

tional, and its prominence varies in different Old Rite communities, it implies that such views that *musica ficta* is uncharacteristic and foreign to an “uncorrupted” chant tradition are erratic and baseless.⁸ As this phenomenon is common in monophonic chant, it is unreasonable to infer that it would not have been intrinsic to the polyphonic singing from the outset – despite the fact that it was not explicitly indicated in the music.⁹

A GENERAL REMARK ON THE BOOK FORMS OF CHURCH MELODIES

It is a common conception that the chant melodies in certain “canonical” chant books represent the “official” forms of the music, and that it is mandatory to sing everything meticulously as it has been written, whereas a failure to do so will be taken into account in the Last Judgement. However, contemporary church practice – be it Greek or Slavic – demonstrates that this is not observed in reality. In addition, there is no proof that it was observed at an earlier time either; rather the contrary. It seems that the concept of the identity of a melody has usually been much less rigid than most scholars have thought.

HARMONY IN EASTERN SLAVIC CHURCH MUSIC

BACKGROUND

According to documents, singing church music in some kind of harmony was already known in the Eastern Slavic liturgical practice in the 16th century. An early literary reference can be found in the *Čin arhiepisropa Novagoroda i Pskova*,¹⁰ which is a description on the divine services of the St. Sophia Cathedral of Novgorod in the 1540s. It contains remarks of the following kind:

И діаки поють съ верхом ...¹¹

И таж начинают часы, и поют тропари по крылосом с верхом ...¹²

... всенощное по обычаю поют. Стихиры по уставу по знаменью, славникъ с верхом.¹³

8 Symptomatically, after Old Believers had been granted freedom of religion in 1905, which in turn had allowed them to promote their church music in public concerts, press critics such as V. Pashalov” (1917) could accuse them of having corrupted the tradition: “Equally inadmissible is the raised leading tone in final cadences, which is totally foreign to the diatonic nature [of the chants].” (Cited in Morosan 1994, 257.)

9 The “diatonic nature” of the chants as they appear in monophonic sources has been a chief argument for the advocates of archaistic polyphony in condemning the established tradition of polyphonic chant. Hence, much of the controversy appears to have been based on a fundamental misapprehension of the rudiments of music.

10 Golubcov” 1899, 239–262.

11 “And clerics sing *with the upper* ...” (Ibid. 257.)

12 “And then begin the hours, and both kryloses sing the troparia *with the upper* ...” (Ibid. 259.)

13 “... the all-night vigil is sung as usual. Stichera according to the Typikon from

The expression that suggests some sort of polyphonic singing is “с верхом”, which means: something is sung with something “upper”. The real meaning of this “upper” remains enigmatic. It could be a polyphonic counter-voice, but apparently, no written sources for such counter-voices from that time have survived. Perhaps it is a question of doubling. One possibility could be doubling the melody in the upper octave. But since it is improbable that an octave doubling was perceived as being different from the melody, would this have been worth mentioning?

A more plausible explanation is that “с верхом” may refer to doubling the chant melody in another interval than the octave, such as the upper third.

Later on, when singing in harmony became standard practice in the Russian Church, it seems probable that harmonization was carried out in a semi-improvisational manner: by doubling the melody in parallel thirds and attaching a well-sounding bass part. Following this procedure there was no need for polyphonic music materials: it was possible to sing in harmony from monophonic chant books. Thus, when we encounter a monophonic chant book, written in square-notes or normal staff notation, we should not take it for granted that the music was actually sung in unison.

But there survive, in addition to monophonic chant books, also *harmonized* chant sources from the late 17th and early 18th centuries. These sources were written in a style customarily referred to as the *partesny* style. Typically, these settings, often made according to Znamenny Chant or Greek Chant, contain four to eight parts, and the music is generally very florid. It is probably too florid to have been used by amateur choirs or casual church singers. I think that this music stands outside the mainstream.

Some time in the latter part of the 18th century, the copying of these *partesny* chant settings seems to have ceased. The reasons for this are not known. When the monophonic Synodal chant books were being prepared in the 1760s, the project leader, Byškovskij, declared that technically it was possible to print even polyphonic chant books.¹⁴ But for some reason, such books were not printed at that time. Perhaps it was considered unnecessary, as the *partesny* style was going out of vogue, and polyphonic singing was customarily carried out from monophonic materials.

CHANT POLYPHONY IN PRINT

The first polyphonic chant books in Russia were printed by the St. Petersburg Imperial Court Chapel in 1815 and 1830. The earlier publication contains non-changing parts of the Liturgy according to the Court Chant,¹⁵ while the 1830 publication, *Krug prostoġo cerkovnago penija*,¹⁶ is a more or less complete *Court Chant Obihod*. Peculiarly, these chant books are not full four-part settings but

musical notation, the doxasticon *with the upper.*” (Ibid. 262.)

14 Bezsonov” 1864, 42.

15 *Prostoe pēnĭe* 1815.

16 *Krug*” 1830.