

MUSIC IN ORTHODOX DIVINE SERVICES

by Dr. Ivan Gardner

The realm of criticism of church singing has not received the love and attention of either the precentors or the faithful. As a result, literature in this field is not distinguished with wealth. Nevertheless, in the interest of the education of the faithful in matters of church life, this question cannot be passed over.

The article presented here is part of a whole cycle of lectures on the question of the esthetics and ascetics of church art, and in particular, of church singing.

Instrumental Music and Orthodox Prayer

The subject of the admittance of instrumental music into Orthodox Churches, has, for a long time, agitated the minds of many zealots of church beauty, and it was not unknown to some of our clergy. Diverse reasons have frequently been offered and put forth as to why instrumental music cannot be permitted in our Divine services; one is that we must praise God with a living voice and not with inanimate instruments. Nevertheless, all these explanations of reasons have not satisfied those who asked.

The arguments of proponents of instrumental music can, in general, be set forth as follows:

Music is a high and noble art. In listening to music a person can more readily come into a prayerful mood and even into prayerful delight (ecstasy). Instrumental music is richer in sounds than is vocal, and thus can act more strongly upon the emotions of the listeners. And, it is easier to pray while listening to beautiful music, for, then the soul hovers, as if on wings, in celestial spheres, and the entire person is as if transformed into prayer. 'While listening to the wondrous music, I pray,' the supporters of such a view (especially women) like to repeat. We must bring as a gift to God all the very best, and what is the best, the most beautiful, noble and pure, if not harmonic sounds? And what is better: the dissonant singing of a nasty little choir, or the sounds, if not of an organ, then at least of a simple, good harmonium? Of course, the sounds of a harmonium are more beautiful, harmonic and decorous than the nasal singing of church chanters with bad voices. When they sing dissonantly, the listener cannot pray, for he is constantly irritated by the dissonance of the singing. He is in an irritable mood, becomes angry and unwillingly leaves the church where he has found neither prayerful, nor esthetic satisfaction. The conclusion from this is that Orthodox Divine services would gain much if instrumental music was admitted into them.

This is the manner in which the supporters of music in Divine services speak. Let us note that in this, they especially like to cite the example of Roman Catholics and Protestants. Their arguments usually seem so convincing that Orthodox Christians who strictly adhere to the established, exclusive practice of vocal singing are, for the greater part, left only to cite Tradition.

Nevertheless, the above cited arguments for the benefit of instrumental music meet with a very strong rebuttal in that realm in which, unfortunately, those who advocate its introduction never look. This is the realm basic to a Christian's life: precisely, the realm of the *inner spiritual life*.

Our word "ascetic" instills a certain terror in even pious people. For many, it conjures up a picture of a struggler, macerated by fasts, vigils, reclusion, and spiritual struggles. The Greek word *áskesis*, however, does not have that narrow connotation which is

ascribed to it. *Áskesis* simply means: "exercise" [as in athletic training], and, expressed in contemporary language, *spiritual training* or, exercising unto virtues. In its wider meaning, it means to be occupied with the directing of one's inner life. Therefore *áskesis* is accessible to each person to a varying degree. Even restraining oneself from anger, as from a passion, is already *áskesis*, asceticism. Therefore, it is not necessary to become frightened if I say that the reason for forbidding musical instruments in Orthodox churches is rooted in Orthodox asceticism. And here, one can perceive the difference of Orthodox asceticism from the asceticism of Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, both of which have allowed musical instruments as a supplement, and sometimes as a replacement for vocal music in their church services. Incidentally, we shall not be particularly examining the asceticism of Roman Catholicism or Protestantism, for this would detract us into an altogether different realm. We shall touch upon it only to the degree necessary. Those who advocate the introduction of instrumental music into Orthodox Divine services quite plainly think and feel in a non-Orthodox manner.

Let us try to look at the question we touched upon from the ascetic (in the broad sense of the word) point of view.

Church hymnology is that material which is fore-appointed by the Church for singing during Divine services and by means of which the thoughts and feelings of the faithful *are guided in prayer and in the spiritual reception of the feast being celebrated*. Among the hymnology there are many hymns which, in expounding Church teaching, act upon the mind; there are those which appeal to the worshippers themselves, calling them to some action, to do a certain thing (e.g., the *stichera* "Come, O faithful, let us do God's deeds in the world," etc.), that is, they act upon the will. There are those which have the aim of calling forth a definite spiritual condition such as feelings of joy, etc. Finally, there are also hymns which are *prayers* in the literal sense, that is, hymnody in which speech is appealed to God.

One who is present in church during a Divine service must hear what is being read or sung on the *kliros* [the area reserved for the chanters], for it is precisely by this *kliros* material that the Church guides the prayer and spiritual condition of the faithful.

In the Church, everything has as its aim the salvation of man; and thus, both dogmas and liturgical actions have a moral value. This aspect of all the things which have a relationship to church life, was noted by the Apostle Paul: "Since you are so eager to possess spiritual gifts, strive to excel in the edifying of the Church."¹

This gives direction for all church art, as a means of edification is possible only in a fully conscious, definite expression of thought. Mood (disposition of mind), as such, does not edify, but can only favorably prepare the soil for the reception of edifying thoughts.² St. Basil the Great expressed this thought:

"The Holy Spirit knew that it is difficult to lead mankind to virtue, that because of inclinations to pleasure, we are negligent of the correct path of life. What does He do about this? To the teachings, He admixes the pleasantness of melody, so that together with what is pleasant and melodious to the hearing, we receive in an unobservable manner what is also beneficial in word."³

Thus, singing has a great psychological significance in preparing the soil to receive the word. It leads the feelings in a certain direction, it "helps heart-felt attention."⁴ To neglect the psychological aspect of church singing, we cannot but go dangerously into the realm of Church art by a completely false path. It is true that the strict strugglers of the first centuries regarded singing *per se* in a negative manner. In their view, it detracted the

mind from inner collectedness and by this, deprived prayer of its main direction - collectedness, of locking up the mind in the heart, of its full logical consciousness, of concreteness of ideas which pass in the mind of the worshipper.⁵ This, however, was a strict view of the strugglers who had wholly submerged themselves into *mental activity*. At that same time, we see the flourishing of chanting in the city churches, which was very varied and ornamented the Divine services. Moreover, the cited words of St. Basil the Great indicate that even he, a strict ascetic, considered singing to be indispensable for Divine services, but only as an auxiliary element.

A word which fully transmits definite ideas and images, acts not only upon the mind, but also upon the feeling, the heart. A certain, known consequence of these images, ideas, etc., evokes a known spiritual reaction upon them - as a result, a certain mental disposition or mood is created. Try, for example, to read even several *troparia* of the Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete, and then several *troparia* of the Canon of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross: two completely different moods will be created in you. Each of these moods is evoked by a change of *completely definite ideas*, presented in the hymnology you have read. You can clearly realize *why* precisely this, and not another mood was formed in you.

Your thought, guided by the words of the hymnology, already goes clearly and logically in the direction which you have definitely recognized. The frame of mind is a general reaction to the assimilation of an idea less concretely than the word of the hymnody; it seeks a more general expression for itself than the word, and finds it in sound: in melody. The latter more saliently shades the *general sense* of the words, the basic character of our reaction to ideas is the character of mood. It augments the sensible word with yet a new property: a mental "tone". A melody in itself can express an emotion, *but it cannot express any kind of concrete conception* and therefore, *it cannot in itself edify*. A melody receives a definite meaning only in unison with words, to which, by virtue of this, it subordinates itself.⁶

In the West, the text plays a subordinate role. This, it seems, appeared as a consequence of the ascetics of Roman Catholicism in general, and in particular, the spurning of the edifying aspect of Divine services. Already in the fourteenth century, the notion of "wordless praise to God"⁷ had become firmly established there, i.e., prayer from which the concreteness of ideas is excluded. Here, the mind has no kind of work, and emotion is moved forth into the foreground, obscuring everything by itself. Thus, this wordless prayer of music alone becomes indefinite, almost impersonal; this is simply a *nervous condition* which leads to the spiritual condition of *delusion* [*plani* (Greek); *prelest* (Russian)], of emotion and imagination. And this is the direction toward which are striving those who think that they actually pray while listening to [or performing] beautiful music, or say that they can pray (and come to ecstasy?) from the music in Roman Catholic or Protestant churches.

Let us define and evaluate this spiritual condition from an Orthodox point of view.

What requirements does Orthodox asceticism set forth in order that our prayer be correct?

First of all, *consciousness*.

"While praying, *confine your mind to the words of the prayers*, and receive what they say with your heart." "Strive to clear out the conscience so that the matter of prayer will *occupy all your attention* ... say your prayers, *diligently submerging yourself in them* and be careful in every way that they come from the heart ... do not allow your attention to be distracted anywhere, or your thoughts to fly aside."⁸ "Intelligent or inner prayer comes

when a worshipper, *having gathered his mind* inside the heart sends from there, not vocally, but by a silent word, its prayer to God, glorifying and thanking Him, contritely confessing one's sins before Him, and beseeching Him for the spiritual and bodily benefits one needs. It is necessary to pray not only with word, but also with the mind, and not only with the mind, but also with the heart, *so that the mind may clearly see and understand* what is taking place in word, and the heart may feel what the mind apprehends. *All this in totality is real, actual prayer*, and if there is nothing of this in your prayer, then it is either imperfect prayer *or not prayer at all.*"¹⁰

This is the kind of firm sentence pronounced on "prayer without words" (such as prayer of music alone), by Orthodox asceticism!

The matter is even more serious in a case where someone wants to introduce music into Divine services, exclusively for "the creation of a prayerful mood" or "ecstasy"...

Of course, music is capable of bringing one to ecstasy, when all feelings and all thoughts are truly abated, when a person is possessed by an ineffable condition of delight, and there begins a *supposed* "praying without words," by sound alone, and a person wholly gives himself up to the enchanting sound of the music.

Nevertheless, such a condition is diametrically opposed to the Orthodox condition of prayerfulness. It can be referred to in the category of "enthusiasms" (or, "zeals").

Truly: what is an enthusiasm? In essence, an enthusiasm is bringing oneself into a condition of ecstasy with the help of external means which usually act upon the nervous system. Thus ecstasy is received by the enthusiastic-one as a blessing of Divine Grace. But this is a deceitful condition; it is that which, in the ascetic language is called "delusion" [*plani*; *prelest*], i.e., self-deceit, a false, erroneous definition of one's own spiritual condition.¹¹

An illumination of Divine Grace is an act that is external in relationship to a person, and it comes to pass unrealized by the will; it does not take root in the nervous system and thus cannot be called forth by external means, as the Roman Catholics and Protestants strive to do. The prayerful ecstasy of an Orthodox struggler, "when all earthly feelings are abated," does not proceed from the struggler himself, but is an action of God's Grace in him, that is, it proceeds from God. A struggler standing in prayer does not excite his nerves, leading them to an unhealthy agitation at which hallucinations can begin or, in general, the logical current of thoughts is violated. Sectarian-enthusiasts wish to "grab" such an illumination, as if forcibly bringing themselves to it, while missing the sole path to it - the cleansing of the heart.¹³

After an excursion into the realm of comparative ascetics, it is evident that singing, or music without words, is a force which acts especially on our nervous nature, and if not bringing one to ecstasy, then in any case, leading up to it. In other words, one attains to a certain degree that which is attained by enthusiasm.

Thus, prayer without words, of music alone, is not prayer at all,¹⁴ and the introduction of music into Divine services only for the sake of creating a mood is simply a departure from Orthodox prayerfulness and Orthodox piety, and by that, from Orthodoxy (for, it is impossible to separate dogmatic teaching from the basis of life formed upon it, i.e., of moral teaching, and this latter from its practical realization.)

Of course, when lay people, listening to Divine services in a language which they don't understand, are deprived of the possibility to *consciously* participate in it, the admittance of instrumental music is fully natural and even unavoidable. Unfortunately, the attitude in favour of introducing instrumental music has infiltrated into the midst of the

Orthodox. We have many adherents of "church *music*" (even if purely vocal) instead of church *hymning* [chanting].¹⁵ The general departure from Orthodox piety, from "churchliness", the indefinite wandering in the chaos of often baseless independent "convictions", the proud refusal to seek for them a firm support in Orthodox piety, facilitate the possibility of such phenomena (of Herculean pillars of religious composers) as, for example the "liturgy" for choir ... and *orchestra!* (of Grechaninov).¹⁶

And so, Orthodoxy requires unconditionally conscious prayer; it does not permit deliquescence or indefiniteness into this realm. *Orthodox hymnody must unfailingly edify*, and if sound is used - vocal music - then it is merely employed to help attract the "heart's attention". It is true that the melody, separated from the text, can evoke in us a certain disposition (mood): sad, joyous, solemn. In this, however, our mind does not receive a single concrete image, not one definite idea which would morally edify. Only the *word* can do this.

All music, every hymn in church, therefore, cannot be other than, first of all, oral. Music in itself, no matter how beautiful or elevated it might be, cannot be prayer and cannot even co-operate with it, if it does not grow organically from the text itself - just as simple meditation cannot be a prayer even though it is pious. The latter suffers from another extreme, a full absence of the participation of the heart.

Basic melodies of our church hymnody are created, as is known, by whole generations of highly inspired chanters who constantly abode in the struggle of prayer, and thus have transmitted in sounds precisely what was demanded as a complement of the word. Therefore, we value the ancient chants although we often simply do not understand them. Here the melody is inseparable from the text. It subjects itself to it both in rhythmic - in the division of the musical phrase - and in the melodic. This is especially clearly reflected in the great *znameny* chant, where the chanter, having at his disposal a significant number of established melodic phrases - tones - can, by their help, correspondingly execute one or another thought of the text, in agreement with that spiritual tone in which he received it. This was free creativity which came from both the mind and the heart. (Contemporary polyphonic compositions are, for the greater part, programmed, i.e., they are written on an earlier thought-out plan with the aim of interpreting what is understood in - and not with the aim of accepting - a given text.)

If we were to come to a heterodox church and begin to listen to the music, we could be struck by the majestic thunder of the organ, the harmonious singing. We would feel that a whole tempest of emotions has arisen within us. But could we give ourselves an account of them? No, we felt solemnity and emotions, but we cannot clearly explain to ourselves what has touched us so, or *about what we wish to pray*. Often for those leaving a [heterodox] church, a melody remains in the ears for a long time and the mind sometimes semi-consciously repeats it, but the text does not penetrate into the soul. Is this correct? Is this edifying? Does this not prove that music has not aroused any concrete ideas? One may wish to express this pleasant condition with words, but words cannot transmit it with exactness, for it is *indefinite*.

Such, it seems, are the true reasons for not admitting instrumental music into Orthodox Divine services, reasons which rest upon Orthodox prayerful asceticism.

The Psychology of Melodic and Partitura Church Singing

Now that we have touched upon the question of the effect of instrumental music on people, and have examined it from the point of view of Orthodox prayer, it is opportune to pass on to the examination of choral, vocal music in our Divine services. Each singer who

participates in Divine services has, by that, obliterated himself to prayer and edification, and thus, in the examination of this question, we must base ourselves on an *ascetical-psychological* standpoint.

I must defend myself: I am not preparing to decide anything definitively, to establish any kind of dogmas in the field of Church hymnody. My aim is merely to note the basic principles necessary for the appraisal of the prayerful and edifying merits of one or another type of singing. I already foresee some perhaps even sharp objections concerning all that I have said. But I ask objectors to note well: I am making my appraisal from only one standpoint - that of prayerfulness and ascetics, the principles of which and their relationship to music, I have already outlined.

Toward the end of the 16th century, the *kliros* of the Orthodox Church in Russia began to be marked by that [physical] displacement which took place at the end of the 17th century, and which, in the 18th century, finally succeeded in tearing away the living bond of [Russian] church singing with sempiternal Traditions, which were carefully guarded by the best masters of hymnody. Only in some places was a thin thread of Tradition maintained. This displacement was the appearance of harmonic (choral) singing also called *partitura*, that is, executed in parts. This singing came to replace the *melodic* form of singing, where all singers sing the melody; the latter form of singing is also called *unison* singing. At the beginning of the 19th century, the Russian church almost universally replaced melodic singing with *partitura*, but the other Orthodox churches (Greek, Serbian, Bulgarian, etc.) retained their ancient melodic forms. Only in the most recent times has multi-part singing begun to be grafted into the Serbian church rather successfully. But even that has taken place only in the largest cities, and not without the closest participation of Russians.

We will not dwell on the historical conditions of the development of this type of singing, of its character in one or another epoch. We are also not much interested now in the question of from where and how it appeared or which were its instigators. I want to try to appraise this manifestation in essence, not paying particular attention to the style and musical value of this type of singing. Therefore, leaving the history of church singing and theory of music (as much as is possible in fulfilling our task), let us delve into the psychological realm. For, it is possible to satisfactorily appraise any phenomenon which touches upon the spiritual side of a person, only if one has first studied the spiritual movements which have accompanied these phenomena. In the given case, in order to appraise one or another method of singing, it will be perfectly natural for us to appraise the spiritual phenomena which are evoked in a person by a certain type of singing.

We saw from the words of St. Basil the Great, that Orthodoxy does not ignore the esthetic element. It only makes use of it as a means of edification.

Since we have seen that the necessary condition for edification and prayer is consciousness, we can already, to a degree, establish a certain criterion for the appraisal of the prayerful merit of methods of singing.

Every one of us has become so accustomed to choral singing that it would seem to us strange, at least, to hear a solemn Divine service without a choir. A choir, even though primitive, even of three voices, has become a most indispensable appurtenance of our Divine services, Thanksgivings, Blessings of Homes, etc.), when a priest and a chanter are chanting, even here we do not hear unison, but, at best, parallel thirds. Unison singing seems to us to be too tedious and not beautiful. No one would argue against the fact that choral singing, even simple parallel thirds is much more varied.

It seems to me, on the basis of decades of observations of the life of Orthodox Christians not of Russian nationality, that this is very much a matter of habit. Everything is relevant: I have had occasion to speak of this with Orthodox, church-minded Greeks and Serbs. My conversations were with very musical people who liked and knew European music and were enthralled with beautiful Russian secular choirs. At the same time, however, they completely rejected our (Russian) choral church hymnodies!¹⁷ They are moved to compunction while singing hymnodies with their melodies, which we are unaccustomed to. A choir's chordal effect, which strikes us as breathtaking, evokes in them, *in church*, a feeling of awkwardness and perplexity. On the other hand, chromatic, ingenious melody based on other musical laws than our (Western, Russian) music, says much to their heart. I will relate a personal experience: about ten years ago, Serbian church chanting evoked only curiosity in me; I found it original, but not very beautiful. Now, however, each day, I find in it new and more beauties, a profound, sincere compunction, a simple, but, in the highest degree, noble majesty. So also with Greek chanting: once on Mount Athos, when my mental condition was prepared by the setting, by all that I saw and experienced, it (the chanting) moved me to compunction to the very depth of my soul, having brought forward with unusual clarity, the sense and mood of the words being chanted.

Aside from habit, the general approach to church art also has great significance.

While not denying *any* merits to choral singing, we nevertheless cannot allow just any kind of choral works onto the *kliros* just because they have the text of the Divine service.

Here we have two types of church singing: melodic and harmonic.

In melodic singing, all the singers sing the melody in chanting a certain Divine service text. Unified with the word, it is the expounder of the feeling concealed in the text and of the singer who is advancing it (the melody) to enhance the words with the melody. All the singers, singing one melody concentrate all their attention on the text and are penetrated with one feeling. The Holy Fathers wrote with praise about this type of singing.¹⁸

In many-voiced harmonic singing, a new element enters into the process of expounding feeling: the chord (or what in principle is the same, a casual joining of several sounds).¹⁹ The chord, whether it is a simple interval, an accompaniment of the melody by another voice in certain intervals, or a casual harmony of several voices in various tones, already brings to singing a new element, *coloring*. Feeling, which is directly expressed in a melody, cannot now flow so directly. Attention is not concentrated only on the coloring of the melody, but must also linger on the harmony of the accompaniment demanded for it.

Musical science distinguishes two types of harmonic composition: *homophonic* and *contrapuntal* [*counterpoint*] composition. In the first, the harmony is obtained from a purely harmonic accompaniment of the melody, in parallel intervals;²⁰ in the second, the harmony is obtained by means of a casual (accidental) joining of various voices, each leading to its own independent melody, but which fall into place through the main, basic melody - the *cantus firmus*.

Let us examine these two cases from the point of view of the psychology of the singer. We will take the polyphonic (contrapuntal) composition first.

In a polyphonic (contrapuntal) composition, we have two main factors: one of them is already known to us - the melody. The basic, inviolable melody, the so-called *cantus*

firmus, is the direct expression of our spiritual mood, given sense by the words. (According to the opinion of certain authoritative researchers, this basic melody was called, in old Rus', "the path").²¹

But this main melody (which has its own coloring characteristic to it) is accompanied, you see, by other melodies which harmonize with it. What is the psychological nature of these accompanying melodies? Are they also a direct, sincere expression of feeling? Do they allow the singer to yield to the text?

The very nature of these auxiliary melodies (in musical terminology, *counterpoints*) does not speak in favour of this. These melodies are subordinate. A division of attention will necessarily arise in those who are singing them: on the one hand, there is the necessity to express their own mood in sound; on the other hand, they must choose these sounds obligatorily equaling the *cantus firmus*. But in this, they will relegate to second place that which is most important in church singing: the organic tie of the melody with the text. This tie is attained in full measure only by a voice carrying the *cantus firmus*. As a consequence of this, there is created a transportation of attention to the beauty of sounds and away from the consciousness of the spiritual, prayerful condition.

Striving for an enhancement of the *cantus firmus* (i.e., the basic melody) has always existed among the people. We know examples of popular counterpoint in, for example, traditional [Russian] folk songs, where there is almost always an original polyphonic accompaniment to the basic melody. We know about the system of supporting voices, the various versions of the hymn "By the Waters of Babylon" which often consisted of definite interweaving melodies.²² For the greater part, these supporting voices (second parts) poured directly from the soul of the singers. This can be seen by the fact that these supporting voices usually do not present a systematic accompaniment of the basic melody, but are precisely supporting voices, merely variations of the basic melody. By virtue of this circumstance, what is polyphonically sound has the same coloring as the *cantus firmus* (*basic melody*).²³

This feature of accompanying the main melody with supporting voices which reflect the mood of the one who is singing, however, is inherent exclusively to native genius. The singer is wholly engrossed with what he is singing; he presents his feeling parallelly to the presentation of the one singing the *cantus firmus*. He does not even think about where to carry his voice but carries it instinctively.

It is another matter when one approaches counterpoint supporting voices with a pre-conceived attitude, with the intention of giving it a supporting voice. Then the living feeling is screened by reasoning, which directs the voice of a singer into one of another interval. The supporting voice becomes extravagant and artificial ...

Every feeling which does not arise itself by sincere movement of the heart, but which one strives to elicit, is already deprived of directness and sincerity. It is contrived. It is then willy-nilly subordinated to conventions, to rules which have been earlier worked-out and, therefore, in such emotions there is none of what is most important: *creative* vital strength. For, every sincere, spontaneously arising feeling seeks external manifestations for itself, *and creates forms of expression for itself*; in other words, it is *creative*. Thus, for true creativity there are no definite laws: these laws pour forth themselves on the basis of creativity.

Feeling, confined within a frame, does not create. For it, definite forms are ready and it remains only to mold itself in these forms. Thus, pre-conviction, convention, will never express real feelings. It is unavoidably experienced in very clever, but artificial and,

therefore, non-creative flights, works of many learned composers. There, beauty of external form very often replaces the absent directness and beauty which creates form and feeling for itself.²⁴ During the execution of a written work, singers are compelled to divide their attention: it is necessary to feel the text, and at the same time to sing the notes, worrying about correct singing of the intervals. Thus, the singing becomes fettered and unfree.

In a homophonic composition, in counterbalance to the coloring of the combination of various melodies, there appears a coloring of the chord, or what in essence is the same - the result of successive chords (sounding) - the coloring of a certain harmonic sequence.

In a chordal accompaniment of a melody, the accompanying voices usually lose all expression. The melodic coloring is completely absent among the voices which hold the common tones, or the bass. Compel any one from among the middle voices to sing his part: what an absurd melody is obtained! These voices are calculated only to produce *in totality* with other voices, a certain effect.

The accompaniment of the melody by parallel intervals, for example, with sixths or thirds, will, in essence change the matter little. For, the accompanying melody in this case is, in some way or other the basic melody re-written a third or a sixth higher or lower. Revolving in the limits of the tetrachord of a different key, it has, naturally, a completely different coloring and, consequently, expresses a somewhat different nuance of feelings. For example, the beginning of the *Dogmatikon* in the Third Tone of the great *znamenny* chant revolves in the limits of the tetrachord *mi-fa-sol-la*, where the order of the tones and semi-tones (from bottom up) will be: $\frac{1}{2}$ -1-1. The accompaniment of this very melody "in thirds" (i.e., a third higher) in the limits of the tetrachord *sol-la-si bemolle-do* is: 1-/-1. But the higher sound will be heard. Yet in the 16th century in Rus', experiments were carried out in harmonizations of original melodies, the so-called "three-lined singing." Contemporaries were not satisfied with it, finding that the accompanying voices too overshadowed the accustomed melody which spoke so much to their hearts.²⁵

Also, in harmonic singing, the singer will experience two feelings: compunction from the words of the text which give sense to the melody, and a purely musical pleasure. According to the degree of his spiritual maturity, either the first or the second feeling will predominate in him. But the one accompanying the melody, the "second", will, in addition, feel the full necessity of equaling the voice which leads the *cantus firmus* (basic melody). And again, the attention of the one accompanying the melody will concentrate more on correctly taking the second part. The singers who sing the middle parts will not be able to place all their soul into the words sung by them, by virtue of the inexpressiveness of their parts.

The action of melody and harmony are different. The melody seems to seize, enflame the soul and draws it after itself. Harmony acts as if hypnotizing, enchanting. Melody can illustrate a thought, seize it, lead it after itself, while the harmony is not in a condition to do this. It can only present a mental tone, a mood; the character of which depends upon the harmonies preceding and following it.²⁶ Harmony does not possess that flexibility for transferring feeling, which is possessed by the melody.

Let us take, as an example, the melody of the Sixth Tone, familiar to everyone. Its traditional harmonization is of a sharply expressed minor character with ascents into major. But write under each sound of it, not a sixth downward (-a minor upward), which will give the melody a minor character, but a minor third downward. Your hearing will quickly define this minor third as the upper third of a major triad. Harmonize the melody

in major (having taken re for the fifth triad *re-si-so* instead of the double tonic - key note - of the triad *re-la-fa-re*) and you will see how the character of the melody itself is sharply changed to non-recognition; you will receive it completely differently. Instead of a compunctionate, tender character, you will hear a solemn hymnody resplendent with joy.

Harmony has completely changed the coloring of the melody.

Were the moods contained in the melody itself? Of course, it was dependent upon the melodist to give, with his voice, one or another nuance to the words, depending on the basic feeling found in the text. I have occasioned to hear superior singers who have penetrated the sense of the text they were singing, who with one and the same tonal melody gave one another, sometimes almost contrasting nuance.²⁷

Before World War I, suggestions were made that the harmonizations of the *stikhiras* (i.e., the various verses to the hymns at Vespers and Matins) be conformed to the text, but due to the technical difficulties, this suggestion was never brought to life.²⁸

And so, full expressiveness of feeling belongs to the melody. Preference must be given to melodic singing for prayerful value and, in relationship to the singers themselves. For then, they all are guided in their feeling by one melody, not distracting themselves with the necessity of singing secondary parts which express nothing. It is precisely in the singing of a melody that a singer can, in Chaliapin's expression, sing words, at a time when singers who are singing other parts will be compelled to sing only notes.

Thus, having stood upon an ascetic-prayerful point of view, we must acknowledge great prayerful value in melodic, unison singing, and not in polyphonic [harmonic]. For, the former more flexibly expresses a person's feeling and, moreover, a *conscious* feeling. Here, the mind, in voicing the word, is combined with the feeling made by the melody, giving to the feeling that consciousness and definiteness which Orthodox Christian teaching about the nature and model of prayer demands. Nothing could be more erroneous in relationship to Orthodox prayerfulness, than various compositions where everything is based on a "mystical combination of harmonies", which come close to the Western "prayer without words" of Durandus, where the text is introduced only because in the Orthodox Church, it is "not accepted" to sing without words. Otherwise, authors of such compositions would have introduced singing without words (which in part has already been done by some).

In the Orthodox Church, there are no performers and no public. There are only *worshippers*. They are in two groups: the servers who are leading the *worshipping* of the people present, guiding the prayers of those present; and the laity, who are *worshipping* in the temple under the guidance of the clergy. According to the rules of the Church, chanters are not included in the category of laity: they are also entrusted with the guidance of the laity in prayer, while at the same time praying and being edified themselves. The Grace-filled moral aim of the Divine service is attained only in a prayerful union of all those present in church. In antiquity all the people sang, singing the refrains to the verses read by the reader, and all the known hymns.

Congregational singing always creates an immense impression and truly takes hold of and unites everyone in *common prayer*, common feeling. But [such singing] is pre-eminently *melodic* unison (monophonic).

This unity and community of prayer cannot be attained in polyphonic (harmonic) singing for the reasons set forth above.

FOOTNOTES

1 I Cor. 14:12; compare 14:3-5.

2 see "Thoughts About Church Singing", In *Novoye Vremya*, #2378. Belgrade, 1929.

3 see his interpretation of the Psalm.

4 Sermon of Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow.

5 see V. Metallov, *Outline of the History of Orthodox Church Singing*, Moscow, 1915, pp. 16, 17.

6 In this regard, I recall a news reporter's interview with Chaliapin. During Chaliapin's last visit to Yugoslavia, a reporter asked him the secret of his enchanting singing. Chaliapin thought a while, then answered: "I think it is that everyone sings notes, while I sing words." This is applicable to church singing. Thus, in Orthodox Church singing, the melody was always subordinated to the text. And if it is to the contrary, than it is not, strictly speaking, *Church* singing, but only service singing, for it expresses not a churchly feeling, but the subjective feeling of individual singers and composers.

7 The words of the medieval writer Durandus: "Praise to God is *unutterable and incomprehensible*; thus, the worshipper pours out his soul in *melody alone*. Melody signifies the joy of eternal life which no word can express. Therefore, the melody is a voice *without definite significance*" (underscoring is the author's, i.e., Dr. Gardiner's).

8 St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain, *Unseen Warfare*, Moscow, 1904, p.197.

9 *ibid.* pp.198-9.

10 *ibid.* pp.193-4.

11 Such is the ecstasy of, for example, the Dervishes of the Mevlevi Order of Islam (the "twirlers"). Bringing themselves to delirium by twirling, they imagine their delirious condition to be divinely illuminated. I have often observed their ceremony, which stupified even the casual spectator.

12 St. Isaac the Syrian, *Ascetical Words*, (Russian edition), Sergiev Posad, 1911, .61, 64.

13 Mt. 5:8.

14 There is a painting by some Western artist: a girl is kneeling in front of a statue of the Virgin Mary and she is playing a violin. The painting is called "Prayer".

15 For example, Archpriest S. Protopopov, *Full-voiced Liturgy in Es-dur for a Large Male Choir*. Leipzig. The foreword to this "liturgy" is important.

16 While I was preparing this talk, I was visited by an acquaintance, a great lover of "church" singing, and we began a conversation on the subject of the church-worthiness of singing. My interlocutor was arguing that it was necessary to introduce, if, not instrumental music, then, in any case "concert singing" in our churches. The public must be attracted," he said. "It is necessary to sing the things that the public likes, or else no-one will come to us. The Roman Catholics have done correctly; they have music. I come to [the Roman Catholic] church and listen to the singing and the music - singular enjoyment! But the other - some sort of tones, chants are drawled out; who wants to hear that?"

When I noted to him that the Church is not a concert hall, that the Church, by its Divine services, guides the faithful in prayer - in a word, I briefly expounded the view expressed in this article, my interlocutor became angry and even exclaimed, "Well, I don't need such a service! I want to listen to good music, good singing - and you are baiting me with edification!" People such as this are, of course, incorrigible.

17 I am speaking of that part of society which lives according to the Church life;

those who have left it, in submitting themselves to the common psychological law, began to be attracted by insignificant compositions of composers who are dead in spirit.

18 "Men and women, the old and young, differing only in sex and age, but not different in chanting, because the Spirit uniting the voices of everyone makes one melody from all of them" (St. John Chrysostom, *Sermon on the Second Verse of Psalm 145*); "All chanting together in church, the men and women, together with the children, and never was singing more pleasing in the Eyes of God .." (St. John Chrysostom, *Sermon on the Feast of the Sacred Chains of the Apostle Peter*); "In your harmonious and melodious love, you chant praises of Christ Jesus and you all comprise one choir, so that filled with unanimous rejoicing in God, you sing unanimously with one voice" (St. Ignatius the God-bearer, *Epistle to the Ephesians*).

19 In the given case, the exactness of the musical-grammatical terminology is not important. It is important for right now that we have a matter dealing not with sound alone, but with the simultaneous appearance of several sounds, which gives a harmony of chromatic shading.

20 Let us note that usually in the harmonization (transposing for choir) of ancient melodic material by learned composers, harmonic composition has been applied most deviously of all and, up to now, almost exclusively. In popular singing, counterpoint predominates.

21 v. Metallov, *Outline of the History of Orthodox Church Singing in Russia*, Moscow, 1923.

22 A. Kastalsky, "Peculiarities of the Russian Musical System". Gosizdat, Moscow, 1923.

23 S. Smolensky, *On the Indication of the Shades of the Execution and on the Indication of the Musical Singing Forms of Church Singing in the "Hook-Writing"*, Kiev, 1909, p.11.

24 We are not speaking here about educated, cultured feeling. Culture does not impede creative capability, but gives it systematization, while avoiding chaos.

25 V. Metallov, p.83.

26 The occurrence of *ison* among the Greeks and Bulgarians does not contradict this. The *ison* is the basic tone of a melody. Greek (and contemporary Bulgarian) singing, based on a different tonal system than the Russian, cannot be harmonized with the preservation of the chromatics inherent in it. It is inevitably lost in harmonization.

27 For example, the *stichera* of Pascha: "Thy Resurrection, O Christ our Saviour" (Sixth Tone) is sung in minor harmonization, even though the general tone of the *stichera* is triumphantly joyous.

26 For example, A. Kastaisky. See his "Practical Guide to the Depressive Singing of *Sticheras*, with the Help of Various Harmonization", Moscow, 1909.