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REVIEW

at

the dissertation of Ilia Zdravkov Mihaylov with the topic:

**THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF CHURCH
MONODY**

from

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Ilia Mihaylov's dissertation "**THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF CHURCH MONODY**" consists of an introduction, 4 chapters, a conclusion, 2 appendices, a bibliography of 133 titles (94 in Cyrillic and 39 in Latin) and a list of publications on the dissertation topic of 199 pages.

In the introduction, the Doctoral Candidate Ilia Mihaylov poses fundamental questions that shape the thematic framework of his research. One of them is the question of the deep contradiction between the age-old tradition in Bulgaria of *eastern church chanting* - which, as *eastern* in origin, is associated more with *folk* singing - and the extreme difficulty, almost to the point of impossibility, of its application in schools of general education. Various reasons are given for this: historical-political, such as the ban on church singing from the mid-twentieth century; cultural, such as the *Balkan* musical tradition or, specifically for us, *Byzantine* music; purely methodological, because "it is only as 'Eastern' that these cultures are not thoughtfully represented in today's Bulgarian schools" (p. 3), from which it follows that, by necessity, the methodology of teaching music in schools is *Western*. Quoting Klara Mechkova, the author also

asks the essential rhetorical question how "a millennia-old musical tradition"...can... "be taught in twenty minutes" (p. 4).

At first glance, the dissertation *topic*, "Theoretical and Methodological Aspects of Church Monody," seems too broad. But it is immediately narrowed by the task set to examine "the monody practice known in Bulgaria as 'Eastern church singing' in view of its place in the Bulgarian school, as an Orthodox-Christian cultural tradition" (p. 4). In fact, this narrowing is implied in the title of the work as *aspects* of church monody, and in particular as *methodological* aspects. The topic becomes particularly current because of the "lack of relevant pedagogical research in the field of general education in our country" (p. 3). The topic thus becomes a challenge, not only because of the questions posed, but also because of the solutions needed to match them. In such a sense, *the aim* of the work is stated as a study of "the possibilities of implementation in the Bulgarian school of the traditional church monody practiced in the Bulgarian lands", concretized for the music education of students from III to IV grade.

The subject of the study is defined as "teaching Orthodox Church monody to pupils in the primary stage of education with the help of multimedia technologies, mobile applications and apps" (p. 5), and *the object* - the result of the training. Such type of activities are sought in the relevant current forms of education as: "extra-curricular activities (ECA) - Interest classes and/or Elective classes (EC) " (p. 6). Given the complex situation in our educational system with regard to Eastern church singing, the doctoral student Ilia Mihaylov relies on *experimental* research, proposing a concrete *formative* experiment with 11 students from IV A and IV D classes (10 girls and 1 boy) from 51. "Elisaveta Bagriana" Secondary School in Sofia. The author sets specific *tasks*, from which the *principal one* is impressed by the study's underlying aim to address some of the "most troubling questions about our cultural identity and education" (p. 7). An attempt is made to "indirectly confirm the hypothesis that this music is suitable for teaching students of grades III-IV in Bulgarian schools by non-specialist teachers" (p. 8). The counterpoint to this is the establishment of the closeness of this type of singing, essentially and originally monastic, the masters of which presumably even quite consciously wanted to hide the specifics of their school on the principle of secret knowledge. The grounds of the counter-thesis are weak. Even if elements of such a noble zeal were to be found in the past, first: such secret knowledge is not essentially Christian, and second: in today's age of total opening of communications through various modern technologies and mass media, such secret knowledge becomes practically impossible. A paradox results. The student can find on various websites all sorts of singers from various schools of Eastern Church singing, both current and older, while at school he has no idea about it. It used to be the other way around in school: what is known in school is

more than what is learned outside. Here the competence of non-specialist teachers can be challenged, but isn't the Eastern chanting a singing by ear, a transmission of experience from teacher to pupil, rather than by rote memorisation, which is particularly adaptable for pupils in the primary stage of learning. Non-specialist teachers can only refer children "to church singers (psalters), bearers of the authentic tradition,...and make...sound recordings of selected works" (p. 8), but also to participate in "developing and arriving at a notational system used as a frame of reference, easy for both teachers and students to learn, and at the same time faithfully reflecting the phenomenon, taking into account the micro-interval relationships of the sound orders" (p. 8). In connection with all this, a very important *additional* task of the present work is "to present evidence of the role and importance of Orthodox monody in the preservation of our national cultural and historical heritage" (p. 9).

The dissertation also proposes a research *toolkit*, a *working thesis* for "the church monody practiced in Bulgarian lands... as an "Eastern" musical phenomenon" and a *working pedagogical hypothesis* for achieving a natural assimilation of Orthodox church chants (festal *troparions*), whereby "the result of this assimilation will be taken into account as appropriate to their Eastern origin" (p. 9). The approach for this is defined as a new one that would "enrich the natural aural education of the pupils by developing in them a different musical sensibility" (p. 10). In terms of the sensitivity that Western European harmonic-functional music pedagogy builds, Mihaylov is undoubtedly right, and his approach is indeed novel in a good sense.

In the first chapter, Theoretical Aspects of Church Monody, the author quite legitimately emphasizes the relationship between the *music-theoretical "disciplinary"* and the purely musical as not fully overlapping and even, in some respects, as inconsistent when they are accurately juxtaposed. The problem of the *ison* as a diphthong in church monody and *Shopluk* diaphony, the "restoration" of the so-called *Antique modes* and the quest for accurate *sizing* can only increase the scissors between the actual sound of authentic Eastern singing, be it folk singing, and the attempts at fully accurate music-theoretical comprehension and fixation of these phenomena (through which we should gain not only the understanding but also the ability to be able to sing).

Terminologically, a critical distinction from certain terms that have come into use, as if they were self-defeating, stands out. For example, the term *Byzantine music*, according to the author, is dubious from a purely historical point of view, given its introduction by "the German historian and humanist

Hieronymus Wolff in 1557, i.e. long after the end of the Byzantine Empire in 1453". On the other hand, the widest possible range of terms is suggested for the objects under study, which are complementary or interchangeable. In this sense, for the purposes of the study, "the two definitions most commonly used in our country are mainly used - Eastern Church chant (singing) and Byzantine (church) music, and we will use the others synonymously" (p. 14).

The doctoral candidate Iliia Mihaylov addresses the extremely important question of the eastern character of church monody in Bulgaria, which is still controversial from various points of view: ethnic, national, historical, geographical, theoretical, methodological, etc. Indeed, the overdoing in the direction of "absorbing" the ecclesiastical monody or in the opposite direction: the very conscious dissociation from it and the assertion of the complete autonomy of our Bulgarian tradition, leads to wrong conclusions precisely with regard to the *Christian* ecclesiastical monody. Being "Christian", it cannot be of "Greek" or "Bulgarian" origin, nor, of course, of "Jewish" origin, if one proceeds from the fact that the first Christians were from among the Jews and, therefore, the first Christian songs were "Jewish". Even the synagogue tradition itself, from which the "first" Christians came, is situated in the multicultural and polyethnic Hellenistic world with its international, Greek language. The rush on "Bulgarisation" Orthodox monodia carries the same charge as that of "devouring," and at its heart lies the prospect of the taking of the kingdom from those who claim that kingdom as (only) theirs. But, on the other hand, those who propagate Christianity as they are commanded inevitably invest the souls of the announced with their unique original and tradition (insofar as they truly, not copyistically, have and bear it). This two-way exchange - from the proclaimers to the proclaimed and back again - creates the colourful and multifaceted colouring of the various incarnations of *Christian monody* despite its single source (the 12 apostles - Jews). Therefore, the most correct study of Christian ecclesial monody must pass through the confirmation of the true roots of its origin, and hence through its concrete practices. This is precisely what the doctoral student does: he turns to the source in the East.

Research on this issue is traced with reference to Jordan Banev's classification, according to which they are *Greek-protective*, *Judeo-protective*, *Eastern-protective* and *reconciliatory*. Quotations are given from authoritative musicologists such as François-Joseph Fétis and Jean-Baptiste Rebourts in relation to the interaction of Eastern singing practices with different cultures and especially with the Western tradition. The modal art music of Persian dastgah, Arabic maqam and Turkish (Ottoman) art music is presented.

Thus, the topic broadens its spectrum as intended in the title, but this is only in a general way - as a starting point for discovering the common roots of different Eastern musical cultures with the church monody. Referring to authors such as Mirza Farahani, Hormoz Farhat, Habib Tuma, and Raulf Yekta, who are music theorists "from within," i.e., from the essence of the types of music they describe, can only confirm the credibility of the study, which seeks in the Christian monody tradition its true root. In view of the authors mentioned, I must necessarily draw attention to the linguistic and musical erudition for which the dissertation is distinguished: working with originals in 3 Western languages together with professional musical training and experience (performing and conducting). Also, a careful and refined academic respect for the authors and authorities with whom he enters into dialogue (for it is quite possible for an authority to be created or imposed as such without actually being one - older generations remember the necessary educational conformity to such authorities).

Very significant in the work is the study of the interaction of the *maqams* with the *Octoechos*, for which Mihaylov turns mainly to the musicological works of the proto-psalter of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, Panayiotis Halachoglou, and his student Archbishop Kyrillos Marmarinos. Their treatises "confirm (albeit indirectly) the pan-Eastern origin of Turkish (secular) art music and Eastern Orthodox (Byzantine, Greek) sacred chants as modal cultures" (p. 41). In confirmation, Mihaylov cites a quote from the prominent scholar of Turkish art music, Eugenia Popescu-Judetz: "the maqams müstaar, açem, hissar and nisabur are recognized in psaltic singing as chromatic faults (phtorai)" (Popescu-Judetz, Sirli, 2000:141)" (p. 40).

Another very important line in the present work is the establishment of a link between church monody and our *folklore* singing, between church chants and traditional monophthong tunes. Mihaylov turns to the authority of Stoyan Djudjeff and finds direct and indirect connections and parallels between the two types of singing, going through the contributions of John Kukuzel and arriving at connections with the music of the already mentioned Eastern peoples such as Turks, Persians and Arabs. On the one hand, a link is established between folk song and church monody, and on the other, the Eastern character and *origin* of both is confirmed, which is extremely important in terms of the methodology of studying our folk music and Eastern church chanting.

Specifically focusing on Eastern Orthodox monody chants, the author Ilia Mihaylov draws the significant conclusion that "this monody tradition proved to be extremely resistant to political change, and despite the gradual fall to Arab or Ottoman rule of Alexandria (7th century), Jerusalem (7th century) Veliko

Tarnovo (14th century), and Constantinople (15th century), [it was] their only vocal tradition until the 19th century" (p. 44). Against this backdrop, the peculiar 'competition' between it and the newly-emerged in our country polyphonic choral practices of the early twentieth century sounds disproportionate to say the least. And what is even stranger is that "it is difficult to hear a Sunday Mass with Eastern monody chanting today. But it is also ubiquitous to celebrate morning and evening services, as well as daily liturgies, with Eastern singing, which in turn can serve as a testimony to what is 'Bulgarian church singing' (p. 45).

The most important characteristics of the modal monody tradition of the Orthodox Church are outlined, which, despite some changes over the centuries, are still preserved today. For example, the *uneven-tempered modal* system, a notational system of church singing of *neumatic* signs, which are placed over the text and denote the direction, intonation and expression of syllables, in contrast to Western notes, which are of fixed value, i.e. they, the unnamed, have meaning only in relation to each other, etc. It is also noted that etymologically this type of singing refers to singing by a man, for which reason it is also called *male* singing. As well as that "the term „Byzantine music" refers to the religious musical traditions of various peoples of the Balkans, the Mediterranean and the Near East, without being limited to the actual time of the so-called "Byzantine Empire" (p. 47).

The tracing of the church monody from broader theoretical positions logically leads to *Bulgarian* theoretical works and singing traditions practiced in the Bulgarian lands. The subject is brought out of depth, both historically and geographically, to focus on the problems of Eastern church singing in Bulgaria, to prove that it is ontogenetically Eastern, and attempts to break it away from its roots, to turn it into an ugly modification of the Western tradition is deeply flawed. It is important to note the aspiration of the Orthodox peoples of the Balkans to seek their autonomy outside the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. It follows that an adaptation of the local language - as is the ecclesiastical Old Bulgarian language of the Holy Seven Seints (Sveti Sedmocislenici) - to the Greek-speaking chants is required, along with practical and theoretical aids. This means that the tradition is only *adapted* (not changed). In a similar vein, the author correctly notes that, because of the designations "Eastern" and "Church", "it is not possible to nationalize [Eastern Church chant]" (p. 49). Also, although terminologically the text "is based on Greek theories, it is entirely in Bulgarian and does not use Greek terms. Pedagogically, this is priceless" (p. 49).

The section on the quantitative, qualitative and spiritual specifics of Orthodox monody can be identified as a particularly important and essential part

of the study. It is compared with the Western polyphonic, polyvocal tradition, on the one hand, and with secular music, on the other, as spiritual and carnal respectively. It is important to note that labels and designations cannot by themselves define what a music is. If the rather late entry of choral polyphonic church music - which Mihaylov accurately notes as *homophonic* rather than *polyphonic* - were to be defined as *sacred*, it would be so in name alone. For to a very large extent, both in practice and in theory, it does not differ from the Western tradition in quantitative and qualitative characteristics, i.e. in even temperament and in polyphonic singing practice. Orthodox monody, on the other hand, as a *monophonic tradition*, with its inherent microinterval and particular focus on the text, i.e. on the *spirit* of the chant, is much more adaptable to liturgical practice. Certainly, when the text is merely a screen behind which nothing stands, purely instrumental music (rather than corresponding vocal music, and especially in the Western tradition) can carry much more the spirit of a message. In this regard, the doctoral candidate Ilia Mihaylov approaches the complex matter very correctly and, in order to be able to comment on what kind of music it is and what its specifics are, he turns to authorities in the field such as St. John Chrysostom, Dr. Demetrios Konomos, Meletios Pegasus, Dr. Constantine Kavarnos.

The section on "The Eight Mode System in Orthodox Church Monody" stands like an ecclesiastical dome at the highest point of Mihaylov's verbal edifice, "Theoretical Aspects of Church Monody". Indeed, the theory of the eight modes (Octoechos) is fundamental to Eastern church chanting. Fundamental premises are discussed: 1) *the modes* as numerical (first, second, third, etc.) in Bulgarian practice, corresponding to *principal*, *plagal*, and one *havy* mode "*varis*" in Chrysant; 2) the *genera* of voices: diatonic, chromatic, and enharmonic, "three/four systems: octochordal, called diapason, pentachordal, called „Wheel" - Trochos, tetrachordal, called triphony, and trichordal, which is called diphony" (Chrysant, 2011:35)" (p. 57); 3) *notation* and names of tones such as: *pa, vu, ga, di, ke, zo, ni (pa)* using the first seven letters of the Greek alphabet: ΠΑ-ΒΟΥ-ΓΑ-ΔΙ-ΚΕ-ΖΩ-ΝΗ = RE-MI-FA-SOL-LA-SI-DO, introduced by Chrysanthus from Madit and Hurmuzius Bookkeeper in the 1820s, which is analogous to the *solmization* of Guido d'Arezzo, in whom the tones are arranged from: *do-re-mi-fa-sol-la-si-(do)*, but because they come from the Latin alphabet begin from *la-si-do-re-mi-fa-sol*= *a-b-c-d-e-f-g* (it is no accident that the author calls Chrysanthus's reform a "solmization" of Psaltic notation" (p. 58); 4) *periods* of neumatic notation, *introductory chant*, *leading tones* (in a quite different sense from those in Western theory, i.e. of those "around which the melody is organized" (p. 59), whereas in Western theory it is the tones that lead to the sustained tones 5) *finalisis*, *isons*, *scales*, where the voice does not simply move along them, but is positioned according to the system (octochordal, pentachordal, tetrachordal or

trichordal); 6) voices in relation to *the text*: short, short-slow and slow/expansive, i.e. *hirmologicistic, troparistic, stihyaristic and papadical*. Similar to the humility of many Orthodox writers who do not dare to express their own opinion on many important issues, but step on the Holy Father's writings, Ilia Mihaylov also refers to authorities in the field such as: Chrysanthus of Madith, Hourmusius the Bookkeeper, Jacob the Protopsalter, Daniel the Protopsalter, Peter Lampadarius, Mircho Bogoev. Very significant is the conclusion made by the doctoral student Ilia Mihaylov regarding the existing system of education in Bulgaria, which "turns out to be pedagogically unsuitable for mastering the ecclesiastical monody, [because of which] the solution must come from elsewhere: from another - a new theoretical methodological and pedagogical understanding of this tradition (phenomenon) and practice" (p. 64).

In the **second chapter** "Methodological Aspects of Church Monody" the very important question of church monody in Bulgarian lands as a problem in Bulgarian music education is raised. Elena Toncheva's thesis that the West chooses music-culture and the East chooses music-cult is shown to be, at the very least, untenable with regard to the application of ecclesiastical Orthodox monody in education. Several reasons are put forward by the author: 1/ "the music educator in general education cannot deprive students of their encounter with various musical achievements,[given that] music is relatively easy to grasp" (p. 66), 2/ according to Klara Mechkova, the aim is "to form an adequate idea of Orthodox song (based on the contemporary achievements of musicological Byzantine studies, Old Bulgarian studies and Slavic studies" and not "to serve the construction and development of a religious and, in particular, an Orthodox Christian worldview" (p. 66) and 3/ "that this still living musical heritage is extremely valuable" (p. 66) along *musical, linguistic and cultural-historical lines*. We should also seek "the creation of a new, innovative methodology of teaching this tradition, supported, of course, by the possibilities offered by modern multimedia technology and technical means" (p. 68).

What follows is a periodisation of Bulgarian music education into four periods: the first period, from the first centuries of the Christian era to 1878; the second period, from 1878 to 1945; the third period, from 1945 to 1990; and the fourth period, from 1990 to the present.

In the first period, it is important to note 1) the surviving *examples* of neumatic notation script, both original and from literary sources (e.g., in Vazov); 2) the Eight mode system - *Octoechos* as *Damascene* (which came from St. John Damascene in the seventh century); 3) the significant role of the St. John Koukouzelis and the introduction of the language of the Holy Brothers Cyril and

Methodius, into which the various chants were translated from Greek. The author defines this language as "Slovene", and others (Boryana Mangova, Elena Toncheva) - as Old Bulgarian; 4) the introduction of "church singing" as a subject "in the Bulgarian school in Vratsa in 1824 by Krustyo Pishurka" (p.73); and 5) the role of churches and monasteries, which "by preparing teachers, select, materially support and train the most alert youth for the purposes of national education" (p. 73).

The second period notes the presence of church "singing" in the curriculum of the Bulgarians, which in 1882 was intended to teach the different modes, and the introduction of the term "*tonal sense*" by the music pedagogue Rachko Rachev. The term *lad* ('mode') comes from Russian musicology and was first introduced by Tchaikovsky. From there it came to mean a *functional* relationship between tones in a particular system. Some authors, such as Nikolai Gradev, dispute its functional aspect and consider it only a *species* category of the concept of *genus* (*interval* system). What we call *lad*, Gradev calls *tonality*. But it is as a broader category that the mode should encompass both the relation itself and the kinds of functional relations (e.g. in the various *tonal* (major and minor) and *modal* (Dorian, Phrygian Lydian, etc.) modes. In terminological terms, *laddishness* as a principle of relation (respectively, modality as well as *modus - lad*) concentrates mostly on the relations between tones as a system, whereas with the term *tonality* as a principle of *centrality* (in the sense of a tonal system) the concentration is on the centre as tone, tonic, tonality. The mode, unlike the genus (e.g. diatonic, chromatic, hemiola, etc.) is already in action, sounding, *functioning*, whereas the genus is only a *substratum*, a material of intervals defined only as *structure*, which have not yet come into use (but from which the corresponding mode will be produced and sounded).

The problems and deficits of the education of the time are also noted, such as: lack of educated teachers and didactic materials; use of a large number of Western European and Russian textbooks, methods, methodological principles, which do not correspond to the origins of our folk singing; the methodological manual "Ladder" by Boris Trichkov, which, despite its contributions, formed the students' melodic sense "unilaterally, on the basis of a "methodology" completely alien ("even exclusive") to the modal nature of Bulgarian folk song and church monody. (p. 81), as well as Dobri Hristov's retreat from his own positions on the "wrong path of musical education". An example of the retreat is the change of the basic tone of teaching from *D* to *C*. *D* is the main one in his work "The Spring Sings. 375 Songs for Home and School in Folk and Common Tone" and is analogous to first mode. But at one point Hristov abandons it and "adopts the

'classical' C major for the initial formation of musical hearing" (p. 83), thereby coming down on the side of the music-educational methodology he himself denounces. This example is extremely important in order to show the following: a) that a theoretical pedagogical thesis can change concrete teaching-methodological work over- and for generations to come; b) that a change that has already taken place, and even brought a quantitatively large output, can be in the completely opposite direction to the (musical) sense; c) that at a given moment an authority-scholar can betray his own scientific *creed* and, as a consequence, his scientific positions on educational practice become inconsistent. Conversely, only if it starts from the very musical phenomenon it is trying to 'academise' will the authority not be vulnerable.

In the third period, although it has been identified as a turning point in the history of music teaching in this country, nothing significant actually happens in terms of natural folk and Eastern Orthodox singing. Even on the contrary, from the name of the subject "Singing and Music" to "Music" only, and until 1960-1965 "there was no system in the selection of musical material for listening to music, there was no proper methodology for managing this process" (p. 84). The "reform" that followed reached only elementary music literacy of students, without "setting definite requirements for the formation of skills and habits in students to read music independently", and that "musical notation is one of the means of developing musical hearing" (p. 85). All of the above, however, is in the context of the Western system of music education adopted by Russia, Austria, Hungary, Germany, the Czech Republic, Poland, etc.

In the fourth period, from 1990 to the present day, the State Educational Requirements (SER) were established, retaining the requirement to pay attention only to folk music, as opposed to church monody, which was quite deliberately neglected as a result of the legacy of the previous repressive atheist regime. On the other hand, provoking the purely musical gifts and skills of students, whether or not they are under the Western system, is minimized. The subject of Music has the role of the most general introduction to music. Value differences are very much leveled as a result of the inherited widespread spiritual retreat. This may also explain the incredibly reduced *horarim* of the subject Music.

Further, the author Ilia Mihaylov points out additional problems that are no less important and significant than those mentioned so far. They are systematized as: organizational-educational, historical-political, cultural-identification, replacement-compile, composition-synthesizing and notation-perceptive.

Organizational-educational problems are identified as the increasing involvement of the state in education with a gradual shift from the church to the

state. "Eastern-church chanting remained in the territory of the seminaries that emerged after the Ottoman Liberation - the Plovdiv and Sofia seminaries, and later the Theological Faculty of Sofia University. They were almost entirely responsible for preserving this tradition" (p. 88).

The author notes *the transition* from polyphonic to choral and from monophonic to polyphonic singing towards the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries as *historical and political problems*. The reasons for such a transition are very important. When *the origins* of such a transition are not orthodox, essentially from another confession, or secular (such as the search for the modern and the new), then it is clearly a question of retreat or a bad compromise. In this case, for example, the ambitions and policies of Peter the Great are referred to, "to which in turn the Western choirs responded on the model of Catholic and Protestant church singing" (p. 93); the boredom of the Russian aristocracy when listening to *znamenoye* singing; similar motivations in our country such as "the gradual importation of **foreign** ... church-singing and influence, with the belief that it was a form of our incorporation into Europe' (Assenova-Popova, 1997:91)" (p. 92).

In her monograph "Ancient Russian Orthodox Score as a Representation of the Reverse Perspective", Vesela Boyadjieva attempts (especially in chapter six) to prove the origin of the ancient Russian polyphony from within the church and between the monastery walls, which, according to the author, "keeps its mystery to this day" (Boyadjieva, 2015: p. 87). The reason for the introduction of polyphony into liturgical practice, according to Galina Pozhidaeva quoted by her, is external - the simultaneous pronunciation of texts as a way out of the situation of very long services in parish churches, which are a consequence of the monastic Byzantine canons. She mentions that on the so-called Hundred Head (Stoglav) Council, polyphony was condemned for certain parts of the service (psalms and canon) and not at all, but "with certain qualifications it becomes understandable how polyphony came to be permitted by Patriarch Joasaph I and the Local Council of 1649" (Boyadjieva, 2015: p. 88). In this attempt we see the half-hearted, evasive and loose explanation for such an essential moment in the history of the Church - the breaking of a seventeen-century tradition.

Orthodoxy is an inherently conservative faith that guards only what is already given. When it comes to preservation from heresies, the Holy Fathers of the Church added certain texts and rules. But in this case it is not a question of adding anything at all to keep tradition, at least because no one today chants polyphony with different texts to keep the long (monastic) service intact. On the

contrary, the services are getting shorter and shorter. For such "improvements" and practices, it is not the keeping of the devotions that is the driving force, but, as the doctoral candidate well notes, the dissipation of boredom, the aesthetic pleasure of the service, etc., in short, the conformity "to the externals," to "the people," whose abstract subject becomes the principle of argumentation. The strict ecclesiastical word for such processes is 'consecration', which, in relation to the monody under consideration in this thesis, might be called 'concert life'.

As *cultural-identification* issues Mihaylov touches upon the Bulgarians' attempt to build their own identity in relation to psaltic chanting. These are the controversies surrounding the so-called "Bulgarian chant". Its defenders are Dobri Hristov, Atanas Nikolov, Hristo Shaldev, Dimitar Tyulev, the Russian musicians A. N. Kompaneisky, as well as the then young composers Boyan Ikonov and Marin Goleminov. They were looking for an authentic Bulgarian singing of Bulgarian origin and supported this thesis. On the opposite side are the "traditionalists" in the person of Petar Sarafov, Petar Dinev, Atanas Manov and others. They defend the original eastern church chanting. As the doctoral student points out, it is significant that "the many years of efforts to resurrect the so-called true Bulgarian church singing practice remain fruitless" (p. 99). Thus, the dissertation musically reaffirms in a new way the well-known position that only what stands and builds on the true foundation can remain.

The author the dissertation sees the replacement of church monody in schools by "songs in which the music and lyrics are authored and their purpose is not tied to worship" (p. 100) as *substitution-compilation problems*. D. Hristov, Al. Krastev, B. Trichkov, D. Hadzhigeorgiev, G. Kotchev, G. Atanasov (other, not the Maestro), P. Dinev, Iv. Lozanov, Al. Cholakov. This substitution in the comprehensive school is valid with particular force today - if it is possible, the ecclesiastical and the liturgical should forever be erased from the minds of the pupils, and they should look for it wherever they want. In this sense, the work of Ilia Mihaylov is particularly relevant.

The doctoral student sees as *compositional-synthesizing* and *notational-perceptual* problems the attempts to overcome the crisis of Eastern Church singing by systematically bringing East and West closer together by figures such as Manassiy Poptodorov and Peter Dinev. The idea is that translations from Eastern neumes to Western music should have a universal role (not for the church) in spreading Eastern singing, including in schools. From being an ardent defender of authentic eastern chanting, Peter Dinev turns around and takes the opposite position, "that psaltic chanting as we know it and as we sing it in our churches

cannot remain in use" (Dinev, 1924: 5)" (p. 104). Such a profound and significant change in the attitudes of a person who grew up with psaltic chanting, who knows the material very well from the inside, and at the same time has a European musical education, is anything but orthodox. It is the position of a composer, a public figure, a propagandist, who seeks to revive the now moribund, in his view, Eastern Church chanting at the cost of ripping it out of its root and making it an ugly form of the Western tradition, i.e., destroying forever its flavor and unique sound, musically characteristic with the intervallic, quite alien to the Western tradition. Thus Eastern church chanting passes under the umbrella of *solfege* and singing by notes that any well-schooled musician can sing by. Thus the primordial principle of imparting an art (craft) by listening to the teacher and seeking to imitate his unique original is done away with. For the neumes do not give knowledge of precisely fixed pitches, but orient about the relations between the different tones in the mode concerned, which relations are different for the same interval depending on the voice and the tradition. If, however, they are written with Western notes, these "different" relations are lost in the uniform, tempered intervals. The same damage is done to our untempered folk singing when it has to be sung with Western notes: the intervals are very easy to navigate from the evenly tempered tones of the piano, but both harmonically and melodically this has nothing to do with the Eastern nature of our folk songs.

The next section of the dissertation is an effort to shake off the Western and search for the primal Eastern tradition, namely to clarify the principles of natural singing. Along with accounting for and clarifying an operative micro-interval, Mihaylov speaks of the division of the tone "into two unequal parts: a larger part, the 'cut' (apotome), and a smaller part, the 'remainder' (lima)" (p. 112), the quarter-tone system, and other smaller intervals that enable each *modus* to "be related to a choice of 'his' tones and intervals or to the organization of a tonal ladder common to several modes. This usually brings a certain atmosphere, a kind of 'modal colour'" (p. 113).

In view of the difficulties of teaching natural modal singing in the primary school, the author Ilia Mihaylov points to Stoyan Djudjev's observation about the management of music education in Bulgaria by "persons who knew or recognized no other music than Western European music, for whom Western European music was the alpha and omega of music education" (p. 114) as a *major problem*. In this sense, the lack of trained teachers with appropriate singing skills, experienced performers (psalters), conceptualization of the monody taught in the context of its cognate Persian, Arabic, Turkish, and Greek theories, a complete notation system

revealing the modal character and intervallic relationships of the voices, and appropriate teaching aids posed enormous problems. For example, Peter Dinev's 'Guide to Modern Byzantine Neumatic Notation', despite its accurate framework, 'is currently unsuitable for a number of reasons. It does not explain the modal character of the modes, it does not deal with the microinterval and it does not speak, so to speak, about the ethos of the given voice. Through this manual there is no way to learn the Eastern way of church chanting" (p. 117).

Ilia Mihaylov tries to give solutions to these problems. For example, "the good thing is that while only a decade ago rare and expensive CDs and records were available to a few collectors, today most of them are already available on Spotify, iTunes, Youtube, etc., and the conscientious teacher could develop, self-educate, and become familiar with a number of examples of modal intonation from the world's exemplars" (p. 118). The dissertation also provides a complete list of didactic aids for the study of church monody, which testifies not only to the doctoral student's dialogical and critical attitude, but also to his creative theoretical and practical invention.

In the third chapter "Didactic Model (Method) for Teaching Orthodox Church Monody in the Primary School" the author proposes a concrete application of his ideas in the Bulgarian general education school in relation to the current situation in our country. Very often we see accurate analyses of complex and intractable problems, but rarely do we see proposed solutions that are truly feasible. In this sense, the author Ilia Mihaylov finds specific niches and doors in the regulations and actual forms of our education at the present moment. Thus, he finds and makes meaningful use of the national development programme "Bulgaria 2030", the well-known Strategic Framework for the Development of Education, Training and Learning in the Republic of Bulgaria (2021-2030), the law on pre-school and school education (PESE), Regulation No. 4 on the state educational standard for the curriculum, ECA, IC and EC in secondary school (general education). With these means Mihaylov came to create a new didactic model (method) for teaching and studying Eastern Orthodox chants by students (III-IV grades) of a comprehensive school. When describing the model, one is impressed by the very good knowledge of vocal training, as well as the peculiarities of the scientific method. What is special in this case is the focus on the children's mastery of the Eastern Orthodox monody in several stages: selection of repertoire, realization of the recordings, notation of the chants, systematization of didactic resources, preparation of the children's hearing and voice for the performance of the Eastern Orthodox monody, exercises for the development of modal musical hearing and practice of natural sound production.

The following is a general description of the specific didactic model, such as: age of the students, duration of the lesson, topic, aims and objectives of the lessons, expected results, types of lessons, methods and techniques of teaching and techniques applied.

Then, the lesson for the study of church monody is presented in terms of structure and content, as well as its methodological sequence and structure.

After the presentation of the lesson comes a systematization of the lessons based on the predominant activities such as: A lesson on learning a new chant, a lesson on specific vocal skills regarding the elements of natural sound production and natural vocal technique, a lesson on the peculiarity of Eastern Church singing, a lesson on the repertoire and performance manner of an experienced psalter - Eastern Church singer, who can serve as a reference for teaching students, a lesson on building vocal technical skills for performing Eastern Orthodox chants (*troparions*) and methods of influence to achieve the described results.

A plan-concept is made for conducting 3 lessons for studying Orthodox monophonic chants as Extra Curricular Activity in the form of: topic, type of lesson, age of students, duration of the lesson, goals and objectives of the lesson, teaching methods, course of the lesson and time allocation for the lesson.

Several patterns can be identified from the lessons thus presented and the practical methods implemented in them. The children are taught to sing in our age-old *Church language*, which for the purpose of the lesson is provided with literal and literary translation. The translations help the children to grasp the full meaning without taking away from the original sound. This is a step towards properly guiding children to hear "two" originals - melodic and linguistic. There is a modernist tendency in churches today to have everything but the chants (and, in some places, now they are too) in the modern, spoken Bulgarian language with the rationale that everyone understands, i.e., again with the misleading argument "for the people." Leaving aside the question of whether, in a thousand-year-old tradition such as ours, such a transmission of the fullness of meaning is (im)possible, this fashionable movement denies us a fundamental cultural and linguistic heritage and achievement. Supposing that one day the language of the church disappears completely, then the children will never have heard it and will never be able to hear it. Both practically and pedagogically it will have lost precisely its *meaning* (not only for them, but for Christians themselves). And now, with the help also of the comparative translations, they have a chance of keeping it alive and rich; of them being, however small, a part of it, and it of them. In the same sense, so much immense labor has gone into this study to keep Eastern Orthodox chanting alive in the souls of the younger generation.

In terms of notation, a compromise is proposed along the lines of the Turkish "five-line microtonal notation system[,] ... developed theoretically and methodologically as early as the nineteenth century....[and] available ... as software (Mus2 3.x)" (p. 139). It is offered more for teachers (because children will naturally learn by listening) to understand that Eastern church singing has a very different way of making sense and hearing. If they want to go deeper into it, they should turn to the unmediated patterns, which methodologically most accurately reflect the indeterminate and modal nature of this type of singing. For students, unmediated writing should be a next stage of development, as a continuation of experimentation in the upper grades. Otherwise, the proposed notation is appropriate for insight into the sound of music of Eastern cultures in general. Mihaylov's methodological proposal is in the right direction.

No less important is the teacher's demand for *natural* (not schooled) singing from the children, which applies equally to folk singing. It is interesting that the author refers to "Bulgarian folk songs performed by actors at NATFA under the direction of Veselka Stambolieva" (p. 143).

Directly related to this is the formation of *modal* hearing, a sense of each of the eight modes and their distinction. Peter Dinev's "reform" goes so far as to make the diatonic fourth voice and the chromatic second voice in some cases equal, as well as other pairs of voices that are basically quite different. Transformed into Western notation so that they are understood "by the people" (because all people learn that notation), the voices lose their modal sound and their flavor and begin to sound more like varieties of classical major and minor.

It is also important that "in view of the intended *chorarium* and the age of the pupils (grades III-IV) in a comprehensive school, the most appropriate [as convenient to learn] in this case are the festive *dismissal troparions* - short songs which are sung on a melodic pattern (or are themselves such a pattern) and most succinctly introduce us to the content of the festive day" (p. 136).

Chapter Four, "Experimental Research and Analysis of Results," falls at the center of the dissertation as evidence from an actual experiment and as a focus relative to Professional Area 1.3. Pedagogy of Music Education. Here the possibility of studying Eastern Orthodox Church monody general education schools is practically shown and proved. The author conducts: *a preliminary experiment* "to what extent short samples of Eastern Church monody (in this case, festal troparions) are suitable for children in grades III-IV to learn and are not mentally taxing...[and]...which of the pedagogical techniques of the developed innovative model of teaching „work" for these children, and to measure and

predict for the future the time needed to master individual chants" (p. 163); a *formative experiment* to report and analyze "the results of the applied training of a group of students in the primary stage of Orthodox Church monody training with the help of the innovative teaching method proposed by the author and of preliminary made sound recordings" (p. 166); a *control experiment* for comparison "by means of the method of music teaching established for our country according to the method of Peter Dinev, i.e. without microchromatic signs" (p. 167). For the purpose of the experiments, the doctoral student turned to a voluntary expert board consisting of: Professor Ilya Yonchev, Associate Professor Jordan Banev, Archimandrite Meletios (Spasov), doctoral student Regina-Octavia Ivanova and head primary teacher Dr. Maya Andasorova. The analysis of the results is in the form of a two-part *questionnaire-interview*: 17 questions, to which the representatives of the Expert Council give the corresponding answers, according to a given rating scale in percentages, together with comments and suggestions. Here I would highlight Maya Andasorova's proposal for "the preparation...of a specialized manual for the study of church monody in schools, as well as accompanying methodological literature for teachers who might be interested" (p. 175). The success of this experiment can be realistically traced through the responses and comments from the survey, as well as from actual recordings of 11 students from Class IV A and IV D (10 girls and 1 boy) at 51. School „Elisaveta Bagriana" in Sofia with the head teacher Dr. Raya Kovacheva for the formative experiment and 7 students from III A class (4 girls 3 boys) of 7. Sveti Sedmochislenitsi School in Sofia with a senior primary teacher Lyuba Blagoeva for the control experiment. It is very significant that extremely professional musicians lose the ability to distinguish subtle micro-interval relations, may even not catch and report them at all, while children have a better chance to feel them due to the purity of their hearing. Therefore, to deprive children, quite deliberately, of the richness of Eastern cultures in the sound of Church monody, and moreover that it is very closely related to our folklore, i.e. it is a millennia-old tradition of ours, borders on criminal treatment of the younger generations. Similar is the enterprise of destroying quite deliberately obscure examples in order to introduce their distorted translation into Western notation.

The conclusion confirms the main ideas of the work.

The *first chapter* outlines the common Eastern origins and characteristics of the monodic traditions of folk song and of church chant in Bulgaria, the basic theoretical principles of the eight-mode tradition, and the quantitative, qualitative, and spiritual differences of this type of singing from Western European and polyphonic church (Eastern Orthodox) choral practice.

In *chapter two*, the issues are: the way in which monody music is present in the paradigm of today's Bulgarian education, the lack of a continuous oral tradition necessary for teaching the experience associated with chant, the didactic systems for teaching monody in the past, and the lack of a developed music pedagogical system for the general school that takes into account the Eastern in the phenomenon of church monody in teaching this type of singing.

Chapter three reviews the necessary normative documents regulating the development of Bulgarian music education, and proposes an innovative model theoretically prepared in the first part of the development.

Chapter four is the experiment that serves as a proof of the author's methodological ideas, which are the proposed working pedagogical hypothesis.

The main pedagogical propositions put forward are: that "the hitherto accepted and traditional system of teaching music in the general school in Bulgaria is suitable and works successfully only for the acquisition of classical or modern (major-minor) equal-tempered works...it is theoretically wrong and pedagogically inadequate for the teaching of Eastern Church monody, namely as Eastern. The dissertation derives the solution to this problem from the need to find a new method for teaching Eastern monody practices in Bulgarian lands" (p. 178).

The contributions of the presented dissertation are classified into several plans. On the *scientific-theoretical* plane, the contributions are: 1/ the discovery of the eastern origin and kinship of the Orthodox Church monody with the vocal musical traditions of the Persians, Arabs, Turks and Greeks and 2/ an extended and detailed clarification of the concept of "natural singing" with a view to the teaching and study of Church monody in Bulgarian schools. In *scientific-practical* terms, the contributions are: 3/ the derivation of a completely new (innovative) for Bulgaria method of teaching Orthodox Church monody and 4/ the enrichment of teaching practice with a new database - sound recordings of active church singers-psalms, bearers of the tradition, recorded in their natural environment. In *general educational* terms, the contributions are: 5/ a successful formative experiment for the expansion of good pedagogical practices in relation to the preservation of regional intangible cultures as a strategic educational goal and 6/ a synthesized empirical and experimental pedagogical experience for a future modern methodology of teaching Orthodox church monody.

Finally, 2 appendices are presented. The first appendix ("General Statements on Singing and Voice Function in the Teaching of Children") shows the author Ilia Mihailov's in-depth knowledge of the children's voice and its specifics in the context of his professional conducting experience, but now refocused on natural, psalms and folk singing. The singing voice with its qualities

of pitch, strength, durability and timbre are traced, as well as its more specific qualities and characteristics such as: density, volume, ringing, endurance and range. Children's voices are studied as: singing process, breathing process and singing breath, tone attack.

The second appendix consists of a legend for microinterval notation and three troparyons on five staff notation with microchromatic signs. These are: the "Nativity" in the fourth mode, the troparyon of St. John of Rila in the first mode and the tropar of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in the first mode.

The Dissertation Abstract corresponds fully, thematically and structurally, to the complete work.

After all that has been said so far, I can say that Ilia Mihaylov's work "Theoretical and Methodological Aspects of Church Monody" fully meets the requirements of the Law, represents an attempt to fundamentally rethink and restructure the music classes in general education schools, opening a new horizon for the recovery of an original millennial tradition of Orthodox Church monody in Bulgaria - a hope for a truly new beginning.

In view of the requirement for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) to the doctoral candidate Ilia Mihaylov, I fully support him, being definitely in favour of his candidature.

I would like to ask doctoral candidate Ilia Mihaylov one question in connection with his dissertation: how do you see the meaning of Eastern Psalmodig chanting in our times?

The review was written by Prof. Dr. Andrey Diamandiev:

13.10.2023 г.