

RESERACH ARTICLE

**Organization of choir singing in churches as a means of
raising and developing children**

**Organización del canto coral en las iglesias como medio
para criar y desarrollar a los niños**

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Summary

The article deals with the study of historical aspects of children's choir singing in church tradition. The author considers characteristic features and origins of children's church choir singing. The reasons for using children's choir singing in Christian churches are investigated. The author characterizes the features of the conditions for utilization of children's choir singing in Christian churches. The distinction between children's church choir singing in the Orthodox East and Catholic West is shown. Children's choirs in Catholic churches were formed mainly from among orphan boys from orphanages at temples or monasteries. In the Catholic society of that time, childhood was not yet considered as a special status. Social assistance to children was included in the general program of care for unprotected segments of the population. However, they were destined for a compulsory religious education. In Orthodoxy, choir singing, along with the ability to read and write, was considered a necessary factor in the education of the ruling class and literate clergy. Thus, a more meaningful and profound educational program for future adults was introduced. In conclusion, the author states that children's choir singing, while being closely associated with church traditions and practice, introduces children to anagogic, educational and spiritual processes of the church ceremony.

Keywords: Church Singing, Children's Choir Singing, Church Singing Practice.

Resumen

El artículo trata del estudio de los aspectos históricos del canto de coros de niños en la tradición de la iglesia. El autor considera los rasgos característicos y los orígenes del canto del coro de la iglesia infantil. Se investigan las razones para utilizar el canto de coros de niños en las iglesias cristianas. El autor caracteriza las características de las condiciones para la utilización del canto coral de niños en las iglesias cristianas. Se muestra la distinción entre el canto del coro de la iglesia de niños en el Oriente ortodoxo y el Occidente católico. Los coros de niños en las iglesias católicas se formaron principalmente entre niños huérfanos de orfanatos en templos o monasterios. En la sociedad católica de esa época, la infancia aún no se consideraba un estatus especial. La asistencia social a la infancia se incluyó en el programa general de atención a los segmentos desprotegidos de la población. Sin embargo, estaban destinados a una educación religiosa obligatoria. En la ortodoxia, el canto coral, junto con la capacidad de leer y escribir, se consideraba un factor necesario en la educación de la clase dominante y el clero alfabetizado. Por lo tanto, se introdujo un programa educativo más significativo y profundo para los futuros adultos. En conclusión, el autor afirma que el canto del coro de niños, aunque está estrechamente asociado con las tradiciones y la práctica de la iglesia, introduce a los niños en los procesos anagógicos, educativos y espirituales de la ceremonia de la iglesia.

Palabras clave: canto en la iglesia, canto del coro de niños, práctica de canto en la iglesia.

Introduction

Children's mindset and worldview are reflected in every area of human culture and existence (Ramazanova et al., 2020). However, it is their spiritual and artistic forms that are the most similar to "childishness" which is associated with sincerity, purity and being "angel-like" (Gardner, 2004). At the same time, children's direct participation in liturgical singing introduces them to the educational and spiritual processes of the cathedral ceremony; there is a process of church socialization at the family, social, church-wide, didactic and religious levels. Through aesthetic means, such singing helps to unite "the earthly and the heavenly", realizing one of the aspects of artistic theurgy (Malikova, Makulbekov, Imanzhushyp, 2019).

Therefore, the study of the specific features of children's choir singing in church tradition, the features of the conditions for utilizing children's choir singing in churches and the history, conditions and consequences of the interaction of "childishness" with the church ceremony constitute a relevant section of the contemporary musicological research.

Features and origins of children's church choir singing

The issue of attitudes towards children is at the very origins of Christianity: Christ's disciples tried to rebuke them, but the Lord noticed that "of such is the kingdom of God" (Mt. 19:14). Hence the Christian message about the purity of a child's soul, worthy of the Kingdom of God – "angelic". Liturgical singing is also called angelic (like the name given by Maximilian I to the court singing chapel created by him in 1498 that first consisted of six boys – "the Angelic Chapel", currently it is the famous Vienna Boys' Choir (Bodishevskaya, 2012).

Researchers are equally positive about children's church choir singing (Table 1).

Table (1): Researchers' Attitude to Children's Choir Singing

№	Author	Overview
1	A. Kastalskii	"from an ideal point of view, for a church choir, the pure, devoid of any passionate tone timbre of male children's voices takes precedence over women's voices" (Kastalskii, 2006, p. 98).
2	I. Lozovaya	children's "angelic nature" and "angelic voices" in singing "gave rise to very special qualities of Znamenny chant, ... manifested both in the nature of the general melodic structure and in the features of its structure" (Lozovaya, 1996, p. 275).
3	V. Martynov	"children's church singing becomes angel-like already in New Testament times, and its prototype is the singing of three holy youths unharmed in a fiery furnace" (Martynov, 1994, p. 22).

As for children's singing, its earliest case (from church tradition) is the ascent of a young man to Heaven during the earthquake in Constantinople in 439, where the young man heard the angels singing the Trisagion and, descending to the ground, sang it together with the people (Martynov, 1994, p. 35). Thus, the emulation of angelic singing was first passed on to an adolescent rather than an adult. Striving for angelic singing is a symbol of the "struggle for an angelic life" (Martynov, 1994, p. 36). However, while an adult needs to spend a lot of effort for such a struggle, distancing themselves from earthly problems and needs, a child is not yet weighed down by the burden of sinfulness, has not yet had time to move far from the angels.

We do not have specific descriptions of angelic singing, but one can assume that the gentle-high tessitura of children's voices and the special "crystal clarity" of their timbres recreate the heavenly world and purity of thoughts. For a long time, boys' voices were considered more suitable for church singing, including because of their strength, depth of timbre and dynamic characteristics.

Before the emergence of Christianity, the angelic likeness was achieved by strict adherence to the closed, perfect and self-sustaining system-caste of singers and musicians of the Jerusalem temple of singing traditions, "God-given and God-established" (Martynov, 1994, p. 23). Children's (youth) voices were also used here as only a family member could become a church singer. Such a family not only performed the established singing but also created new and brought up young singers according to the principle of word of mouth. Professional skills had to be acquired from childhood.

Saint Ambrose of Milan (circa 340–397) indicated that in his time children sang in church choirs (Martynov, 1994). In a conversation on the Gospel of Matthew, Saint John

Chrysostom said, "For since we condemn ourselves for sins, for them that have sinned much and deserve to be blamed we ourselves cry; but for ourselves the children; for the imitators of whose simplicity the kingdom of heaven is reserved" (Tvoreniya svyatogo ottsa nashego..., n.d.). These words confirm the traditional belief that children's prayer, including prayer offered in the form of choir singing, finds special mercy with God.

Thus, the basic principles of church singing were formed in the first millennium a.d. (Tvoreniya svyatogo ottsa nashego..., n.d.), however, with the use of chants characteristic of the services of the Jerusalem temple and synagogue, as well as some local folk chants (Mitropolit Ilarion (Alfeev), 2012). The main idea was the implementation of the general principle of "the essence of church singing is singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19) (Mitropolit Ilarion (Alfeev), 2012, p. 118). Early Christian liturgical services used dialogue between the primate and general (quasi-choral) singing which also included children's voices (mass, general folk singing, together with aesthetic purpose, served as an expression of Christian unity, conciliarity). Thus, St. John Chrysostom points out, "women and men, young and old, have different voices, but they do not differ in the words of hymnody, for the Spirit blends the voice of each and effects one melody in all" (Khoretskaya, n.d.). Let us recall that for a long time, in the socio-cultural space, children (according to Ph. Ariès, until the 12th century (Ariès, 1999)) were considered "undeveloped" adults and it was in this capacity that children became part of the church-choir (heterophonic) community, gradually becoming conscious members of the Eucharist communities. On the other hand, in church, children met Christ's commandments (Mt. 18:3: "...unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven") and their status was consistent with the cult of the baby Jesus himself.

After the Edict of Milan by Emperor Constantine (313), along with the complication of liturgical services and singing itself, not just professional singers and choirs but canonical ones are becoming the norm – those put into service through the laying on of hands by the bishop (cheirothesia). Therefore, singers became members of the clergy and even were on a dais within a church (closer to the singing angels and higher than ordinary believers). In the professional requirements of the new generation of choir singers, there was no distinction between adults and children. Normally, only male choirs took part in Byzantine liturgical services which corresponded to the general attitude towards the absence of women in the choir (except choirs of women's monasteries). However, boys' choirs, according to Metropolitan Hilarion (Alfeev) (2012), became much more widespread in Byzantine services.

The differences between children's church choir singing in the Orthodox East and Catholic West

In the period before the 11th century, there were Western and Eastern churches, which had their features (Table 1).

Table (1): Key differences between children's church choir singing in the Orthodox East and Catholic West

Nº	Catholic Christianity	Orthodox Christianity
1	In the 10 th –16 th centuries, children's choirs included orphan boys (and not only) from shelters based in churches or monasteries	Choir singing in the 10 th –16 th centuries was considered a necessary factor in the education of members of the ruling class and literate clergy
2	Since the 17 th century, conservatories were created where education included an in-depth course of sciences	Since the 16 th century, special singing schools were created
3	Children were choristers at Sunday services in churches, in processions, at funerals and	Children sang in unison with low men's voices. Most of the church choir consisted

Children's choirs in Catholic churches consisted of orphan boys (and not only) from orphanages based in churches or monasteries (the tradition of helping orphans and the poor goes back to the Babylonian kingdom and is associated both with spiritual and religious factors and the prospect of churches receiving powerful social and political preferences and support of wide strata of society; this tradition reached organized forms already during the Christian Middle Ages, in particular, the teaching of children by the Benedictines since 529, the Sistine Chapel boys' choir in the 6th century at the behest of Pope Gregory the Great).

However, childhood was not yet considered a special status, and social assistance to children was included in the general program of care for vulnerable groups of the population. Nevertheless, children were destined for compulsory religious education, and children with pure voices (without tense, "chesty" sound) – church-choir education. The so-called Dresden list of the charter of the Great Church of Constantinople, dating from the first half of the 11th century, contains the rite of catechesis on Good Friday when "singers from orphanages ascended to the pulpit and sang a psalm" (Uspenskii, 1960).

In the St. Florian monastery in Austria, the boys' choir has existed from 1071 (Martynov, 1994) to the present. The famous boys' choir at the Leipzig Catholic Church of the Apostle Thomas which sings in the church three times a week to the present, was founded in 1212 together with the first orphanage school in Saxony in the Augustinian monastery (at the time of the Reformation – 1539 – this choir was led by I.S. Bach) (Martynov, 1994). It is characteristic that first conservatories (the first, Santa Maria di Loreto, Naples, 1537) were orphanages where children (poor, orphans and paid "boarders") were taught music, especially singing (to prepare choristers for church choirs); however, the conservatories had both church and secular subordination. In the 17th century, these conservatories were transformed into the best music schools of the century of musically progressive Italy, special training groups of castrated singers (Barbier, 2006) were brought up there (boys with beautiful voices were castrated so that their voices did not change and did not become lower with age). The income of the conservatories, in addition to church and philanthropic donations, included the earnings of the children themselves who were singers at Sunday services, in processions, at funerals and the ordination of clergy. Students took an in-depth, "adult" course of science – counterpoint, music theory, singing (for soprano singers and contralto-castrates, for tenors and basses), composition, playing string, wood and brass instruments; wore appropriate attire. Music was now becoming their "vocation, a continuous ministry of the glory of the Lord" (Barbier, 2006, p. 55).

Since the 12th century, the genre of the motet spread, in which the tenor who performed the melody of the Gregorian chant was joined first by one and then three voices with a different text, where since the 14th century the upper voices were performed by descantist boys. Since the 14th century, the genre of "high" mass took root, in which complex polyphony with equal voices gradually flourished (the Dutch school of polyphony was especially distinguished), characterized by the mastery of counterpoint with the exceptional expressiveness of polyphony (up to 36 voices) performed "a cappella" and the acquisition of musical meaning in its real understanding.

Since in the West the basses of the times of the Gregorian chant were not constantly involved (preference was given to tenors), with the development of motets and "high" masses, the effect of spiritual enlightenment and inspiration was more consistent with the choirs (male) with predominant high registers with the use of boys' "soaring" timbres (also men's falsetto) – in contrast to the Russian tradition of future octavists singing an octave below the usual bass part.

In 1913, a liturgical movement began in the Catholic Church – a series of ministerial initiatives aimed at reviving liturgical piety and attracting the laity to conscious and active participation in the service. Due to the efforts of Pope Pius X (in particular, his encyclical on

church music "Tra le sollecitudini"), as well as the "father" of the liturgical movement, the Benedictine monk Lambert Beauduin, educational centers began to appear in the Catholic West, which set themselves the task of developing the ability to understand rituals and texts, the restoration of the primacy of Sunday worship and the revival of collective singing and Gregorian chant. Church singing became one of the important tools for teaching parishioners the cathedral liturgical prayer (Sukharev, 2018, p. 15). Speaking about the canonical obstacle for women to be choir singers, Pius X wrote, "Whenever, then, it is desired to employ the acute voices of sopranos and contraltos, these parts must be taken by boys, according to the most ancient usage of the Church".

In the Orthodox East, church music developed in a unique way, including with the participation of children. For Russian culture, the choral tradition is generally associated with Orthodox church music, with a gravitation towards the experience of medieval singing art. The spiritual tradition has undergone evolutionary changes over the millennium but certain features remain and sacred music acts as such a constant genre branch, "a historical category that can characterize the level of artistic thinking of a particular era" (Martynov, 1994, p. 42).

Until the end of the 12th century, Orthodox singing was closely connected with Znamenny chant and the spread of the principles laid down in the Octoechos which required an ordinary singer to have an outstanding musical memory for the free use of the entire available stock of tunes and operate with complex intonation structures. Moreover, "everywhere the creators of the singing monuments were exclusively monks" (Martynov, 1994, p. 106), which corresponded to the Orthodox tradition of the priority of the "spiritual heart" over technical and artistic foundations.

In the 10th century, choral singing was considered a necessary factor in the education of members of the ruling class and literate clergy, along with the ability to read and write, which was facilitated by the practice of teaching in chant (Dudin et al., 2019). Therefore, a more meaningful and in-depth educational program for future adults was introduced – a service to God that was created through the "wisdom" of divine singing (Komyakov, 1992). This was how a special "super-system or rite of chants" was introduced in Russia. The essence of this system was to reproduce the sacred universal Orthodox rhythm of life and, consecrated by this sacred rhythm of each individual soul, introduce new chants – Kiev, Greek and Bulgarian – "symbolizing a prayer for the entire Orthodox the world" and "introducing into liturgical singing the element of folk song and a kind of childish naivety inherent in folklore" (Martynov, 1994, p. 79). That is why children's voices in this context corresponded to the integrity of the world perception and the sacred idealization of childhood.

One of the first cases of the use of children's voices in an Orthodox church is considered to be especially festive types of singing – liturgical rites which Gardner calls "liturgical dramas" (Gardner, 2004). The most famous were "Play of Daniel" and "Donkey walk" (most prominent in the 16th century; after reforms of Patriarch Nikon fell out of use) (Gardner, 2004, p. 468). In 1636, the German traveler and geographer A. Olearius recalled "six little singers in white vestments". Most likely, "they were junior sovereign's or patriarchal singers because they must have been trained; they could have been 10–14 years old" when "before the signs of mutation the voices were the strongest and most beautiful" (Gardner, 2004, p. 470).

Specialized singing schools contributed to the consolidation of professionally difficult choral traditions in Moscow, Pskov and other cities (Mitropolit Ilarion (Alfeev), 2012). Certain folklore intonations were also attached to the main voice ("path"). High children's voices sang in unison with low male voices. The church choir mainly consisted of male voices (recall the priority of low timbres). No special scores were written for "small singers" (boys) (Pozhidaeva, 2017, p. 129). The Moscow Synod of 1551 proclaimed that "many schools were in Moscow, Veliky Novgorod and other cities" and ordered the clergy of all cities to organize children's schools; it introduced polyphony into practice (Ilin, 2007).

Church singing was included in the content of general education by the "Public School Statute" in 1864 (Skripacheva, Devyatkina, 2014, p. 133).

In the first half of the 17th century, the ideological concept and genre forms of Orthodox art were undergoing serious changes due to "Latin influence". The era of polyphonic scores using a wide range required a significant expansion of the choir's capabilities (up to 24 voices). Boys with high, "clear" voices began to be actively involved (as one could not involve female voices).

In the second half of the 17th century, "singing schools began to be created in Russia where children were taught according to the new fashion" (Mitropolit Ilarion (Alfeev), 2012, p. 227). One of the first such educational institutions was organized in the Andreevsky Monastery, then in the Iversky and Chudov Monasteries, at the Tsar and Patriarch Courts (the choral professionalism of Russia was concentrated in the latter two). The most famous was the Glukhov (Orthodox) Singing School (1732) – the first specialized music education institution in the Russian Empire that annually supplied 10 young men for the Court Chapel and the orchestra in Saint Petersburg (Pozhidaeva, 2017).

The Moscow Synodal Choir (organized at the end of the 16th century as a choir of the Patriarch's Choristers) kept up (and in a certain way competed) with the Petersburg Chapel where, starting from the 17th century, boys also appeared. Both choirs (the Saint Petersburg Court Chapel and the Moscow Synodal Choir) later embodied the strongest and most characteristic features of the Russian singing style.

In the 19th century, leading figures of the choral art highly valued the role of church choirs with the participation of young singers, realizing that the future of national culture depended on their upbringing. There is a tendency to secularize choral performance, in particular, for children. These processes coincide with the epochal (romantic) "cult of the child" and childhood. In the 20th century, with the mass closure of churches and monasteries, there was a spread of a secularized tendency of school and other choirs, "withdrawal" of children from churches.

Conclusion

Church choir singing, including children's, is strongly associated with church traditions and practice and introduces children to the anagogic, educational and spiritual processes of the church ceremony; it reproduces in children's singing the angelic nature of life and thinking.

In general, the participation of child singers in liturgical acts and dramas stimulated the orientation of the adult world towards a childish, pure perception of the world. Gaining prayer and singing experience has had a transformative influence on thousands of professional musicians who mastered the poetics of sacred music as a child.

An analysis of distinctive features of the genre and repertoire specificity of Orthodox children's choir singing may become a prospect for further research.

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