

Archdeacon Sebastian Barbu-Bucur, Mihalache Moldovlahul. "Anastasimatar II"

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Review

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At the end of 2011, the series of restitutions offered by Editura Muzicală under the title "*Izvoare ale muzicii românești*" was supplemented with a book whose importance and consistency captures the attention of anyone interested in the history of Romanian music and, in particular, of the Byzantine music developed on the Romanian territory: the second volume of the *Anastasimatarion* by Mihalache Moldovlahul. The new publication bears the signature of the famous Byzantinologist Archdeacon Ph.D. Sebastian Barbu-Bucur and completes the volume published in 2008, which includes the anastasima hymns in the first four modes¹⁰¹. The importance of this *Anastasimatarion* for the continuation of the process of Romanianization of the Orthodox Church chant is outstanding and confers the recent publication the privileged status of a bibliography of major importance for the understanding of the changes undergone by the music of Byzantine tradition in the 18th century.

The indefatigable researcher's interest in this historical period is widely known, while the so-called process of "Romanianization" of church singing has been a constant concern of Archdeacon Ph.D. Sebastian Barbu-Bucur for several decades, and is reflected in a few volumes¹⁰² that have become valuable and indispensable bibliographical sources for the

¹⁰¹ Mihalache Moldovlahul, *Anastasimatar I*, Series "*Izvoare ale muzicii românești*", vol. XII A, Editura Muzicală, Bucharest, 2008, 575 p.

¹⁰² See the volumes: Sebastian Barbu-Bucur, *Cultura muzicală de tradiție bizantină pe teritoriul României în secolul XVIII și începutul secolului XIX și aportul original al culturii autohtone*, Editura Muzicală, Bucharest,

Byzantinologists and historians of the Romanian music. Along with the studies and volumes dedicated to the musical and literary work of Filothei sin Agăi Jipei, the author of *Psaltichie rumânească* (1713, the first psaltic music manuscript with Romanian text), the famous researcher also draws the attention to the activity and manuscripts of other Romanians like Iovașcu Vlahul, Șarban Protopsaltul, Ioan sin Radului Duma Brașoveanul, Naum Râmniceanu, Ghelasie Basarabeanul. By diligently following this line of research, Archdeacon Ph.D. Sebastian Barbu-Bucur has the merit of having discovered, in the Great Lavra of the Holy Mount Athos, the autograph manuscript of the *Anastasimatarion* by Mihalache Moldovlahul (between 1982 and 1985, during his study program in Greece and on the Holy Mount Athos). The existence of this manuscript was supported by a mention made by Anton Pann and by the copies kept in the Romanian libraries. Three decades after its identification, the *Anastasimatarion* by Mihalache Moldovlahul is now available to musicians – researchers and composers alike – in a *documenta et transcripta* edition, providing, on neighbouring pages, photocopies of its pages and their full transcription in linear notation.

The substantial analysis offered in the introduction to the volume is an outstanding preamble to the musical part, in which the author includes substantial and valuable information, grouped under the title: *Mihalache Moldovlahul, compozitor de muzică bizantină și precursor al Reformei chrisanthice – sec. XVIII* (Mihalache Moldovlahul, Byzantine music composer and precursor of the Chrisanthine Reform – 18th c.). The information on Mihalache's teaching and creative activity was gathered gradually¹⁰³ over three decades of relentless searches. The study contains details that the author used to compile Mihalache's brief biography, for the reconstruction of which he had to examine an impressive number of manuscripts. The father-professor corroborated the information he found in their marginal notes and thus managed to identify the author of the Romanian version of the 1767 *Anastasimatarion* under other names, too, like Mihalache Ieșeanul, Mihalache Eftimivici or Mihalache Iftimivici. A disciple of the famous Peter the Peloponnesian, protopsaltis of the

1989; Sebastian Barbu-Bucur, *Filothei sin Agăi Jipei-Psaltichie rumânească*, vol. I, *Catavasier*, Editura Muzicală, Bucharest, 1981, in "Izvoare ale muzicii românești", vol. VII A - *Documenta et transcripta*, vol. II, *Anastasimatar*, Editura Muzicală, Bucharest, 1984, in "Izvoare ale muzicii românești", vol. VII B - *Documenta et transcripta*; vol. III, *Stihirariul*, Editura Muzicală, 1986, in "Izvoare ale muzicii românești", vol. VII C - *Documenta et transcripta*; vol. IV, Editura Episcopiei Buzăului, Buzău, 1992, in "Izvoare ale muzicii românești", vol. VII D - *Documenta et transcripta*; Sebastian Barbu-Bucur, *Manuscrisele muzicale românești de la Muntele Athos*, Editura Muzicală, Bucharest, 2000.

¹⁰³ The first study in which Archdeacon Ph.D. Sebastian Barbu-Bucur has approached issues related to Mihalache's *Anastasimatarion* dates from 1976. See: *Manuscrise psaltice românești și bilingve în notație cucuzeliană*, in "Studii de muzicologie", vol. XII, Editura Muzicală, Bucharest, 1976, pp. 118-181.

Great Church of Constantinople, Mihalache Moldovlahul was in his turn a well-regarded teacher. Since 1784, he worked as Protopsaltis at the Princely Church and teacher of church singing at the St. Sava Monastery School and at the Bucharest Metochion of the Diocese of Râmnic, where he trained many psaltes who preserved the Byzantine tradition of kliros singing and passed down his religious songs in Romanian, orally or in handwritten copies; the names of these disciples and of the manuscripts they wrote are mentioned and described in the introductory study.

The importance of the book under review can be fully realized only if we place Mihalache's manuscript within the broad context of the process of Romanianization of church singing. This process began in the 16th century with the translation of the Gospels, Epistle, Psalms and of other religious texts and continued in the following centuries, with the psaltes being confronted with many linguistic, theological and musical obstacles. Archdeacon Ph.D. Sebastian Barbu-Bucur has identified four stages of this long process that lasted until early 20th century¹⁰⁴. Mihalache's manuscript falls in the second stage, marking a distinct phase thereof, when the melodies are set to the already translated text: "...we no longer speak of a mere replacement of the Greek words with Romanian ones under the psaltic notes, or of a simple adaptation of the text to music, or of the music to the text... Mihalache, just like Macarie and Dimitrie Suceveanu, abandoned the typical Greek prosody and adapted the melody to the prosody of the Romanian language, thus changing the melodic profile... they preserved the scale, cadences and style, but created their own melodic line" (p. 44-45).

Mihalache's codex was written in the same year as one of the copies of Filothei sin Agăi Jipei's anthology, prepared by Constantin Ftori Psaltis of Râmnic. This coincidence supports the idea of the spread of kliros singing in Romanian already a few decades before the 1814 psaltic music Reform. Moreover, the analysis of various anastasimataria kept in the Romanian libraries, conducted by Archdeacon Ph.D. Sebastian Barbu-Bucur, has also revealed that this version is "the most complete Anastasimatarion we have in Greek or in Romanian, in Cucuzelian and Chrysanthine notation" (p. 19). The researcher also notes that by adopting the *syndomon* style (short and concise), Mihalache has followed the same path as his teacher Peter Lambadarios the Peloponnesian, who introduced this style in his anthologies, which contain simpler and less ornamented chants. This style was later preserved by the reformers of the music of Byzantine tradition and maintained in the 19th century.

¹⁰⁴ See: Sebastian Barbu-Bucur, *Cultura muzicală de tradiție bizantină pe teritoriul României în secolul XVIII și începutul secolului XIX și aportul original al culturii autohtone*, Editura Muzicală, Bucharest, 1989.

The introductory study contains many comparative analyses of hymns drawn from the main anastasimataria collections (in Greek and Romanian) of the late 18th century and early 19th century – belonging to Peter Lambadarios the Peloponnesian, Petros Efesios, Hieromonk Macarie, but also to Filothei sin Agăi Jipei, or the podobens notated by Ion Popescu-Pasărea at the beginning of the 20th century. The researcher's openness to the previous versions and to those closer to today enables the elimination of certain assumptions regarding the lineage of Mihalache's version and also leads to important conclusions like those related to the similarity of his hymns to the contemporary ones. "...Mihalache managed, especially in the Anastasimatarion, to wrap the Romanian words in such an appropriate melody, that in many cases it was able to resist until today. The examples illustrate... Mihalache's superior musicality... The melodic garb suited for Greek words had thus been largely removed, while another one had been tailored to suit the Romanian words and taste. Therefore today, after more than two centuries, some of the hymns in Mihalache's *Anastasimatarion* are very similar to those of our time, while others are absolutely identical, such as the podobens *Ce vă vom numi* (What Shall We Call Thee) (modes V-VIII) ", (p. 45).

In the final part of the study, Archdeacon Ph.D. Sebastian Barbu-Bucur highlights the role that language played in shaping a national character of church singing. The search for balance between the melodic line of Byzantine origin and the prosody and word order of the Romanian language resulted in the emergence of certain Romanian musical traits. Nevertheless, the changes that occurred during the process of Romanianization did not affect the Byzantine lineage of kliros singing in the Romanian churches. "As in other Orthodox countries – shows the distinguished researcher – the Romanian music of Byzantine tradition underwent a process of localization by introducing its own expressive features without destroying the original Byzantine essence" (p. 46). The author's statements are well supported by numerous examples inserted in the study, in which Romanian and Greek versions are presented in parallel.

Along with the first part of *Anastasimatarion* by Mihalache Moldovlahul, the recently published book is a major bibliographic resource on Orthodox music in the Romanian churches of the second half of the 18th century. The photocopies of the manuscript enable the study of hymns and of various aspects regarding the use of Cucuzelian notation. The introductory study, on the other hand, summarizes, along with data on Mihalache and his work, valuable information on Romanian and Greek psaltes and on manuscripts from the Romanian libraries, along with competent considerations on church music.

Through the meticulous research of Mihalache's *Anastasimatarion* and of his contribution to the Romanianization of church music, Archdeacon Ph.D. Sebastian Barbu-Bucur adds a new page to the golden book of the history of Romanian music, which he has enriched over the decades with other significant contributions like Filothei sin Agăi Jipei, Ghelasie Basarabeanul or the cataloguing of the thesaurus of manuscripts from the Holy Mountain Athos. The passion he has put into finding and decoding the old musical manuscripts often pervades the lines of his studies, as he himself confessed in the early pages of the book. His childhood ideals have turned into accomplishments (as he himself appreciates), while the passion for researching manuscripts (we add) reveals precious though long forgotten testimonies and contributions to the creation of the musical repertoire of the Romanian Orthodox Church, like the one in the book under our review.