

Mircea BUTA, *Aspects of the Church Singing from Arad at the Turn of the Millennium*, Editura Muzicală, București, 2017

The author of this work *Aspects of the Church Singing from Arad at the Turn of the Millennium*, printed by Editura Muzicală of Bucharest in 2017, is Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mircea Buta- the illustrious professor of Church music at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology “Ilarion V. Felea” in Arad, a lover of monodic-linear and harmonic Church songs, and choir conductor.

Analyzing the content of the work, from the beginning it should be noted that, although this is a special and particularizing area of the Romanian Orthodox Church, such as Church singing in Western Romania, the author's effort is observed especially in deeper areas of musicology and theology.

For the subject of Church music, similar attempts to those appreciated today as globalizing, were manifested and exercised with a more pronounced character in the Romanian Orthodox Church in the middle of the twentieth century, starting with 1950, when the Romanian Patriarchate initiated the process of standardizing liturgical singing. The standardization of singing, supervised and supported centrally by numerous musical prints, says Father Professor Dr. Vasile Grăjdian, from the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Sibiu, through studies and argumentative articles, as well as through the curriculum of theology schools, aimed and implicitly had as a result, the elimination of the regional variants of Church songs, the most targeted being those from Transylvania and Banat. Although this action did not fully achieve its purpose and objectives, both before and after the Romanian Revolution of 1989, regional singing styles being further cultivated in Transylvanian and Banat parishes, something of the *unity ideal of church singing*, says Father Vasile Grăjdian, has been preserved, being always rediscovered especially in the common Byzantine origins of Orthodox singing, regardless of regional or historical features.

Under this general, but also particular dome is the compendium of studies of professor Mircea Buta, systematized in this volume. This paper includes, on the one hand, the highlighting of musical personalities, such as: Trifon Lugojan and Rev. Ioan Șerb, which have left their mark on church singing in the west of the country, and on the other hand, the city of Arad as a promoter of the publishing of regional Church songs. Also, in this paper we find a general framework of the similarities of the intonational

essences regarding the Church singing from Ardeal and Banat, then we meet some personal thoughts and opinions of the author, very well argued and substantiated, regarding the local church singing, and also presenting some perspectives. The end of the paper is drawn, we could say, by a case study - applied on the prosomia of the Paraklesis of the Theotokos, in the notation of Trifon Lugojan.

After an intense work at the altar of Church music in the Arad area and after a period of almost four decades of uninterrupted and tireless activity as teacher, the author felt the need to lay down on paper a general framework and an overview of the realities of Church singing from Arad, an area blessed by God. The passing of the millennia is marked to some extent in terms of the past, present, but also the future of ecclesiastical singing in the West of the country, the book reviewed inviting us somewhat to an even deeper understanding of the causes and effects produced over the years on local Church music.

The complexity of the Church musical life in the Arad area cannot be approached without accepting the historical, social, and especially the educational-musical factors of the citadel. On the one hand, a strict approach of the local melodic structures is definitely necessary, and on the other hand, an inter-relationship with those existing in other areas of the country.

Going through the content, this paper goes beyond the limits of a school approach. The formal organization of the paper offers a special balance to the entire content, but also an approach accessible to anyone, even the uninformed. Reading the book by Assoc. Prof. Mircea Buta leaves behind the satisfaction of understanding and science reached, not through simple and sterile speculations, says Father Grăjdian, but following the long and difficult path of Church music practice. Only in this way we can reach true and useful conclusions. The author does not claim to have treated this paper exhaustively. This paper is a landmark and a starting point for theology students, but also for young people who embrace local Church singing. Anyone reading this volume can form a clear and well-defined idea regarding the history of Church singing in the city of Arad, the its current situation, but also the its perspectives.

The musical aspects captured in this volume do not represent and do not replace the structural content of the Arad Church singing. They are developed from the perspective of a new context, from the perspective of other points of view and angles, and with new details, which can open new horizons and new perspectives for other reference works, such as the present one.

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