



TRADITION AND INNOVATION IN ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHANT - “OUR FATHER”

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I INTRODUCTION. TRADITION OR INNOVATION?

It is well known that Romania has found herself over time at the confluence of several cultures (Latin, Greek, Slavic, Western). The Romanian people are Latin, speaking a Romance or new Latin language, but are also promoters of the Orthodox faith, with Byzantine roots and heritage. This situation explains why Romanian culture in general and church music in particular have combined, at certain points, Eastern (Byzantine) elements with those of Western or of another origin (e.g., Slavic).

In discussing Romanian Orthodox chant, it should be remembered that, for a long time, in Romanian churches, the services were sung in the traditional languages of worship, Greek and Slavonic; but, beginning with the 15th-16th centuries, singing “in the language of the fatherland” began to emerge, as a result of books being translated in Romanian, and, in 1713, the first manuscript with chant music in Romanian was compiled by Filothei sin Agăi Jipei.

If psaltic music, of the Byzantine tradition, has always been sung in Romania, harmonic-polyphonic music was introduced systematically during the second half of the 19th century (although it had been sung earlier in Transylvania, Banat and Bucovina), giving birth to much controversy, some of which has been maintained until today (in some circles, there is a belief that “only Byzantine music is Orthodox, redeeming”, and “harmonic-polyphonic music is heretical, hellish”).

In our days, there are certain divergences even when we talk about psaltic music itself, between the Romanian style of interpretation (which relates to regional characteristics – language, vocal emission, tuning system or, at most, quasi tempered, melodic ornaments) and the Greek style or influence (assuming the role of “the sole keeper of authentic Byzantine chant,” promoting the reintroduction of the non-tempered system, of a specific kind of vocal emission, with a strong nasal pronunciation, more melismata and cheironomic signs, a specific system of melodic attractions, etc.).

This is why the presentation of the relationship between tradition and innovation in Romanian Orthodox chant is complicated, because, with these controversies, some aspects even assume an ambivalent character – the same reality for some has a traditional character, and for others, it is innovation. For example, for lovers of today’s harmonic-polyphonic music,

the setting of The Lord's Prayer, in D major, by Pantelimon Frunză¹ (harmonized for four equal voices by Nicu Moldoveanu in G major), is considered a traditional chant, because it is based on an older chant, very well known, but for the opponents of harmonic-polyphonic music, it is an innovation that has no place in the repertoire of liturgical music.

Illustration 1: "Tatăl nostru", in D Major, by P. Frunză, in *Repertoriu coral-religios*, p. 14

The image shows a handwritten musical score for the hymn "Tatăl nostru" (The Lord's Prayer) in D Major, composed by P. Frunză. The score is written on four staves, each with a vocal line and lyrics in Romanian. The tempo is marked "Moderato" and the dynamics are "pp". The lyrics are: "Ta-tăl no-stru ca-re-le-esti în ce-ri și în-țea-ră-se mu-me-le Țău și-e în-pă-ră-ți-a Ță-șă-că-se". The score is written in a clear, legible hand, with notes and rests clearly visible on the staves.

On the other hand, other supporters of harmonic-polyphonic music and innovation downplay Byzantine music and tradition in general, calling it "antiquated", "outdated" or "dull", advocating for the "modernization" of church music, which is obviously an equally damaging exaggeration.

But one might ask, does the term "traditional" has always a positive connotation, while "innovation" has a negative connotation, or vice versa – "innovation" a positive connotations, and "tradition" a negative? Must the ratio of tradition and innovation in Orthodox music be antagonistic, an expression of the struggle between good and evil, the promotion of one and the rejection of the other? Or we can militate for a different perspective, peaceful coexistence and even of joint elements of the old and the new, as an attempt to update the tradition through the integration of new elements (through their "christianization" or "spiritualisation") or to anchor the "new" in traditional items lost or forgotten in the "scrolls" of the old times?

To find the most appropriate answer, I believe that we must start from the premise that music in the church is a "means" (a way or a method) of supporting and favouring the status of the prayer, and especially in public, and not an "end" (aim or purpose) in itself (it is not a "dogma"), therefore should not be absolutized, even if it is called upon to facilitate communication and communion with The Absolute – our God. The music is the "servant" of the text revealed.

1 See *Repertoriu coral-religios*, vol. 1. Galați: Bishopric of Dunărea de Jos, no year, 14-15. Library of the Conservatory of Music in Iasi.

Despite the controversy mentioned above (rarely present), the relationship between tradition and innovation in Romanian Orthodox chant is peaceful, one of acceptance, coexistence, and even merging (if by tradition we largely understand psaltic chant, and by innovation, harmonic-polyphonic music): coexistence, in the sense that it can be sung at the same service and even by the same singers in both psaltic and harmonic-polyphonic repertoire; and innovation in the sense of the adoption in church chant (liturgical music) of some secular musical influences (from theatre, opera, operetta, instrumental music, musical folklore, other Eastern influences), which has been banned, no matter if we are talking about Byzantine or harmonic-polyphonic music. The situation changes in the case of paraliturgical musical repertoire, which can be interpreted in other cultural spaces than the church, in concerts of religious music. This is why a liturgical chant, supporting important innovations, can be converted into a paraliturgical one (for example, the Lord’s Prayer by Irina Odăgescu-Țuțuianu, or the variant of Felicia Donceanu).

II THE LORD’S PRAYER IN THE OUTPUT OF SOME ROMANIAN COMPOSERS

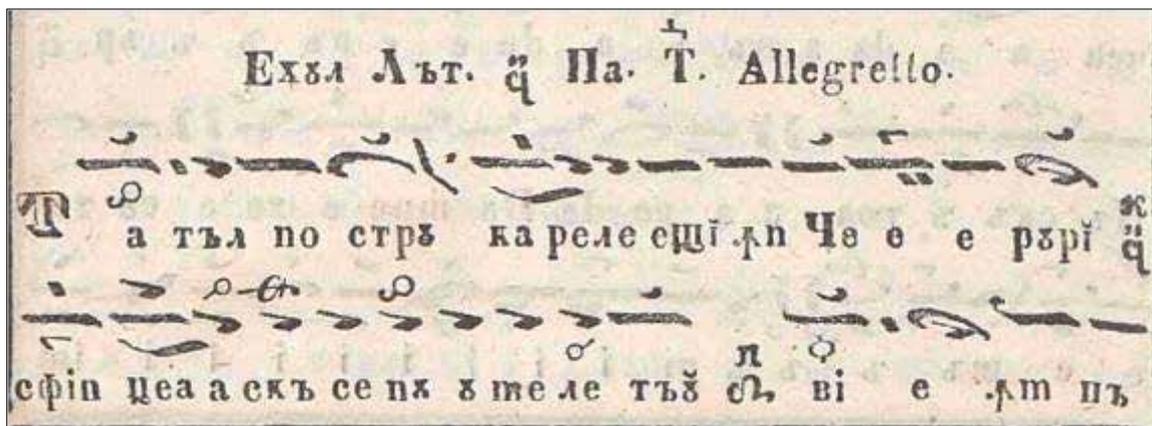
The Lord’s Prayer, “Our Father”, offered as a model of prayer for all Christians by our Saviour Jesus Christ Himself (Matthew 6, 9-13; Luke 11, 2-4) is prayed at all church services. Traditionally, it is read, not sung, and therefore introducing the practice of singing can be considered in some sense an innovation, accepted and transformed over time into a tradition (parallel to that of reading). In this case, the variant that is sung is especially met with in the context of the Divine Liturgy, after the Holy Anaphora, before the Holy Communion, but also within the sacrament of Holy Matrimony.

Published in various collections of music (beginning with the second half of the 19th century), the “Our Father” was set in both ways, psaltically and harmonic-polyphonically (for various voices, equal or mixed voices, and even with instrumental accompaniment). Harmonic-polyphonic versions are presented according to the influences prevailing: Russian influence, Western, Byzantine, to which are added certain contemporary influences.

1. PSALTIC (MONODIC) VARIANTS

a. **Anton Pann** (1796?-1854) composed a psaltic monadic setting² in the 5th mode 5, which has remained the most popular until today, and a source of inspiration for harmonic-polyphonic versions. It can be considered the traditional monodic version *par excellence*.

Illustration 2: “Tatăl nostru”, mode 5, by A. Pann 1854, 30



Structurally, it consists of five musical sections³ with imperfect cadences on Ke-A and perfect cadences and the final on Pa-D. One notices the intention of the author to express the message

2 Anton Pann, *La Sfânta Liturghie a lui Ioan Gură de Aur*. Bucharest: A. Pann 1854, 30-31.

3 George Dumitriu, *Cântul liturgic ortodox în creația corală a compozitorilor români*. Iași: Artes 2013, 249.

of the text with an appropriate melodic line (e. g., the word “heaven” is sung in the higher register). It also uses the Spathi phthora on Ke-A which attracts the neighbouring pitches (Zo is flatted and Di is sharpened) and increases the range under the Di-G (other authors give up at this phthora).

Illustration 3: Transcription in linear notation of the original version of “Tatăl nostru”, mode 5, by A. Pann

The image shows a musical score for the prayer "Tatăl nostru" in linear notation. It consists of five systems, each with a staff of music and a line of lyrics. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and phthoras (indicated by letters like A, B, Bv, C, Bv1 above the notes). The lyrics are in Romanian and match the text in the adjacent caption.

A a Ta - tăl no stru ca-re-le ești în ce - ruri sfin-țea - scă-se nu - me-le Tău.

B b Vi - e îm-pă-ră-ți - a Ta, fa - că-se vo-ia Ta pre-cum în cer - și pe pă-mânt.

Bv bv Pâi-nea noa - stră cea spre fi - in - ță dă - ne-o no - uă as - tăzi.

C c Și ne iar-tă no-uă pă-ca - te-le noa-stre pre-cum și noi ier-tăm gre-și - ți-lor no - ștri.

Bv1 > bv1 Și nu ne du - ce pre noi în-tru is-pi - tă ci ne iz-bă-ve - ște de cel vi-clean.

The end of the chant exists in two versions: the first in the high register and the second in the lower register (the last is more appropriate to the meaning of the text).

Illustration 4: “Tatăl nostru”, mode 5, by A. Pann 1854, 31

The image shows a handwritten musical score for "Tatăl nostru" in Cyrillic notation. It consists of three systems, each with a staff of music and a line of lyrics. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and phthoras (indicated by Cyrillic letters like Г, Л, К, Ч above the notes). The lyrics are in Cyrillic and match the text in the adjacent caption.

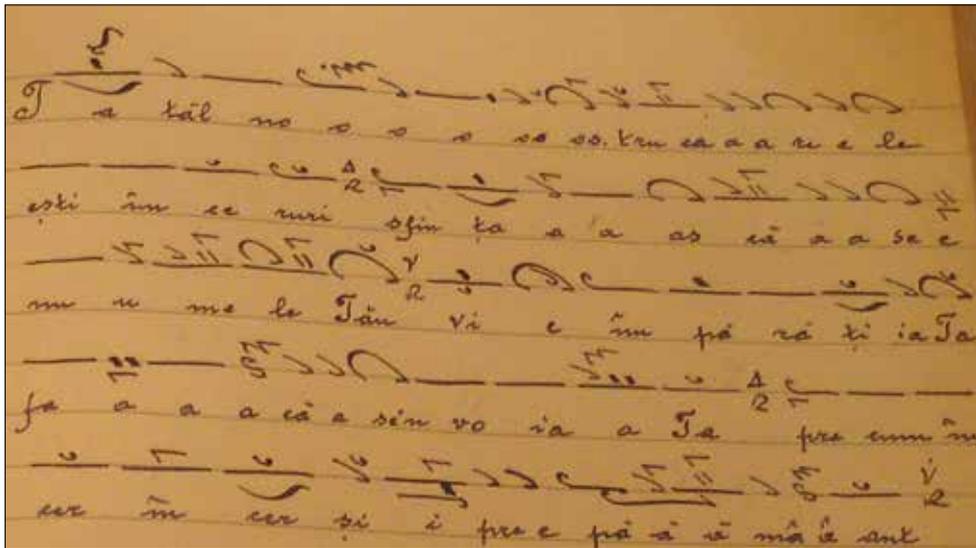
тръ іс пі і ть чі не із въ ве е е е ще

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Чі не із въ ве е е е ще е де чел ві клеа а ан

and a climax in the high register (Ga'-F'). Not being printed, these versions have not become widespread.

Illustration 7: "Tatăl nostru", mode 8, by Chiril Arvinte, MS rom. 220, Library of Neamț Monastery, f. 21



c. **Pr. Florin Bucescu** (born 1936) composed a version in mode 3, written in double notation (psaltic and linear)⁵, with imperfect cadences on Ke-A and Ni-C (only one at the word "ispită" – "temptation") and perfect on Pa-D and Ga-F. He very often uses the gorgon, which streamlines the chant. The composer Vasile Spătăreleu reworked this chant for two and three equal voices⁶.

Illustration 8: "Tatăl nostru", mode 3, by Fr Florin Bucescu 2006, 45

Glas III ̣̣ ga ̣̣

Liniștit și cantabil (Tranquillo e Cantabile)

The image shows a printed musical score for 'Tatăl nostru' in mode 3. It features double notation (psaltic and linear) on a single staff. The tempo/mood is marked 'Liniștit și cantabil (Tranquillo e Cantabile)'. The lyrics are: 'Ta - tăl nos - tru ca - re ești în ce - ruri, Ta - tăl nos - tru ca - re ești în ce - ruri, sfin - țea - scă - se nu - me - le Tău, vi - e' m - pă - ră - ți - a Ta, sfin - țe - a - scă - se nu - me - le Tău, vi - e' m - pă - ră - ți - a Ta, fa - că - se vo - ia Ta, pre - cum în cer și pe pă - mânt. fa - că - se vo - ia Ta, pre - cum în cer și pe pă - mânt.' The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and ornaments.

⁵ Bucescu, Preot Florin and Spătăreleu, Vasile. *Jertfa laudei. Liturghie psaltică în glasul III și prelucrare corală la două și trei voci*. Iași: Trinitas 2006, 45-46.

⁶ *Ibidem*, 87-88 for two voices, and 158-160 for three voices.

2. HARMONIC-POLYPHONIC VARIANTS DISPLAYING RUSSIAN INFLUENCE (19TH CENTURY)

If, in the case of the psaltic versions, the traditional character is not questioned, the characteristics of the modes of Byzantine tradition being retained, when one examines some of the harmonic-polyphonic Romanian variants with other influences, one can identify in them composition certain new elements that lead to the idea of innovation. But such “innovation”, triggered in the 19th century, might become (or not) a tradition for the 20th century.

Harmonic-polyphonic music penetrated into the Romanian cultural area first through links with Slavic peoples (e. g. Paisie Velicicovschi, of Ukrainian origin, would have favoured the practice of harmonic-polyphonic chant at the Monastery of Neamț, where he was appointed abbot in 1779; and Archimandrite Varlaam, Russian by origin, founded a male choir of soldiers in Bucharest in 1836) and the use of Russian musical repertoire (Bortniansky, Turchaninov, Arkhangelsky, Davidov etc.), also under the influence of the European harmonic-polyphonic art⁷.

Illustration 9: “Tatăl nostru” in F major, by G. Musicescu, in Dumitriu 2013, 247



The main Romanian representative of Slavic influence is **Gavriil Musicescu** (1847-1903), Bessarabian by origin, trained in music at the Theological Seminar in Huși, and at the conservatories of Iași and St Petersburg (1870-1872). In Musicescu’s output, G. Dumitriu has identified four versions⁸ of the “Our Father”: one in F major and one G major, and two other settings displaying Slavic influence (C minor and F major).

From the analysis of the first two versions, one notices a masterly use of recitative superimposed on the “airy” chords of the scales with the main harmonic functions (F major: I-V-I).

Elsewhere, a modulation to the minor relative occurs, through the ascending alteration upward of step V and the transformation of the step III chord from the minor to the major.

Illustration 10: “Tatăl nostru” in F major, by G. Musicescu, in Dumitriu 2013, 57



7 Dumitriu 2013, 51.

8 *Ibidem*, 247.

3. HARMONIC-POLYPHONIC VERSIONS DISPLAYING CLASSICAL-ROMANTIC INFLUENCE (19TH CENTURY)

The classical-romantic current was manifested in the Romanian cultural space in the second half of the 19th century, with evident echoes later on. Western influence came through German by means of two “schools”: one in the Romanian territories under Habsburg dominion (Transylvania, Banat, Bucovina), with representatives who had studied in Vienna (Isidor Vorobchievici, Ciprian Porumbescu, Eusebie and Gheorghe Mandicevschi, etc.), and the other in the Romanian Principalities, with representatives of German origin (Eduard Wachmann, Alexander Flechtenmacher)⁹.

Illustration 11: “Tatăl nostru” in A minor, by C. Porumbescu, for male choir¹⁰

Ciprian Porumbescu (1853-1883) composed an original variation of the Lord’s Prayer, in the key of A minor, for 4 male voices (it was later adapted for mixed chorus by Nicolae Ursu, in 1957), with a tempo marking of *Moderato*, and in 4/4 time. In this piece, one sees specific elements of the Western school: “lyrical, bright [song], with dramatic highlights” “in the style of Italian opera”¹¹, dotted rhythms, triplets, small

note values, harmony with chromatic chords, modulations and modulated inflections in the key of the dominant, to the relative major and the major of the original key (the score actually finished in A major), dynamic nuances from piano to fortissimo, etc.

Eusebie Mandicevschi (1857-1929) was the author of twelve Liturgies¹² with different versions of “Tatăl nostru” in which he uses chromatic melodic passages, modulations, imitation, melodic motifs with arpeggios and so on.

Illustration 12: “Tatăl nostru” in C major, by E. Mandicevschi

9 According to *Ibidem*, 62.

10 See in Delion, Pavel. *Imnurile Sfintei Liturghii pentru cor mixt*. Iași 1994, 74.

11 *Ibidem*, 65.

12 According to Nicu Moldoveanu et al. *Dicționar de muzică bisericească românească*. Bucharest: Basilica 2013, 394-395; see also Liviu Rusu, *Eusebie Mandicevschi. Opere alese*. Bucharest: The Music Publishing House 1957, XIV-XV, 119-123.

4. HARMONIC-POLYPHONIC VERSIONS OF BYZANTINE INSPIRATION (20TH CENTURY)

Towards the end of the 19th century, traditional Orthodox psaltic chant began to come to the attention of composers of church harmonic-polyphonic music (A. Podoleanu, T. Georgescu, G. Musicescu, G. Ionescu, I. Bunescu, etc.), being used “either in the form of melodic quotation, or of compositions in the psaltic style”¹³, while in the 20th century harmonic-polyphonic chant based on psaltic melodies, with classical or modal harmonies, became the authentic standard for the Romanian Orthodox polyphonic chant, with a much higher degree of accessibility and permissiveness (D. G. Kiriac, I. D. Chirescu, G. Galinescu, N. Lungu).

Illustration 13: “Tatăl nostru” in D minor, by G. Galinescu (1883-1960)¹⁴

The musical score for "Tatăl nostru" is presented in a standard Western staff format. It consists of two systems of music. The first system includes a vocal line (Soprano) and a piano accompaniment (Piano). The vocal line begins with a fermata on a whole note, followed by the lyrics: "Ta-tăl no-stru ca-re-le ești în ce-ruri sfin-țea-scă-se". The piano accompaniment provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines. The second system continues the vocal line with the lyrics: "nu-me-le Tău Vi-e im-pă-ră-ți-a Ta fa-că-se vo-ia Ta pră-cum în cer". The piano accompaniment continues with similar harmonic patterns. The score uses a 4/4 time signature with a key signature of one flat (B-flat).

The versions of Kiriac (1866-1928), Chirescu (1889-1980) and Lungu (1900-1993) quote the melody of Anton Pann, in mode 5, transcribed in the key of G minor or E minor, with a 4/4 time signature, alternating sometimes with bars in 2/4 and 3/4 beats. If Kiriac and Lungu harmonize according to the principle of accompanied monody, with few elements of imitative free polyphony, Chirescu resorts to a more complex polyphony, with the passing of the melody from one voice to another (measures 4-12), the use of imitation in *fugato*, and strict imitation at the octave (between tenor and soprano), etc¹⁵.

13 Dumitriu 2013, 73.

14 MS 72, f. 14, National Archives of Piatra-Neamț.

15 See more details in Dumitriu 2013, 251.

Illustration 14: "Tatăl nostru" in E minor, by I. D. Chirescu¹⁶

The musical score for "Tatăl nostru" in E minor by I. D. Chirescu is presented in a four-part vocal setting with piano accompaniment. The score is in 3/4 time and features four vocal parts: Soprano (S.), Alto (A.), Tenor (T.), and Bass (B.). The lyrics are in Romanian. The tempo is marked "Meno mosso". The score includes dynamic markings such as "p" (piano) and "mp" (mezzo-piano). The lyrics are: "Ta, pre-cum in cer, A-șa și pre pă-mint Pii-nea noa stră, pii-nea noa".

5. CONTEMPORARY VARIANTS

The musical score for "Tatăl nostru" in F major by Vl. Ciolac is presented in a four-part vocal setting with piano accompaniment. The score is in 3/4 time and features a Solo Soprano (S.), Soprano (S.), Alto (A.), Tenor (T.), and Bass (B.) parts, along with piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked "Adagio". The title "13. Tatăl nostru" is prominently displayed. The lyrics are in Romanian. The score includes dynamic markings such as "p" (piano) and "rit." (ritardando). The lyrics are: "TA - TĂL NO - STRU, CA - RE - LE EȘTI ÎN CE - RURI. M-m NO-STRU, CA-RE-LE EȘTI ÎN CERURI, SFIN - ŢEA - SCĂ - SE NU - ME - LE TĂU, VI - E".

Illustration 15: "Tatăl nostru" in F major, by Vl. Ciolac¹⁷

I have included in this category newer musical compositions of the Lord's Prayer, in which there can be found separately or in combination all the elements presented above (homophony, polyphony, classical or modal harmonies, psaltic or original monody accompanied, Slavic recitative, substantial lyrical pieces in Western style, etc.): The composers include Vladimir Ciolac (b. 1956), Dan Mihai

16 In Ioan D. Chirescu, *Cântările Sfintei Liturghii*. Bucharest 1972, 81.
 17 Vladimir Ciolac, *Liturghia*. Chişinău: Pontos 2004, 35.

Despite some controversy, I notice in the Romanian cultural space a peaceful balance of “tradition-innovation” (the equivalent of “psaltic – harmonic-polyphonic”), of coexistence and even of overlap.

From the psaltic repertoire the most popular version of the “Our Father” in Romanian is the mode 5 setting by Anton Pann, performed in many churches by all faithful participants, and from the harmonic-polyphonic repertoire, within the Divine Liturgy and Sacrament of Holy Matrimony, the versions by P. Frunză (harmonized by Nicu Moldoveanu), or by of V. Ciolac, C. Porumbescu, and so on are preferred; for concert programmes or harmonic-polyphonic competitions, contemporary versions are sought after, extensive works with difficult melodic passages and harmonies (for example, Irina Odăgescu-Tutuianu and Felicia Donceanu).

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