

The "psalmody in tenor voice". The musical manuscript no. 31 of the Platytera monastery in Corfu, Athens 2011, pp. 118+[2], 20X27 cm., ISBN 978-960-99745-0-9.
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Among the manuscripts of the Platytera monastery in Corfu, that have been recently described by the writers, there is a small musical manuscript of importance in what regards its contents. This manuscript contains greek and latin hymns as well as evangelical texts about the Sainly Passion. All the texts are written in greek and even the latin hymns have been transcribed into the greek alphabet.

Many texts included in this manuscript are known thanks to the Ritual of the orthodox and catholic Church masses. But there are other texts which are not included in the official ritual of the two churches. More specifically, the following are included, written in greek: the well-known antiphony "Semeron krematai epi xylou" (Today is hanged upon wood...), some verses from the Gospels that are being read on Holy Tuesday and Holy Thursday, an extract from the Laments of Jeremiah and five verses from the Lament of the Virgin, the well-known «Paristameni» (Standing by the cross). Latin hymns in greek characters are the following: In monte Oliveti oravit..., Christus factus est..., Adoramus Te Christe... as well as the entire 50th Psalm: Miserere mei Deus...

The musical pieces of the manuscript are meant to be sung by a mixed choir; the voices of this choir are defined as basso, tenore, alto, soprano. In the manuscript there is a registration of the notes for the "tenore" voice. Furthermore, in the beginning of the manuscript, the tonal basis is given for the harmonization of the other three voices during all the hymns. On one page of the manuscript one can find a parallel registration of the notes for basso and tenore whereas on another page the term falsobordone is mentioned describing the rendition of the hymn "Today is hanged...".

The handwriting and the style of the writing lead one to the assumption that the manuscript has been written by a Greek. Based on the watermark, the manuscript dates back to the second half of the 17th century. As of the beginning of the 18th century, we know that it belonged to the Corfiot chanter Ioannis Marketis and later to the music teacher and priest Theodoros Kigalas.

The manuscript, was intended for a function that would take place in a mixed environment, language and religion-wise. This function can't be placed in the Ritual of either church (Orthodox or Catholic) that's why we have assumed that it was an out of the temple function in which members of both creeds could participate, all of them possibly belonging to a latin religious confraternity.

The origin of the manuscript is one more desideratum of the research. The use of polyphony has led us to assumptions about an origin from the Ionian Islands or Creta since we don't have information about the existence of polyphonic music in any other Latin-occupied area at the time the manuscript was written. The assumption about a Cretan origin is the prevailing one since in the urban centres of the Venetian-occupied Creta, the use of polyphony is witnessed in latin as well as in orthodox environments. As for the Ionian islands the polyphonic music seems to have been transferred from Creta as suggested by the characterization of the polyphonic music in the Ionian islands as "Cretan music" as early as the 18th century. One more element in favour of the Cretan origin of the manuscript are the verses of the Virgin's Lament, known also as "Paristameni" ("Standing by the cross") which can't be found in other Greek areas apart from Creta.

The Platytera manuscript seems to be today the only existing manuscript which includes hymns from both churches, written in byzantine semeiography and meant to be sung in

polyphony. Furthermore, it is perhaps the only record from the 17th century on the use of the greek alphabet for the writing of latin texts.

In order to understand and interpret its “paradoxes” we need undoubtedly more records, which we hope exist in other book collections and haven’t been lost forever. We need, moreover, an interpretation by musicologists who will transcribe the music of this manuscript and will search its relations and influences from East and West. So we are now handling it to those specialists with the certainty that the manuscript of the Platytera monastery constitutes a serious record on the music genre that was developed in Greece during the Venetian occupation.

DISTRIBUTION:

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