

Childrens Repertory

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Motto:

Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises.

Iacov 5:13

1. Song for children; theological motivation.

God finds pleasure in the song of love of good heart and true faith. Singing help us to show Him our love from the bottom of our heart and express the most profound thoughts and emotions of our inside being.

When we sing we honor God and we open our souls for Him, we show the message of God's love for saving souls.

Our redeemer left us the most concrete image of serving others with a good heart, when He compared children with Christians, He said “ and said, “Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and became like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.”

The teacher understands the way children behave and appreciates in the right way the limits of their age. Even mature people some times (re)act in the wrong way. “But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market places, who call out the other children” Matthew 11:16

Jesus proves that He loves children when He said ”And who ever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward”.

This is the reason why Jesus receives children, He even rebukes His disciples because they considered that little ones bother Him “...Let the children come to me and don't stop them ...“

Jesus proved that he loves children because He uses their example to teach adults “ Taking a child, He set before them, and taking him in His arms, He said to them ...”

That illustrated in the most encouraging way that Jesus is praised even by little children. “ and said to Him, “do You hear what these children are saying?” And Jesus said to them, “Yes; have you never read, *out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise for yourself?*”

When children sing many people have the chance to listen the message of the gospel. Singing is a way of worship and is well known that in all times believers followed God. In times of joy, in hard times and times of hope, believers sing hymns of glory. Many people like to sing but not many sing for the glory of God.

We sing in times of joy and when we need peace for our soul.

We try to teach our children to sing and thank the Lord for His love. There is not even one man among God's people who doesn't like to sing. It is true that not many have the gift of composing melody and verse for Christian songs and especially those addressed to children. Although, this job is let by God he commanded to Moses to write a praise song for deliverance under the Egyptians and teach children to always remember what God did by singing this songs and not forget the history and God's goodness. Jesus fulfilled the will of the Father for children.

Following the example of Jesus through the centuries, Christians carefully and with love tried to induce even from childhood the love for the savior Jesus Christ. That can explain the apparition of many musical writings, some simple, other complex, which one made for different levels of understanding.

The praise of God done by children became a bigger and bigger concern for the Christians.

The earlier schools near the churches show the necessity of teaching children to praise God since ancient times.

Sunday schools put aside an important time to teach children how to praise God. That's why the repertory of "praise from children mouth" is extremely various.

Many composers give their energy serving God through their creation for children. Unfortunately because some of them were humble they prefer not to sign their works, like Johan Sebastian Bach when he signed his works S.D.G. which means Soli Deo Gloria (all the glory to God) because he considered that all the glory belongs to God.

• **Topics**

All churches celebrations are ways of celebrate big events from the life of Jesus Christ or from the history of the church and children are involved - as much as they can understand - in these celebrations. Most church calendars contain celebrations that involve children the artistic program of children.

These themes can be part of the historical events of the church:

- Christmas – birth of the Savior.
- Palm Sunday
- Easter - resurrection of the Christ
- Pentecost

In the recent years children are involved in some other celebrations with social themes, such as:

- Mother's day
- New year's eve
- Some churches choose to have a thanksgiving day for all that God gives.

They are some other themes as Jean Staenschi shows us in his book “Children's Singing Book” translated in Romanian in 1929 and published again, after it was revised, in 1979. This book contained “100 spiritual songs for children” as it's said in the subtitle. The songs are translated and discovered by Jean Staenschi. The author places in the preface of the book a thematic index in an alphabetical order as it follows: Bible, Church, Heaven, Calling to God, Christmas, Creation, Faith, Love of God, Holy Spirit, God take's care, Happiness, Forgiveness, Confidence, Teaching, Lord's sacrifice, Praise, Confess, Mission, Redeem, Pace, Easter, Sin, Surrender, Pray, Evening, End of the lection, The coming of the Lord, Life on earth, Victory over sin.

The composer Iovan Miclea, conductor teacher in The “Ciprian Porumbescu” Conservatory from Bucharest , published in the period of communism under the pseudonym of Ion Milutanu, published in Portland in December 1992 a book with choral songs for children entitled “Praise the Lord”. I would like to remark this edition not only for the content of the ”choir songs for children”, as its subtitle says, but also for the themes repartition operated by the author that is unusual for a children's book. The composer himself explains in the preview of the book:

“ The rich and diverse summary, from a musical, emotional and thematic point of view, of the 75 choral songs from the volume *Praise the Lord* insures a big aria of choice and orientation of the repertory demanded by the new generations of children and also asked by the growing needs for the occasional or Sunday services from the House of Lord”.

What is special about this edition is the thematic repartition of the 75 choir songs, well established in a thematic index at the end of the book. Stating that we use Iovan Miclea's Book, which contained a thematic index, as an example of the themes of all songs for children, we present the index as it follows:

- Praise, thanksgiving, worship
- Adoration and thankful heart.
- Joy in Christ
- Calling to the Savior
- Confidence in God

- Listening and walking with Jesus
- Heavenly home
- The word of God
- Birth of the Savior
- Resurrection of Christ

Because of his rich experience as a composer and teacher, Iovan Miclea conceived, as a conductor, the repertory of the children's choir book. It ended with a *canon of three voices* and with *five vocal exercises for the children's choir*. The composer's preoccupation for a receptive message of his songs determined him to build his book on two levels as he is saying: “ With the exception of the songs no. 1,2,7 and 63, all the others were printed like this: the left page of the book presents, written in verse, the literary content of the songs and the one on the right contained musical lines together with the verses. Why is it so? For an easier learning, and understanding of the children or for their parents with a musical background. At the same time the separate writing of the text offers the possibility for those who are interested to learn and recite in the Lord's House, the poems.”

If Iovan Miclea started from the song to poetry, offering to the little ones “didactic” material, other poets started to write songs after they wrote the lyrics. This is the situation of the poet Costache Ioanid, who included in his volume of poetry “Mysteries” a part of poetry dedicated to children, entitled “Big mysteries for the little ones”. Many of his poems dedicated to children became songs afterwards, the music being sometimes composed by the poet himself or by others. Nicolae Moldoveanu and Traian Dorz, known in the evangelical world, especially for the songs, the meditations, and poems written in communist prisons, also took the effort and time to write for children the famous book *Osana, Osana* subtitled “*Songs and poetry for the best children*” signed by Traian Dorz. He does not have a thematic repartition of the songs and poems but if we analyze the presented content we notice that he writes about some known themes and also about calendar celebrations of each month, describing a new dedication for each new month. To these thematic innovations, others are added, such as children blessing prayers etc. Nicolae Moldoveanu published in 1994 the book entitled *Songs for Children* and in the preview of this book we can see a thematic repartition as it follows: Praise, Thanksgiving, Prayer, Faith, Hope, Listening, Bible, Teaching, God, Jesus Christ, Seasons etc. These songs are written on notes recording the main melody of the song and words.

The grace of the anonyms composers or known composers of understanding the receptivity of the children and compose for their understanding, teaching through organization of the repertory to appreciate the theme of the songs, helped these songs spread in almost numerous the churches from different denominations.

- **Typology**
- **Interpretation**

If we are to classify the children's repertory we would come to this conclusion:

- *Songs for children sung by children* .

- Child singing solo
- Children group
- Solo with choir interventions
- Solo with instrumental accompaniment
- Children choir with instrumental accompaniment.

- *Songs for children singing by adults.*

- Mihaela Oancea - tape recordings
- Nicolae Moldoveanu - tapes, books and notebooks
- Genovena – books and tapes

- *Songs of adults speaking about childhood.*

These are songs that bring forward the nostalgic feelings of adults referring to the spiritual experiences of childhood.

Because of the different ways of spreading the repertory for children among Christians we can speak about a typology of recording these.

• Oral transmission

One of the most used ways of spreading these songs is the oldest method of learning, this is the oral way. Generation after generation, from church to church, belonging to different denominations, the most beautiful songs for children are composed and spread. Parents and grandparents educate their followers, teachers of Sunday schools teach their students, friends make changes of musical knowledge in the simplest manner possible: learning as they hear. Many songs cover a big area, forming what we can call evangelical folklore. Hundreds or even thousands of children learned songs from authors, which remained unknown because they did not make a book of written songs with their name on it, but the melodies remained and were adopted by the new generations. We can mention songs like: *Nice is the green field, I will sleep I am tired, Near Jesus I see a lot of children, To shine like the sun, I am only a child, Is good to know that you have a heavenly father.* This is the base of the repertory of songs for children from every church where activities for children are a priority. These songs were transmitted "person to person" and were models for songs like "My mother", "Mother call us all in the house", "One word on this world" etc. whose authors remained under silence.

Audio recordings

In our times the same repertory can be heard on different tapes, which circulate from hand to hand in churches. Sunday school programs, which include songs of praise of children promote as a didactic material songs recorded on tapes. A lot of the musical bands of children revealed themselves through these songs for children recorded on tapes. Now we can take advantage of the latest technique like videos we can catch on video the programs where children participate with their repertory. All these became models for the activity with children from all the churches. This fact reduces the differences between the artistic manifestations from different denominations.

Writings

In the practice of the work with children we can find many writings, which also circulate hand to hand, from church to church with different celebrations as Mother's day, Easter, Christmas etc. Some of the songs are written on the singing notebooks of musicians, which are responsible for the singing act with children. Others are found on a variety of technical supports.

Music books

There have been made some efforts in time that the most known songs which orally were promoted or as writings to be written on notes and put in special "Books for children". Many churches have set aside a special place to sell different books and, among them, books and tapes with songs. Many books for children are nicely adorned with pictures, beautiful stories and poetry. Some of these are translated from other languages. If we had to draw a conclusion it would be that most of translations are written in English.

Sion, published in six volumes, contained translated songs, on one or two voices. Between the songs we can find stories, bible histories, together with some pictures like Osana, Osana of Traian Dorz. Others, maybe most of them contain the melody line with the text and again beautiful pictures like the volume "Songs for Children" by Nicolae Moldoveanu or "The children's harp" arranged by Jean Staenschi

There are books, which contained songs for children on three or four voices, in the version of choral songs like the book "Praise the Lord" by Iovan Miclea.

• In terms of musical education of composers the children repertory can be classified like this:

- Songs with anonymous authors.
- Songs with popular known authors.
- Songs with educated authors from musical point of view.

• Pedagogical importance.

The forming of a Christian character with the help of music is a new method discovered by the Christians teachers. Even from antiquity the Greeks formed the doctrine of ethos that deals

with the impact that music has on the character in the process of shaping the human personality. Because the Greek state wanted to form through music the people with a hard word to say. The Greek philosophers turned music into a state problem. Aristotle sustained that the rhythm and the melody contained the reflection of anger and kindness or other qualities. “When we hear with the ear, the rhythm and melody we perceive the reproduction of characters.” Aristotle`s conclusion is that music influences the character. Plato stated, in his work, that “The state” for the forming of the models, that we need people “honest, full of manliness and wisdom”. He, considers that the Doric mode is the most appropriate for education, the others are even bad for the soul.

Christians took some of these experiences but they were based on the Old Testament were Moses listening to the word of God wrote and told children the history of Jewish people but also they were songs that instructed them to be patriots.

This concept of music with social implications is recognized by all nations. In a conference in Paris , in 1929, speaking about “Romanian music”, Nicolae Iorga says that the “Romanian religious music is in essence of choral tradition and it comes, for sure, from the Byzantium .” He also mentions that music schools from Constantinople , sent priests and teachers of music in the Romanian Countries, to bring here the influence of oriental music. In about 1820, the schools of Constantinople spread their influence in regions where later were published works of Makarie who “understood to be the reformer of the religious music in the Romanian countries” Later this tradition suffered changes because of the big western influence at the beginning in Transylvania and later in other regions. Confessional schools developed the educational element of music. Neoprottestant cults grew especially in the 19 th century. The communist period was the biggest obstacle that some confessional schools had to face. Because of this situation, education was made in the Sunday schools of the evangelical churches. Due to their sometimes hidden activity, beautiful songs were created having an educative content.

We close this brief presentation of our study in the spirit of Nicolae Moldoveanu's words from preview of the book “*Songs for children*” :

“For the man of faith, the song is unimaginable power in pain and in joy. It gives wings to the spirit and takes the spirit in places of peace and heavenly lights ... The followers of the Savior, we, the parents, the teachers and the children we will not forget sacrifice of praise – the song – which we must bring every day on the altar of a clean heart. This is our holly duty! Praised be the Lord!”