

Revitalization of Byzantine Chant and Liturgy: State of the Question

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The study and research of medieval Byzantine music and its place in the liturgy is the most neglected of all Byzantine studies. There are various reasons for this dilemma. Of all the arts, Byzantine music is the one that has suffered the greatest loss of tradition. This in turn has led to a general state of ignorance and even omission of Byzantine music from the other cultural aspects of Byzantine and Western Medieval studies. This is greatly unfortunate, for Byzantium was a highly sophisticated society where music, following the tradition of Ancient Greece, played a dominant role in every arena of religious and secular society.

Lest you think this estimation concerning the neglect and oversight of Byzantine music has been exaggerated, one has only to look at the recent exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art: *The Glory of Byzantium*. In the 574 page catalogue entitled, *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era, A.D. 843-1261*, the musical participations and contributions to this highly sophisticated culture were overlooked and the musical manuscripts were ignored. Although musical manuscripts such as Evangelia or Lectionaries containing ephonic notation were incorporated in the catalogue, the musical contents were disregarded and the manuscripts were analyzed by art historians who were able to comment only on the artistic scope and not the intended musical purpose and, in most instances, were not even

aware that musical notation was present. Furthermore, in the seventeen chapters of this publication by the Metropolitan Museum which focused on aspects of Byzantine society and civilization, there was absolutely no mention or discussion of the music of this culture, and yet it is documented that music framed every secular activity of Imperial society as well as its known function in the liturgical rites. The omission of the music could perhaps be explained that this was an exhibition that was mostly choreographed by Western medievalists. And in their defense, there was an attempt to compensate for the omission of music in the exhibit by inviting The Greek-Byzantine Choir of Lycourgos Angelopoulos to perform for two concerts in one evening during the run of the exhibit. But the problem can not be parceled solely to the Western medievalists, for Byzantinists are equally guilty and perhaps even more responsible for the neglect. Although the publication *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* and their respective symposiums make an attempt to include some music presentations when relating to liturgical themes, the inclusion of music sessions is, at best, sporadic. The neglect of music was monumental when Dumbarton Oaks had its symposium on Secular Byzantium and its Culture and totally ignored the music which was a prominent part of secular Byzantium. It is problematic when authoritative organizations, such as the Metropolitan Museum and Dumbarton Oaks, overlook the discipline of Byzantine music, for they set the example for others to mimic. For instance, in the premier issue of *Thesis*, a journal of Greek foreign policy issues, there was an article that reviewed the exhibition "The Glory of Byzantium." Although the article reviewed the religious and secular culture of the "Second Golden Age of Byzantium," it remained as equally ignorant as the Metropolitan Museum in its negligence of the role of music which embraced all aspects of secular and liturgical culture.

The argument could be offered that music is a very specialized discipline. And although this is true, the same argument could be posed for other disciplines of Byzantine studies. Also the argument of the lack of knowledge and documentation of medieval Byzantine music could be offered as an excuse. Although this may have been true earlier in this century, it is no longer the case. There has been a profound increase in scholarship in the area of Byzantine

tine musicology¹. Even the lectionary music examples which the Metropolitan exhibited, can now be realized into modern notation by means of comparative studies and transcriptions.

The knowledge of medieval Byzantine music has been greatly expanded in the last several decades. Even Western musicologists are slowly beginning to accept the significance and influence of medieval Byzantine music on Western medieval music. Western Medieval music derives its nomenclature of modes from Byzantine modes; as well as its melodic construction of formulae; its modulations and pararelations of modes; its use of form; wordpainting; and even the origins of polyphony—all borrowed from Byzantine and Ancient Greek music.

Although the knowledge of medieval Byzantine chant has increased, there is no denying that tradition has been lost. To begin with, through the many centuries of the Byzantine Empire, medieval Byzantine chant developed and evolved through various stages of development. In fact Byzantine liturgical chant continued to be transmitted during the Turkish occupation, or as it is currently being coined the Age of Romiosini, and has consequently been referred to as a "Late Medieval Music," because unlike Western medieval music, its development after a point remained stagnant.

Today's music of the Greek Orthodox Churches in Greece is very often referred to as "Byzantine Music," but this is not wholly correct. The liturgical chant which is sung today in modern Greece is inspired and influenced by medieval Byzantine chant but it is more appropriately named "Neo-Byzantine Music," Chrysanthine Music, or the "New Method." The reason for this is that in the early nineteenth century this late medieval Byzantine chant was reformed and in the process the music as well as the notation was altered. This new method was established by the teaching of the Three Teachers: Gregorios Lampadarios, Chourmouziotis the Chartophylax, and Archimandrite Chrysanthos of Madytos. The latter was especially influential and this reform process culminated in 1832 with the publication of Chrysanthos' treatise the *Mega Theoretikon*, which has become the standard theoretical book on new-Byzantine chant and which is still faithfully used in Greece today.

Chrysanthos' reform process drastically altered the medieval

system so that in a century's time medieval Byzantine chant was almost forgotten in interpretation and practice by even Greek musicologists. Chrysanthos initiated his reforms by simplifying the notation into a more concise method so that it could be printed. Prior to that, medieval Byzantine chant had always been handwritten by scribes in monasteries, even though music printing in the West had begun about 1473. Although Chrysanthos' reforms were well-meaning, he and his followers changed a system of notation that had remained relatively stagnant for centuries and in turn they added their own rhythmic and melodic interpretation. More specifically the reform reduced the number of neumes or notes of the medieval notation, restructured the modes, defined the size of intervals, and regulated the principles of modulation. Although some medieval melodic formulae were preserved in the new system of notation, Chrysanthos' alterations do not preserve any tradition earlier than the eighteenth century. Chrysanthos' new method very quickly overshadowed the medieval system, because it received the official approval of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and under its auspices the Third Patriarchal Music School in Constantinople was directly responsible for disseminating the New Method to all countries under its jurisdiction as well as to other Patriarchates. To obscure even further the medieval system of Byzantine chant, it should be pointed out that the Patriarchate Committee of 1881 altered the scientific measuring of the intervals of the scale as it was arranged originally by Chrysanthos and his followers. Consequently, medieval Byzantine chant became muddled and lay in obscurity, and its medieval system of notation became forgotten and indecipherable by both Greek and Western scholars. It was only in the mid-1930s that this musical "rosetta stone" was rediscovered by a group of Western scholars named Egon Wellesz, H.J.W. Tillyard, and Carsten Hoeg, who found the missing key to deciphering medieval Byzantine neumes into a transcribable notation. Although Greek musicologists were at first reluctant to accept the discoveries of non-Greek scholars, Greeks and Western musicologists accept these findings but with some reservations on the points of rhythm and chromaticism. As with any reconstruction of historical music, there is always some degree of subjectivity. With medieval Byzantine chant there is perhaps even more so,

because of the corrupt changes of its medieval practice in the nineteenth century which were adopted as the authoritative practice of transcription. But even with a general consensus of a more authentic manner of transcribing medieval Byzantine chant, there are problematic choices to be made in the performance realization of the manuscripts, for there is no exact rhythm indication, no indication of exact tuning or temperament, no exact indication of dynamics in the manuscripts. Furthermore, musicologists must envisage that variations of performance practice must have existed in different regions of the empire throughout its long era of existence and it is documented that there were a series of changes in neumes and melodies of chant during the medieval period. With all of the complexities and evolution of medieval Byzantine chant, the question is how can we preserve and revitalize medieval Byzantine chant and its place in the liturgy?

Although the liturgies of Byzantium have suffered changes and even the loss of some their practices in modern times, they have remained far more stable than the music with far less dramatic changes because they were transmitted and documented throughout the centuries without many corrupt changes and without the transcription problems of medieval musical notation. The most dramatic changes of modern times are perhaps the translations into modern languages and the abbreviated services to accommodate modern day parishioners. The preservation of Byzantine chant in these liturgies has not fared as well. The Greek Orthodox Churches of the United States are notorious for their lack of preservation of Byzantine hymnody and chant in their attempts to harmonize and create a new four-part choral tradition of Western-like church music. How then can we revitalize medieval Byzantine chant before it becomes extinct in this country or elsewhere in the world where it is becoming a dying tradition? The question and the answers are very difficult. Also, there must be a common realization that music from different cultures and times requires much more education and attention than the current music of one's culture. There must be a preparation process for the listener that medieval Byzantine chant will not have the grandeur of Classical/Eighteenth-Century or Romantic/Nineteenth-Century music. Instead it is music on quite a different level and should be perceived as an embel-

lishment of the Byzantine text that it accompanied. The essential features of medieval Byzantine chant are the melodic progressions; the shifts of interior cadences; the vocal technique; the refined, yet modest, dressing of the Byzantine hymnographic poetry; the ornamentations; and the use of the isokratema, the improvised drone accompaniment. Are modern listeners ready for the revitalization, of this chant? Based on the case of the monks of Santo Domingo di Silos who entered the top recording charts a few years ago with their 20 year old recordings of Gregorian chant, I believe the same could happen to medieval Byzantine chant with the appropriate marketing. Although critics of the Gregorian chant hit could argue that the success of this CD was not based on the absolute qualities of the music but on a variety of factors, such as the reaction against the steady beat of contemporary rock and pop culture, the search of exotic music, or a kind of meditative asylum for the ears resembling the sounds of New Age Music. All of these factors could equally apply to medieval Byzantine chant.

In the revitalization of medieval Byzantine chant, the modern, living traditions of Greek Orthodox chanting in Greece (especially in remote areas, such as the Mt. Athos Monasteries) provide some of the best sources of inspiration in the attempts at reconstructing the medieval Byzantine chant. For the success of the revitalization of Byzantine chant, musicologists, performers, and educators must look to the medieval manuscripts for the original musical sources and not the later corrupted transcriptions of the neo-Byzantine chant. Although there may never be a general consensus as to the authoritative way of transcribing and performing the medieval Byzantine chant, the medieval sources are complete without the elimination and restructuring of neumes and melodies. With the use of medieval sources, it becomes important to research and experiment the performing of medieval Byzantine chant.

In the process of revitalizing the Byzantine chant, the medieval repertoire must be brought forth to the public-at-large by means of publications of the transcriptions in Western staff notation, recordings and concerts. Although most of my Greek colleagues do not approve of transcriptions of Byzantine chant onto Western staff notation, failure to do so will mean the isolation and loss of most Western musicologists, musicians, and audiences. The process of

education must also include fellow Byzantinists. There should be a continued effort to make the Byzantine music paper/session not an occasional entry but a regular part of every Byzantine Studies Conference and Dumbarton Oaks Symposium, just like it has become a part of every International Byzantine Studies Congress and every International Musicological Society Meeting.

The process of education also includes the teaching of courses on Medieval Byzantine Music, its history and the methodology of transcription. Efforts in this venue have been made by Professor Theodore Bogdanos, who has a Music Institute for chanters on Chanting in the neo-Byzantine tradition through the Athenagoras Institute at the University of California Berkeley and Diane Touliatos, who periodically teaches a course on the History of Medieval Byzantine Music and Hymnography at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. However, this is not enough. There must be a stronger effort by the hierarchy of the Greek Orthodox Churches of North America to educate their priests and chanters in the Medieval tradition of Byzantine music. At best it can be said that the Archdiocese promulgates the art of chanting in the Neo-Byzantine tradition without emphasis on either its medieval history and evolution or the use of medieval sources for transcription purposes. Also, the National Forum of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians needs to give more emphasis to revitalizing medieval Byzantine chant. Although the Forum is sponsoring a transcription project of Byzantine chant for distribution in the Greek Orthodox Churches of North America, it is only consulting nineteenth century sources for this project, so that it is attempting to preserve only a neo-Byzantine tradition. The Forum in the past has looked to pioneers such as John Sakellarides, George Anastasiou, Nicholas Roubanis, and Christos Vrionides, who introduced choral settings to traditional Byzantine melodies. Composers from the second half of the twentieth century who have continued in the choral setting tradition are the late Frank Desby, Tikey Zes, Theodore Bogdanos, Nicholas Maragos, Anna Gallos, and Steven Cardiasmenos as well as others. And indeed, it is the musical compositions from these composers that predominate the music of the Greek Orthodox Churches in the United States. Although this music may attempt to preserve the echos and ethos of Byzantine music, it does not

preserve nor revitalize the medieval tradition of Byzantine chant. This is not to say that these choral compositions should not be utilized in the liturgy. On the contrary, musical creativity and progress should not be inhibited. But neither should a tradition that existed and was preserved for over sixteen centuries be lost in a period of two to three centuries. There are places in the liturgy where the medieval tradition of Byzantine chant could be used alongside with the more modern interpretations of Eastern Orthodox musical repertoire. In fact, Byzantine chant even lends itself well to the present choral environment. In performance practice, medieval Byzantine chant is performed by two choirs, the right and the left, so named because of their position in the sanctuary. The one choir sings the notated melody, while the other performs the improvised isokratema. The domesticos or precentor functions as the leader and/or soloist of the two choirs and is also known for the practice of cheironomia or medieval hand conducting. This medieval choral tradition could easily be adapted to contemporary performances. Two choirs in the United States that perform Byzantine chant are the Romeikos Ensemble directed by George Bilalis and the Capella Romanum directed by Alex Lingas. Through their performances both choirs are attempting to revitalize medieval Byzantine chant.

There is, of course, the problem of language. Not all present day performers are equipped to read the Byzantine Greek which accompanies the music. Although modern translations of English, French, and Italian have been set to Byzantine musical settings, one must be very cautious, because there is an art to translations for music settings. And very often the musical line is altered to accommodate the variable syllables of text. Reputable music publishers in the United States have preferred to keep an English transliteration of the Byzantine text so that the authenticity of the music can be preserved and have opted to include instead an English translation for the understanding of the text.

Another tactic that has recently been used in the preservation of medieval Byzantine chant is to have it performed by instruments as opposed to its original vocal practice, albeit there was secular medieval Byzantine music intended for performance by instruments. The contemporary British composer John Taverner is known

for incorporating medieval Byzantine chant in his instrumental/vocal compositions. Taverner very often will use the monophonic Byzantine chant as the unifying melodic force in his contemporary compositions. Another experiment is the recent CD recording of the Kronos String Quartet. In the attempt of preserving and revitalizing medieval Byzantine chant, the Kronos Quartet has recorded a newly discovered musical composition in their latest CD by Kassia (born 810), the earliest woman in the history of music for whom we have preserved music.² The composition entitled "Using the Apostate Tyrant As His Tool" (Org`anw crhv`amenos o duvmen`hs) of Mode II Plagal is performed according to a published transcription by Diane Touliatos.³ The arrangement attempts to follow the medieval tradition by beginning with the intonation formula and the inclusion of an improvised isokratema performed by three of the strings. There are purists who will frown at the performance of a sticheron liturgical chant by a string quartet. On the other hand, if this brings medieval Byzantine chant to an audience that might never otherwise hear it, then it is well worth the effort. Only with research of the medieval musical tradition and ultimately its realization in concerts, recordings, and even current church liturgy according to correct performance practice can we hope to revitalize medieval Byzantine chant.

NOTES

¹ See this author's three published surveys on the states of the discipline of Byzantine music from 1975 - 96 to view the increase in numbers of scholars and the explosion of research in the field: D. Touliatos, "State of the Discipline of Byzantine Music," *Acta Musicologica*, L/2 (1978), 181-92; idem., "Byzantine Music Since 1975," *Acta Musicologica*, 60/3 (1988), 205-28; idem., "The Discipline of Byzantine Music through the 21st Century," *Proceedings of the XIXth International Congress of Byzantine Studies, Copenhagen, Denmark, Aug. 17-25, 1996* p.449-63; idem., "Hellenism in Music: Lost Art and Culture Recovered," internet publication: SAEamerica.org

² Kronos String Quartet's *Early Music (Lachrimae Antiquae)* CD, released September, 1997.

³ D. Touliatos, ed., Kassia, *Six Stichera* ("O God-bearing Father, You Cherished the Love," "Lord, You Have Condemned the Pharisee," "Us-

ing the Apostate Tyrant As His Tool," "From A Good Root," and "The Tomb of Your Remains," Transcription and Introduction by Diane Touliatos, (Bryn Mawr: Hildegard Publishing Company, 1996); idem., *Kassia (b.810)*, *THIRTEEN HYMNS: Five Hymns to the Great Martyr St. Christina: Hymn to the Pious Pelagia; The Fallen Woman; Augustus the Monarch; Let Us Praise Peter and Paul; Now the Voice of Isaiah the Prophet; The Five-stringed Lute and Fivefold Lamp; Above the Teachings of the Greeks; Edessa Rejoices*, Bryn Mawr, PA: Hildegard Publishing Co., 2000.

The "Domino Effect": Image and Reality in the Balkans

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The scenario of a "domino effect" in the Balkans, first articulated with any seriousness in the early 1990s in the United States, has evolved as the dominant perspective underpinning America's policy in the region.¹ The cast of characters in its presentation over the years has included President Clinton, various cabinet members, as well as members of the congress.² Several North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies have echoed it since.³ Simply put, the scenario reads: If violence increases in any one Balkan state, its conflict could spread to a neighboring state. Since most Balkan states have conflictive territorial claims, chaos in any one state could encourage other states to join a war.

I argue in this brief essay that the assumptions upon which the scenario rests are flawed, that violence increasing in "X" or chaos in "Y" alone is not sufficient to predict a "domino effect." Certainly not at this point in time or in the near future, in which we see other Balkan states joining a war for territorial gain, to protect co-religionists or co-nationals, with the end result being a war between NATO allies—Greece and Turkey. I begin with a glimpse of the geopolitical landscape and question the assumptions upon which the scenario is based, consider the persuasiveness of the scenario, and conclude with an evaluation of the rationale underpinning the "domino effect" in the Balkans.