

Photios Ketsetzis' Program notes

Author: Arsinoi Ioannidou

Πολυέλεος / Polyeleos

“Δούλοι, Κύριον” by Chourmouziος Chartophylax (c. 1770-1840)

Fourth plagal mode

The name “polyeleos” literally means “a lot of mercy.” The name is derived from the 135th psalm (Septuagint numbering) in David’s Book of Psalms and more specifically from the repeated refrain in each one of the psalm’s 26 stanzas that translates as: “His mercy lasts forever.” This psalm is sung or read during Matins along with the 134th psalm and with selected verses from other psalms during a saint’s feast.

The present musical settings of the 134th psalm “Δούλοι, Κύριον” are composed by Chourmouziος the Archivist (Chourmouziος the *Chartophylax*). A prolific composer, he was an instrumental member of the Patriarchate Committee for the reform of Byzantine music notation and is known mostly for his meticulous efforts to transcribe the complete patrimony of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine chant into the New Method.

Καταβασίαι αργαί / Slow Katavasiai

“Ανοίξω το στόμα μου και πληρωθήσεται” by Petros the Lampadariος (c. 1730-1778)

Fourth mode

Katavasia (in the singular) is the eirmos of the Canon sung during the most important feasts of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary. The name has its origins in the performance practice tradition which dictates cantors should step down, to “katavasis” in the Greek language, from their position at the music stands in order to sing these chants at the center of the church.

The musical setting of the present katavasia “Ανοίξω το στόμα μου και πληρωθήσεται” was composed by Petros the Peloponnesios (c1730-1778) also known as Lampadariος, which means “leader of the left choir” in Greek. Recognized as one of the most prolific composers of the Post-Byzantine era, Petros is additionally renowned for his realizations (exegesis) of the ornamental signs of older melodies and his revisions of earlier music books.

Μακάριος Άνήρ / Blessed is the Man by Petros Lampadariος (c. 1730-1778)

Fourth plagal mode

The large unit which comprises psalms 1, 2 and 3 (Septuagint numbering) in David’s Book of Psalms is called “*Makarios Anir*”. This name stems from the first two words of the very 1st psalm “*Μακάριος Άνήρ*”. According to monastic rite, the biblical Psalter is divided in twenty sections or *kathismata*. A single *kathisma* contains groupings of psalms called *staseis* and each *stasis* consists of one or more psalms. For example “*Makarios Anir*” is the first stasis (psalms 1, 2 and 3) of the first *kathisma* of the Greek Psalterion (Book of Psalms).

The present musical setting is composed by Petros the Lampadarios and abridged by Manuel the Protopsaltes (d.1819). The name bestowed upon Manuel “Proto-psaltes” means in Greek to be the first among the psaltes (cantors) and it is the highest office that a Byzantine ecclesiastic music performer may achieve as the preeminent cantor of the right choir. His credentials are his vocal abilities and a profound knowledge of the repertory and tradition that requires an extensive Byzantine music education as well as years of performance experience. Such a cantor has the absolute responsibility for the selection of pieces and the chanting of the most important hymns.

Καλοφωνικός Ειρμός / Kalophonic Eirmos
“Ἄστρον ἤδη ανατέταλκεν” by Balasios Hiereūs (c.1660)
First mode

The musical genre of *Kalophonic Eirmoi* makes its first appearance in the beginning of the seventeenth century during the Ottoman occupation. The first chant of every ode of the Kanon is called in the singular “*Eirmos*.” During the seventeenth century the *eirmoi* employ kalophonic settings, that is, compositions with extensive melismas and kratemata (musical sections with nonsense syllables) and their use is not exclusively liturgical. The kalophonic eirmoi are regarded to be the first musical samples of the Greek artistic awakening after the fall of Constantinople.

Balasios the Priest is the composer of “Ἄστρον ἤδη ανατέταλκεν”. A prominent music teacher and prolific composer, Balasios interpreted and analyzed the stenographic notation of John Damaskenus (676-756). “Ἄστρον ἤδη ανατέταλκεν” is one of the first compositions in this new genre and it is quite lovely. It refers to the birth of Christ and therefore its character is blissful and panegyric.

Kratema by Petros Lampadarios (c. 1730-1778)

“*Kratema*” which means in Greek “to hold” or “a holding,” indicates a prolonging of a chant’s melody within a Byzantine ecclesiastic music context. The *kratema* are also occasionally referred to as “*terirem*,” a name derived from the nonsense syllables te-ri-rem that accompanied these long sections or independent compositions. The *kratema* is one of the chief characteristics of the *kalophonic* style which flourished roughly at the beginning of the fourteenth century. Sometime after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, a new music book emerged called the “*Kratematarion*” which are a collection of *kratemata* further classified by their respective modes. The present *kratema* is composed by Petros Lampadarios.

“Θεαρχίω νεύματι”
Starting in the first mode

This is a well-known chant sung during Vespers when celebrating the Feast of the Dormition of the Virgin Mary. The text is taken from the so-called Apocrypha, which are stories related to the life story of the Virgin Mary that came down to us not through the New Testament but through oral tradition. Its musical peculiarity resides on the fact that every stanza of the poetic text is sung in a different mode until the eight-mode cycle is exhausted. The modal sequence is: *Protos – protos plagal – deuterios – deuterios plagal – tritos – barys (tritos plagal) – tetartos – tetartos plagal*. The last verse which

functions as the epilogue is sung in *protos* mode so that the modal cycle is complete and the chant then returns to its opening mode (Φουντούλης).

Reference:

All biographical notes and term definitions are taken from:

Τολίκα Ολυμπίας, Επίτομο Εγκυκλοπαιδικό λεξικό της Βυζ. Μουσικής