPA according to Michael de Angelis
Agnus Dei	[ˈag.nʊs ˈde:.i]	[ˈaɲ.nus ˈdɛ:.i]
qui tollis peccata mundi	[kvi: ˈtɔlɪs pɛˈkɑ:.tɑ ˈmʊn.di]	[kwi: ˈtɔl.lɪs pɛˈkɑ:.tɑ ˈmʊn.di]
miserere nobis	[miˈsɛˈre:.re ˈno:.bɪs]	[miˈsɛ:.rɛ ˈnɔ.bɪs]
dona nobis pacem	[ˈdo:nɑ ˈno:.bɪs ˈpa:.tsɛm]	[ˈdɔ.nɑ ˈnɔ.bɪs ˈpa:.tʃɛm]

***Agnus Dei* – IPA of German and Italian Latin**

Although *s* intervocalic would have a [z] sound in both Germanic and Italianate modern languages in Latin *s* is sung voiceless [s] in both pronunciations. Sidney Allen, a Cambridge scholar of Classical Latin backs up this practice: "In very early times intervocalic *s* had generally developed to voiced [z], but this sound was not maintained in Latin and was changed to [r]"[25]. Also, in *Agnus Dei* letter *s* remains unvoiced in Germanic pronunciation of Lanzrein and in the Italian Latin of Father Michael de Angelis. Visibly different pronunciation occurs for the letter groups: (a) *gn* which becomes [gn] and [ɲ]; (b) *qu* which reads [kv] and [kw] respectively; and (c) *ce* which sounds [ts] in German Latin and [tʃ] in Italian Latin.

Performance practices in Transylvania show that the Hungarian and German ethnics stay closely to the Germanic pronunciation of the Latin, while the Romanians mix the two phonetic systems: Italian and German. The Romanians keep the voiced *g* sound in *agnus* and the affricate [kv] in *qui* from German phonetics, but they Italianize the *pacem*, using the affricate [tʃ] instead of [ts] adding also the modern voiced *s* intervocalic, [z] sound from the Romanian language.

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[25] Allen, W. Sydney. *Vox Latina. The Pronunciation of Classical Latin*. Cambridge University Press, 1978, pp. 35.

Table 4

Latin	Transylvanian – Saxon/ Hungarian Pronunciation in IPA	Transylvanian - Romanian Pronunciation in IPA
Kyrie eleison	[ˈky:rie eˈlɛison]/[ˈki:rie]	[ˈki:.ri:ɛ ɛˈlɛɪ.sɔn]
Christe eleison	[ˈkrɪs.te eˈlɛison]	[ˈkri:.s.tɛ ɛˈlɛɪ.sɔn]
Agnus Dei	[ˈag.nʊs ˈde:.i]	[ˈag.nʊs ˈde:.i]
qui tollis peccata mundi	[kvi: ˈtɔlɪs pɛˈka:.ta ˈmʊn.di]	[kvi: ˈtɔlɪs pɛˈka:.tɑ ˈmun.di]
miserere nobis	[miˈsɛˈre:re ˈno:.bɪs]	[miˈzɛ:.rɛ ˈnɔ.bɪs]
dona nobis pacem	[ˈdo:nɑ ˈno:.bɪs ˈpa:.tsɛm]	[ˈdɔ.nɑ ˈnɔ.bɪs ˈpa:.tʃɛm]

**Kyrie and Agnus Dei – IPA of Transylvanian Latin in Hungarian,
Saxon and Romanian communities**

Let's now take a look at *Sanctus* and *Benedictus* and notice how these movements would be sung in the two Latin pronunciations considering that the main word accent falls on the first syllable. *Coeli* is pronounced [ˈtsø:li] in Germanic Latin, while in the Italian Latin is [ˈtʃɛ:.li]. The rule applied in phonetics is when *c* followed by a frontal vowel the sound changes into a [ts] sound for German and into a [tʃ] sound for Italian. Lanzrein insists on a glottal stop every time German language would employ it. Initial *h* is mute in Italian and pronounced [h] in German. Allen affirms that "*h* is basically a weak articulation, involving no independent activity of the speech-organs in the mouth, and is liable to disappear"[26]. While Allen documents how *h* has been lost in colloquial Latin of the classical period, notes "but we may be sure that the writing and pronunciation of *h* continued for a long time to be taught in the schools and cultivated in polite society – as St. Augustine complains […] and it is therefore not surprising that we find it replaced by *ch*, where *ch* probably has the value of the German *ich-Laut*"[27].

Table 5

Latin	German Ecclesiastical Latin Pronunciation in IPA according to Valentin Lanzrein	Italian Ecclesiastical Latin Pronunciation in IPA according to Michael de Angelis
Sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth	[ˈsaŋktʊs ˈdɔmɪnʊs ˈde:ʊs ˈsɑ:baɔt]	[saŋk.tus ˈdɔ.mi.nus ˈdɛ:.us ˈsa.ba.ot]
Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua	[ˈple:ni sʊnt ˈtsø:li lɛt ˈtɛra ˈglo:ria tu:a]	[ˈplɛ.ni ˈsunt ˈtʃɛ:.li ɛt ˈtɛr.ra ˈglɔ:.rɪ.ɑ ˈtu:.ɑ]
Hosanna in excelsis	[hoˈsana lɪn lɛksˈtsɛlsɪs]	[oˈzan.na in ɛkˈtʃɛl.sɪs]
Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini	[beneˈdɪktʊs kvi ˈve:nɪt lɪn ˈno:mɪne ˈdɔmɪni]	[ˈbɛ.nɛ.dɪk.tus kwi ˈvɛ.nɪt in ˈnɔ.mi.ne ˈdɔ.mi.ni]

Sanctus and Benedictus – IPA of German and Italian Latin

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[26] ibid., pp. 43.
[27] Allen, W. Sydney. *Vox Latina. The Pronunciation of Classical Latin.* Cambridge University Press, 1978, pp. 45.

<div align="right">**Table 6**</div>

Latin	Transylvanian – Saxon/ Hungarian Pronunciation in IPA	Transylvanian - Romanian Pronunciation in IPA
Sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth	[ˈsaŋktʊs ˈdɔmɪnʊs ˈdeːʊs ˈsɑːbaɔt]	[sank.tus ˈdɔ.mi.nus ˈdɛː.us ˈsa.ba.ot]
Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua	[ˈpleːni sʊnt ˈtsøːli ɛt ˈtɛra ˈgloːria tuːa] /[ˈtseːli]	[ˈplɛ.ni ˈsunt ˈtʃɛː.li ɛt ˈtɛr.ra ˈglɔː.rɪ.ɑ ˈtuː.ɑ]
Hosanna in excelsis	[hoˈsana ɪn ɛksˈtsɛlsɪs]	[hoˈsan.na in ɛkˈtʃɛl.sɪs]
Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domin.	[beneˈdɪktʊs kvi ˈveːnɪt ɪn ˈnoːmɪne ˈdɔmɪni]	[ˈbɛ.nɛ.dɪk.tus kvi ˈvɛ.nɪt in ˈnɔ.mi.ne ˈdɔ.mi.ni]

<div align="center">*Sanctus* and *Benedictus* - **IPA of Transylvanian Latin in Hungarian, Saxon and Romanian communities**</div>

Most Hungarian communities use [ˈtseːli] instead of the Germanic [ˈtsøːli]. Although the Germanic Latin has a more consonantal pronunciation, particularly in the [k] and [s] sounds, the mix with the Italian pronunciation found in the practice of Romanian performers does not necessary justify phonetically this blend, even though the Italian vowels and the absence of the glottal separation provide a more melodic flow and softer consonants. In the *Gloria* movement, all the differences mentioned above apply distinctively to the Transylvanian communities.

<div align="right">**Table 7**</div>

Latin	Transylvanian – Saxon/ Hungarian Pronunciation in IPA	Transylvanian - Romanian Pronunciation in IPA
Gloria in excelsis Deo	[ˈgloːria ɪn ɛksˈtsɛlsɪs ˈdeːo]	[ˈglo:.ri.a in ɛkˈtʃɛl.sis ˈdɛ.o] or [ˈglɔː.rja in ɛkˈtʃɛl:sis ˈdeːo]
et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.	[ɛt ɪn ˈtɛra paks hoˈmiːnɪbʊs ˈboːnɛ volʊnˈtaːtɪs]	[et in ˈtɛr.ra paks ɔˈmiː.ni.bus ˈbo:.ne vo.lunˈta:.tis] or [ɛt in ˈtɛrra ˈpaks hoˈmi:nibus]
Laudamus Te, benedicimus Te,	[lauˈdaːmʊs te beneˈdiːtsɪmʊs te]	[lauˈda:.mus te beneˈdiː.tʃi.mus te] or [laʊda:mʊs te bɛnɛˈdi:tʃimus te]
adoramus Te, glorificamus Te.	[adoˈrɑːmʊs te glorifiˈkaːmʊs te]	[a.doˈra:.mus te glo.ri.fiˈka:.mus te]
Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam,	[ˈgrɑːtsias ˈɑːgɪmʊs ˈtiːbi: ˈprɔpter ˈmagnam ˈgloːriam ˈtuːam]	[graː.tsi.as ˈa.dʒi.mus ˈtiː.bi ˈprop.ter ˈmagnam ˈglo:.ri.am ˈtu.am] or [gratˈjas]
Domine Deus, rex coelestis, Pater omnipotens,	[ˈdɔmɪne ˈdeːʊs rɛks tsøˈlɛstɪs ˈpɑːtɛr ɔmˈniːpotɛns]/[ˈtseːˈlɛstɪs]	[ˈdɔ.mi.ne ˈdɛː.us reks tʃɛˈlɛs.tis ˈdɛː.us ˈpa.ter om.ni.poˈtɛns]
Domine Filii unigenite, Jesu Christe.	[ˈdɔmɪne ˈfiːlii uniˈgeːnɪte ˈɟeːsu ˈkrɪste]	[ˈdɔ.mi.ne ˈfiː.li u.niˈdʒɛ.ni.te ˈje:.zu ˈkʰri:ste]

Latin	Transylvanian – Saxon/ Hungarian Pronunciation in IPA	Transylvanian - Romanian Pronunciation in IPA
Domine Deus, Agnus dei, Filius Patris, Qui tollis peccata mundi,	[ˈdɔmɪne ˈdeːʊs ˈagnʊs ˈdeːi ˈfiːliʊs ˈpɑːtrɪs kvi ˈtɔlɪs pɛˈkɑːta ˈmʊndi]	[ˈdɔ.mi.ne ˈdɛː.us ˈagn.us ˈdɛː.i ˈfiː.li.us ˈpa.tris kvi ˈtɔlɪs pɛˈkɑːta ˈmundi]
miserere nobis	[misɛˈreː.re ˈnoːbɪs]	[mi.zeˈrɛː.re ˈnoː.bis]
Suscipe deprecationem nostram	[ˈsʊstsipe deprekatsiˈoːnɛm ˈnɔstram]	[ˈsuʃ.tʃi.pe de.pre.kaˈtsi.o.nem ˈnɔs.tram]
Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris miserere nobis	[kvi ˈseːdɛs at ˈdɛkstɛram ˈpɑːtrɪs misɛˈreː.re ˈnoːbɪs]	[kvi ˈsɛː.des ad dɛksˈteː.ram ˈpa.tris, mi.zeˈrɛː.re ˈnoː.bis]
Quoniam Tu solus sanctus, Tu solus Dominus,	[ˈkvoːniam tu ˈsoːlʊs ˈsaŋktʊs tu ˈsoːlʊs ˈdɔmɪnʊs]	[ˈkvɔ.njam tu ˈsoː.lus ˈsank.tus tu ˈsoː.lus ˈdɔ.mi.nus]
Tu solus Altissimus, Jesu Christe.	[tu ˈsoːlʊs alˈtɪsɪmʊs ˈjeːsu ˈkrɪste]	[tu ˈsoː.lus alˈtis.si.mus ˈjeː.zu ˈkʰriː.s.te]
Cum Sancto Spiritu	[kʊm ˈsaŋkto ˈspiːrɪtu]	[kum ˈsank.to ˈspi.ri.tu]
in gloria Dei Patris.	[ɪn ˈgloːria ˈdeːi ˈpɑːtrɪs]	[in ˈglɔː.ri.a ˈdɛːi ˈpa.tris]
Amen	[ˈɑːmɛn]	[ˈa.mɛn]

Gloria **- IPA of Transylvanian Latin in Hungarian, Saxon and Romanian communities**

In addition to the differences previously mentioned, several words present different phonetics within the *Gloria* movement of the Mass. *Jesu* is pronounced with an unvoiced *s* [ˈjeːsu] and maintains its voiceless sound in Italian Latin (cf. Michael de Angelis pp. 22, and Sydney Allen 35), even though Lanzrein indicates a voiced intervocalic *s*, [z] in this case for the Italian Latin[28], as Transylvanian Romanian performers use [ˈjeː.zu]. The use of unvoiced *s* in Ecclesiastical Latin is also confirmed by Moriarty[29]. The word *suscipe* is syllabified differently: *sus-ci-pe* and it reads [ˈsʊstsipe] in German Latin, but *su-sci-pe* in Italian Latin and it sounds [ˈsuʃ.tʃi.pe]. The letter group *ge/gi* keeps its hard sound in German Latin as in [uniˈgeːnɪte] and [ˈɑːgɪmʊs] while it softens in the Italian Latin as in [unidʒeˈniːte] or [ˈa.dʒi.mus].

Although the Church has historically tolerated a degree of variation in Latin pronunciation, the commonly held assumption that Ecclesiastical Latin is synonymous with modern Italian pronunciation is often questioned by both linguists and musicologists. Performers who are unfamiliar with Roman Catholic musical traditions or with the custom of a particular region, may apply by-ear heard pronunciations or a combination of these. This is evident in the hybridized Latin pronunciation found in Romanian performances, where the two versions of pronunciation are mixed regardless of composer's and audience's origins. It

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[28] Lanzrein, Valentin. Cross, Richard. *The Singer's Guide to German Diction*. Oxford University Press, 2018, pp. 256.
[29] Moriarty, John. *Diction.* Shirmer Music Company, 1975, pp. 161.

is possible that the Roman-Catholics of Moldova cultured under the Franciscans and Dominicans who were speaking Italian Latin, mixed the German Latin with the Italian Latin. As Romania comprised throughout history of Moldova and Wallachia, this hybrid Latin may have reached from Moldova into the South. Romanian performers keep today this version of pronunciation. This mix is not singular in the use of Latin language. For example: "Latin in England was taught through the medium of French, by French schoolmasters, and this resulted in the introduction of some peculiarities of the French pronunciation of Latin"[30] to English speaking communities. France has been resistant to Papal centralization of Latin through its later *Societé des amis de la pronunciation française du Latin*[31] and earlier in the history through Gallicanism, despite the Ultramontanism's efforts to support Papal authority. Consequently, what pronunciation practice best aligns with historical and musical authenticity for soloists or choirs performing Latin repertoire if Papal standardization is not to be considered? In the case of Transylvania, the historical answer is clear: German Latin.

3. Performing Faith: Vocal Authenticity within Religious Aesthetics

There are many local performers whose vocal sound, although classical, keep a very distinct quality of the orthodox vocal tradition from a technical aspect: a chest-pressed tone, a prominent forward jaw action which favors a more pharyngeal resonance, a vibrato rate of the voice quite low. The vocal sound feels generally pulled downward by inner actions of the body while trying to protrude outside of it, a sense of heaviness and unease that the body also manifest while singing, caught in a sound production that vehemently wants to dominate. The audience has been already conditioned to expect this specific vocal feature. Meanwhile, most Western vocal traditions use the light vocal mechanism through which the voice learns to have agility and firmness, and a *chiaroscuro* quality that is not too dark, which assures not only the singer's vocal longevity, suppleness and beauty but the authenticity of the repertoire discussed.

The native language is also a dominant component of the vocal timbre and singing style. Nina Sun Eidsheim challenges the assumption that the voice reveals race and identity directly. When people say a voice "sounds Black", that impression isn't based on inherent acoustics, but filtered through cultural expectations, media representations and historical stereotypes[32]. Not only that one hears a clear African American timbre, a Korean vocal sound, an

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[30] Allen, W. Sydney. *Vox Latina. The Pronunciation of Classical Latin*. Cambridge University Press, 1978, pp. 102.

[31] ibid., pp. 107.

[32] Eidsheim, Nina Sun. *The Race of Sound: Listening, Timbre, and Vocality in African American Music*. Duke University Press, 2019. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11hpntq. (accessed August 13th, 2025).

Italian tenor timbre, a Russian bass voice, or an American Broadway performer but one may surely assert the vocal orthodoxy of Callas, Anna Netrebko and Angela Gheorghiu. In the sense that voice represents a culture[33], one may identify hundreds of Romanian female student and teacher performers duplicating Callas' or Gheorghiu's voice mechanics and behavior as well as their stage appearance. These characteristics of the vocal timbre become requirements of a classical trained singer in the respective region. These then dictate the vocal trend and the educational framework. Due to imitation, timbre richness, in many cases is not a natural occurrence as it may be for the original performer, but an overload of pharyngeal pressure, physique stiffness and extreme protrusions of vocal sound, an *impostazione della voce* that targets way beyond the field of a natural biologically vibrating instrument. The goal for a graduate becomes then one's ability to sing grandiose mature opera roles of Verdi and Puccini as early as possible. This is why Richard Miller points out the heavy vocal mechanism of the Eastern-European singing schools which train religiously the Balkan singer. The aesthetics of vocal timbre should follow though "the Western ideal of beauty"[34].

Romanians, Hungarians and Saxons of Transylvania do not question which Latin pronunciation to use in performance. Each community and performer tend to adopt the version of Latin passed down through teachers, churches, schools, or heard informally in local performing practice. Despite ongoing processes of musical and cultural assimilation, Transylvania remains educationally and culturally diverse. Nonetheless, vocal practices originating outside the Carpathians, brought here other phonetic system, styles and vocal features, who have gradually become dominant. Among these, one finds the use of a hybrid Ecclesiastical Latin coating a heavy vocal mechanism. As a result, the pursuit of performance authenticity in this repertoire has diminished, and the regional identity has been supplanted.

Cultural preferences play a significant role in shaping the vocal behavior of young singers, The need for the development of specialized vocal performance programs outside of church, focused on Western sacred repertoire stays valid. Such a curriculum, distinct from those centered on opera or Byzantine music, would include the study and the performance of the Mass, oratorios, and sacred cantatas within their appropriate liturgical and historical context. The vocal and expressive demands of this repertoire differ from those of operatic styles or Byzantine sacred music. The performer is advised to have arguments when choosing to follow vernacular Latin of today's communities, or a scholarly reconstructed Latin of a region or the Papal standardization. Ultimately, seeking and remaining faithful to the vocal style in which one's voice finds its natural expression and authenticity also entails a deep artistic integrity.

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[33] idem.
[34] Miller, Richard. *The Structure of Singing*. Shirmer, 1986, pp. 206.

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