

СОЦІОКУЛЬТУРНИЙ ВИМІР СУСПІЛЬСТВА: СТАЛІСТЬ ТА ЗМІНА

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CHRISTIAN SONG AS A PRODUCT OF THE CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN CULTURE

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1. Introduction

Music is defined as the art of ordering sounds executed in a given time. A source of sound, such as human voice or a musical instrument may be combined with words, drama, image, dance or gestures [17, p. 496]. Although music has been present in human culture for a long time, it is rarely treated as a primary subject of academic research. The literature of the subject features many statements connected to music, for instance: “music provides a medium for shaping feelings, perception, focus, awareness and real actions” [13, p. 113]. It has gained importance as a vital element of culture which is defined as “the entire human heritage, perfection mastered in a given discipline, high level; cultivation; raising, [...] the Latin noun derives from the verb “colelere” – to cultivate, care for, raise, cherish, look after; celebrate, worship, respect” [3, p. 253-254]. Another literary source explains the word “culture” as “the entire human heritage, developed throughout the history or a specific historical period” [20, p. 390]. The concept of “culture” and, thus, its definition has evolved and taken many forms. It was expressed differently in ancient times, the Middle Ages, romanticism, The Young Poland, the time of the Polish People’s Republic and it is expressed yet in a different manner nowadays. Moreover, culture was frequently put in opposition to other concepts, such as nature. Philosophers and artists of various artistic eras, i.e. Romanticism, the Young Poland or the Young Europe, perceived nature as their source of artistic inspiration, the reflection of emotional experiences, the way of easing their existential pain, the source of everything primal, true and good. They put it in opposition to antique culture, treated as the foundation of suffering, moral decay, the manifestation of everything untrue, artificial and doomed to inevitable material degradation [10, p. 37]. For ages, music has been an integral part of culture which explains the term “musical culture” understood as all cultural phenomena connected to music. It includes such factors as: creative acts, means of communicating music, musical education and its direct reception. Although in every community or era the face of music is different – due to nationality, class or geographical background, these elements impact one another.

The Church has developed its own culture as well, since Thruths of the Faith and multiple

events connected to religion create certain values, standards and patterns of behaviour. Contributing to every sphere of life, Christians create the Christian culture, although in some circumstances they may encounter various obstacles, such as the lack of consent to the display of religious symbols in public places [2]. It must be said that writing “*Evangelii nuntiandi*”, pope Paul VI defined the relationship between Christians’ faith and lives as fundamentally “culture-forming”. Interacting with all kinds of groups and communities, a Christian forms relationships, creates their own culture and expresses through it. It fosters behaviours inspiring artistic activity resulting in wonderful works of literature, architecture and music [7, p. 262]. Creative processes connected to music have their source in human imagination. It develops a person’s attitude towards reality since childhood, it improves sensitivity towards various external stimuli, fosters the attitude of expression, i.e. a person’s own attitude towards others and the world [27, p. 37]. “Song”, present in literary sources connected to sociology, culture sciences, literary studies, pedagogy and musicology, constitutes one of the creative acts. Time and time again, researchers have attempted to respond to this cultural phenomenon present in nearly all kinds of human endeavours [23, p.8]. It constitutes the product of the contemporary Christian culture as being the example of the creative act. Religious songs encourage to study the Holy Bible and other religious texts as well. It includes worship hymns inspired by the Holy Bible and valuable theology. Both, a song and a hymn, contribute to the Christian culture and worship either God or His Saints. Since the 1970s, in Poland there has been a debate on the phenomenon of popular music in church. On one hand, it is criticised for being a superficial form of art, unable to inspire methodological research. On the other hand, it ignites emotions and awe which calls for no need of “*fundamentum in re*”. The discussion is conducted in multiple popular magazines and at academic conferences. It might be stated that, within the area of musical culture and a song itself, this academic imperative has lost its diligence, although, as far as researchers’ interests are concerned, these very concepts have recently gained popularity [19, p.11]. This paper is focused on factors defining music [including religious songs] as a social phenomenon, considering the fact that without human contribution it would not exist – in either a productive or a reproductive form. Some tend to state that music has an autotelic quality, which shall not need the audience or social space. It must be emphasised that music is created men, no matter if only for the author or for the audience as well [13, p. 113]. What helps us determine music as a social phenomenon using religious songs and establish that it has become a social product? The following part of the paper features elements identifying the social quality of music. They include the fact that music is an integral part of culture, also the symbolic culture to be even more precise. Through communicating certain contents it carries meaning, it fosters interpersonal communication, as well as helps communicate with God. The important quality of a song is the fact that it may be perceived as a social relationship, as it facilitates new bonds, interactions and actions undertook by social actors. It incorporates certain normative standards [mentioned above] and social patterns of behaviour. They function in a certain cultural and social order, guiding our

behaviour in given situations connected to creating, recreating and reception of music. Song, as an element of art, has its place in human activity within the social structure due to the music and lyrics. It is determined by the social structure and constitutes a form of reproduction and recreation of this structure. Music is strongly connected to the constant process of cultural and social changes. It fulfils many vital social functions, such as: communication, integration, identifying, ludic, economic and political [13, p. 114]. All these aspects are worth noticing in our reality.

2. Symbolic culture and relationships

Researchers for whom culture is the main area of focus, for instance in anthropological or religious context, are interested in all kinds of relationships established by people connected to the culture of existence, as such bonds are the essence of social and symbolic culture [14, p. 106]. Song may be explained as a product of human cultural activity, which falls into the anthropological aspect of culture [13, p. 115]. Apart from imminent aesthetic qualities, each artistic creation frequently carries an emotional load reflecting the emotional state and the way of perceiving the reality. Hence, a song provides a space for the expression of dynamics for multiple relationships. Nowadays, it appears to be obvious that culture, in all its definitions, cannot be restricted only to a local community. The phenomenon of the popular music culture proves how different inspirations interact with each other and how cultural borders gradually vanish [1, p. 46-47]. The social and cultural role of an artist is to surprise the audience, fight stereotypes, anticipate the outcome of events, connect what is opposite and distant. Frequently, artists tend to create and come up with new forms of social order [15, p. 242]. Although religious songs closely resemble secular pop-culture, they gradually become a vital product of human activity carrying certain meaning. They convey content, symbols and thoughts widely interpreted by the society. Their social and cultural significance, as well as universal character proves in the way religious songs ignite imagination and reach the audience's hearts providing aesthetic experiences. Such works may be defined as a set of meanings connected to a certain tradition, customs, standards and rules concerning the sole process of creation as well as reception [13, p. 115-116]. Moreover, the moral attitude conveyed in religious songs facilitates the proper development of the young generation. One of the important factors connected to this subject is the activity of music bands focused on the Christian culture and song. Their pieces symbolise the idea of "sharing good" and become the model of proper, morally-acceptable social behaviour. Religious songs improve the relationship between the world and God – the transcendental participation of the being. Contents popularised by priests, conductors or organists through religious musical groups aim at the growth of young people in a specific attitude, which shall eventually result in, for instance, accepting the existence of God as a personal being acting as a final and executive force, providing ultimate models and purpose for everything that exists. This being exists in a kind of metaphysical space characterised by a transcendental perspective [16, p. 397].

Frequently, religious songs provide an "educational tool" supporting proper educational and didactic processes. Religious songs tend to have a soothing effect on adolescents who tackle such problems as depression. Nowadays, the number of such people is constantly growing. The development of depression is very often enforced by the up-bringing process of the young person [4, p. 142]. This process is widely understood as all phenomena connected to

how the social background impacts a person and how it shapes his/her personality. Sociology and pedagogy point to the deliberate and conscious nature of the process of up-bringing [17, p. 873]. Apart from their educational quality, religious songs provide a tool for the establishment or development of connection with God or other people – they directly improve a person's emotional growth and education. It includes the impact on a person's psyche, subconsciousness and his/her role in the family and society. Religious songs familiarise young people with the following, vital rules:

- clarity: connecting object with their names and, with time, with their practical function. The distinction between what belongs to the leader of the group and what belongs to the performer is clear. Such a rule eradicates mistakes and bad habits.
- regularity: transferring knowledge in a proper, ordered manner; one taught piece of content must be logically derived from the previous one, without jumping from one subject to another
- autonomy: the leader shall provide conditions enabling autonomous activity of the members of the group, i.e.: logical thinking, practical analysis of actions, problem solving
- connection between the theory and practice: everyone participating in rehearsals should discover that the process of learning is not only art for art's sake
- individualisation: a direct contact between the leader of the group and its member, aiming at paying attention to the member's personality, successes and failures [27, p. 36].

A person whose task is to establish relationships, integrate and shape the group of adolescents should remember not to treat the band as a whole. The leader [a conductor, a teacher or a priest] should differentiate his/her approach in relation to a particular person in case of problems. Such problems include:

- comprehensibility, i.e. presentation of new concepts. They should be shown in connection to the concepts already familiar to the group; abstract terms should be introduced after a kind of sensory presentation so as to start with something close before moving to something distant. The introduced content and requirements should also be graded from the easiest to the most challenging ones.
- effectiveness, i.e. comparing the knowledge and practical skills with the assumed goals for didactic purposes
- durability of knowledge and skills in connection of such factors as memory, motivation, interest in rehearing and knowledge of culture. Addressing several senses results in more satisfactory effects and improved durability of the adolescents' knowledge [27, p. 37].

All the concepts listed above prove the existing and emerging relationships between people and personal development [of the participant – the performer and recipient]. As far as the religious song is concerned, it indicates that the religious context, perceived as an interpersonal relationship between a person and the Absolute, will constitute the proper and suitable type of religion for the particular individual. All other orders “of orientation and objects of worship”, no matter how they are understood by a person, will not only be

insufficient but also inconsistent with human dignity, a person's abilities, nature and structure. The Personal Absolute, understood as the True Existence, Unity, Truth, Good and Beauty, constitutes the "sacrum" or "numinosum", which a person should trust and unite with [16, p. 399].

Every practical, didactic and educational outcome may be defined as an achievement provided that it triggers changes within an individual and that it considers developmental and individual qualities of the person. A song may be defined as means of communication between people which also gives it the social character [13, p. 116]. The relationship between the conductor [teacher] and performer [student] presented above prove that such a relation is commonly known. The assumption may also be applied to the "interaction". In order to define this concept, it is vital to point to the mutual impact of people and phenomena, correlation of more than one actions, acts and pursuits [18, p. 371]. Interactions and bonds forming and uniting a group singing religious songs, as well as the power of music, were researched by such authors as the sociologist Georg Simmel, who, as one of the first, used the word "interaction", took interest in its manifestations, including the musical aspect of human life. As Barbara Jabłońska claims, "for Simmel, music appeared to have a powerful communicative and identity-forming quality". Among other issues, Simmel focused his research on analysing the role of music in the lives of certain ethnic groups" [13, p. 117]. From the sociological perspective, the development of multiple relationships, i.e. structure, forming interactions connected to music are of great importance. Moreover, Jabłońska points to Alfred Schütz – the representative of phenomenology, who claimed that music has a significant impact through gestures and symbols as well. Actions undertaken by actors throughout the musical process are oriented towards one another, supported by substantial amount of musical knowledge and fixed in a wide social and cultural context. It enables music to fulfil the condition of intersubjective communicativity. Mutually oriented actions undertook by actors – musicians, operating within a given social and cultural context and equipped in certain knowledge and skills [or musical culture], as well as streams of consciousness adjusted to each other within the internal time, enable the emergence of musical communication, which frequently takes place on the extra-semantic level. As Jabłońska claims, "Schütz's focus is oriented towards integrative rituals, which enable mutual synchronisation of actions crucial for the reception of music". In order to perform a given piece, it is absolutely necessary for the musicians to understand one another. Such a condition is fulfilled through gestures (e.g. of the conductor) and through creating music primarily within a face-to-face relation. Following this logic, one may observe that similar integrative rituals concern the relationship between the performer and the audience who share the same time and space [13, p. 118]. On the abstract level, each dimension of human culture (including the musical culture) will be made of certain symbolic systems. In every work comprising of text and music, such as song, the language is of great importance, as it stands out among other symbolic systems. It is one of the most profound and highly developed symbolic systems, characterised by a consistent material. Language is considered a tool for all references and meanings – they are available in a given culture as both: articulated communication and its perfect substitutes, such as thinking [1, p. 66-67] – symbolism is, hence, the essence of the musical culture.

3. The social, normative and structural context

Presenting the social quality of music, which is crucial for the whole phenomenon, it may be claimed that the art of sounds is connected to strictly specified normative rules. In a given context, they gain sense and importance, as well as govern the process of interaction. They tell how to behave in a specific social and musical situation. Our behaviour will vary depending on where we are: in an opera, at the disco, at a family gathering or in church, where religious songs are performed. Certain rules condition functioning in the musical world and the complete understanding of the actors – creating and receiving music is impossible without considering its social context [13, p. 118]. The following part of the paper will be devoted to the horizontal and vertical language of culture, including the musical culture, in the context of religious songs. As it requires specificity, the horizontal language is based upon non-verbal signs and words. It concerns the superficial and conventional dimension of communication. The horizontal aspect is responsible for the outer layer of personality – the persona. It governs the space of social exchange. The persona (the performer), its shape and content, is influenced by the tradition and collective forms of communication, clear for the consciousness - the verbal language and norms. Should elements of the subconscious emerge, they are expressed as patterns and accurate behaviour regulated in either specific or magical imaginary. As the psychological functioning of the outer part of an individual is directed towards the society, the collective and outer culture, the symbolic, transcultural (spiritual) aspect of the musical culture language is absorbed automatically and literally (as a sign) from the horizontal position. The horizontal language emphasises collective values and marginalises deeper universal and cultural values, such as: spiritual culture, art, religion. What is more, it highlights individual values, deep forms of expressing symbols and archetypes – the internal life, critical and transcultural experiences [4, p. 343]. The vertical aspect, on the other hand, represents multidimensional symbols pointing to archetypical, universal and transcultural symbols. By a complex, multidimensional symbolism and through presenting the relationships between archetypes and imagination, it provides the alternative for the development directed towards the outer aspect and the expression of collective values. Provided that the “I” structure is mature, the symbolic language pushes the development of the psyche inside and towards deeper cultural and transpsychological meanings. The process of learning and distinguishing the vertical aspect of language, for instance in an artistic work comprising of text and music, such as a religious song, depends on the subjective reception of cultural archetypes and symbols through the process of individualisation [6, p. 345]. The participants of the musical culture (e.g. people performing and listening to religious songs) should be aware of their own illustration of culture perception as considered in the category of culturally and socially regulated patterns of behaviours, acceptable in the given historic time and within a specific cultural background. Usually, actors are able to perfectly recognise a specific situation, for instance listening, and adjust their behaviour to such a situation. Nowadays, as we face the era of modern technologies and the development of media, these rules need to be re-invented. Music transcends traditional contexts – concert halls or religious buildings. It is worth emphasising that contemporary religious music is forced to follow the same market requirements as secular popular music. The understanding and perception of the “true” work of art means the recognition of the institutional and discursive processes

governing the interpretation of such a work as a work of art or a piece of music conveying morally acceptable values and message [13, p. 120]. This understanding and reception is also dependant upon the actors' general knowledge of culture and art, as well as their properly "shaped" aesthetic perception and response.

4. The process and changes within the social life

For centuries, singing has constituted one of the vital elements of social life. It accompanies the humankind in many changes. It is a natural quality, since music is deemed an element of the symbolic culture. Singing is an indispensable element of many crucial events shaping lives of individuals as well as whole societies. Hence, this section of the article might have as well been titled "singing as a social change". Contemporarily, religious song understood as one of musical genres gains popularity among all kinds of audiences. Although it is associated with a secular genre, it became a part of the Christian culture through multiple processes. The adjective "religious" distinguishes it from the traditional form [23, p. 5]. As people are characterised by mind and free will, each activity performed by a person holds a certain specificity. It would be perfect if people kept in mind certain ethical rules [crucial in the context of religious songs] and followed them while undertaking actions [5, p. 294]. Singing greatly contributes to changes taking place within an individual, which shows in the context of the whole society. Throughout ages, having a lasting impact on other persons' (or groups') personalities, shaping their system of beliefs and values in a proper way as well as influencing actions directed towards a given area has been strongly emphasised. For instance, during the Polish Renaissance, the intellectual elite paid much attention to proper morals of teachers. It was a serious matter not only to the Commission of National Education, but to such philosophers as Hugo Kołłątaj and Grzegorz Piramowicz as well [9, p. 29].

Singing and music has become an indispensable part of social changes, including the musical education of the young generation. The process of change considers not only people's lives throughout ages, but also the musical practices. Their structural nature includes continuity and durability of these (cultural) practices. Dynamics and variability, including fluctuation, constitute other qualities of these practices. While there is not enough space for the description of the history of human musical life, it is the area of focus for many musicologists. It is vital to highlight the strong connection between songs and the process of social change [13, p. 122]. The fact that music and singing undergoes constant changes is beyond all doubt. However, it is important to wonder whether the change is linear or directional. Hymns and songs deriving from local musical folklore serve as an intriguing example. The trend of mixing religious and secular elements, which is the case as far as the religious song is concerned, has its roots in the Middle Ages [28, p. 50]. Unquestionably, it may be attributed to the processual nature of social changes. Secular convention to a great extent penetrated liturgical drama, although the issue in the context of musical phenomena has not been yet researched in Poland. This processual nature and infiltration of traditions may be exemplified by multiple contemporary research focused on Christmas traditions, such as carols and rhymes [28, p. 50-51]. Addressing the issue of the linear change within the social system, it may be defined as one-way. It emerges at one stage and moves towards the other. A latter stage may be connected to the improvement of the former one. The directional change indicates that a stage can be the same as the previous ones, which makes it irreversible. There are some proofs confirming that, as

far as the religious song is concerned, both theories of the social development are applicable.

Many researchers searched for examples proving, for instance, the rationalisation process of human practices concerning music, which has progressed throughout the centuries. Among others, they focused on the medieval monasticism, the standardisation of musical notation, the evolution of harmony, the creation of musical instruments, the emergence of polyphony, as well as the construction and structure of orchestras. The mathematical concept of music, connected to some aspects present in the process of rationalisation of the western culture, laid the foundation for these analyses. It provides an example of the understanding of the directional change in music, in which the musical notation has been of great importance. It has gradually been standardised and its origins have been traced back to medieval European monasteries [13, p. 123]. This proof of the evolution of music and organised forms typical of the European culture indicates the dynamic development of the art of sounds throughout all historical periods, as well human activity connected to music and the contemporary religious song, which is an example of a complex phenomenon. Its emergence is inspired by such factors as technological novelties and popular culture. Nowadays, authors employ the popular form of songs and enrich it in terms of ideology, rather than artistic content [25, p. 20]. There are multiple issues exemplifying the linear and directional nature of social change, portraying people's musical lives. Among them there will be the problem of the music market and industry [24, p. 207]. Modern changes taking place within the market are obvious and connected to the technological development mentioned above, as well as possibilities created by the modern media. Some may perceive such tendencies as a threat of commercialisation to the traditional Christian culture, which creates the new kind of society - the mass society dominated by the majority and rejecting the leadership of the elites. In the case of this new type of society, the culture is submitted to people's needs and expectations [12, p. 22-35]. The analysis of this particular dimension of the media culture brings about the question whether the processes taking place within the tradition of religious music result in associating it with the concept of entertainment [Szymański 2014, p. 332-333]. Religious song tends to grow closer to the commercial music in its expression and sound. It takes place due to a certain cultural change driven by constant emergence of new needs of musicians and their audience.

The last, functional aspect of music and song, although it may sound superficial, concerns many functions they serve in the society – they provide a certain institutionalised tool for satisfying social needs. Experts in the field frequently state that it is not always possible to draw general conclusions concerning the purpose of songs for contemporary people. However, it is possible to distinguish a group of songs serving specified tasks accompanying different occasions, such as birthdays, weddings or greeting. Strongly connected to such celebrations and events, they constitute a source of Christian entertainment. For instance, it is true to Christmas songs mentioned in the previous part of the article or songs present in people's everyday lives [23, p. 128-131]. Many songs play vital role in the process of education and up-bringing discussed earlier.

5. Summary

Considering the addressed content and aspect of the social dimension of music [including its product, i.e. religious song], it may be firmly stated that it constitutes a form of a social practice, as it gathers structural factors, defining the nature of the Christian musical culture

[and this society as such]. It is within this culture, where the reproduction of social system and multidimensional relationships between the structural and constructive aspect of human actions, focused on religious music and singing, takes place. We develop spaces for culture and mutual trust in all kinds of environments [11, p. 3]. Practice combines two types of elements: the subjective one, within which works comprising text and music are given meaning and the objective one, representing the context of social and cultural life. Such a situation provides the space for the creation and recreation of a new aspect – human activity showing in musical practice, i.e. a song. It also proves the fact that religious songs, defined as the product of music and the musical culture, are a social phenomenon. This statement is supported by many factors and this article provides merely an introduction to further analysis.

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ХРИСТІЯНСЬКІ ПІСНІ ЯК ПРОДУКТ СУЧАСНОЇ ХРИСТІЯНСЬКОЇ КУЛЬТУРИ

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Представлена інтерпретація музики як соціального явища, що відповідає визначенням соціальним очікуванням і нормативним вимогам. Наголошується на тому, що музика відіграє комунікативну функцію. Створення та відтворення так званої християнської музики розглядається як соціальна практика, що інтегрована у структуру інститутів культури та релігії. Ця соціальна практика поєднує в собі два типи елементів: суб'єктивний, в рамках якого творам, що містять текст і музику, надається зміст і об'єктивний, що представляє контекст суспільного та культурного життя. Така ситуація забезпечує простір для створення та відтворення нового аспекту – прояву людської діяльності у музичній практиці. Це також доводить той факт, що релігійні пісні водночас є продуктом музичної культури та суспільним явищем, що може аналізуватися соціологічно.

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