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PHD THESIS SUMMARY

**THE LITURGICAL MUSIC IN MUSIC
THERAPY PRACTICE**

SUPERVISOR

FR. PROF. DR. VASILE STANCIU

PhD STUDENT

OPREA (FARCAȘ) SEVERINA-MARIA

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Keywords : Music therapy , liturgical , research, psychotherapy, questionnaire , depression , aggression, sample , elderly, children .

Introduction

Liturgical music manifests a triple action at psychic level: it helps the man better understand his inner state, it takes him out of his individuality by opening his heart towards God and unifies him in thought with his fellow men, so that he can dwell naturally and in peace with himself and with his fellows.

Science, art and spirituality fundamentally meet in music, reclaiming the dialogue between scientist and artist, inviting to common projects that serve a society which expresses more and more the need to recover values lost in time. The normality of our society cannot be the outcome of a fragmentary reality – solely scientific, artistic or religious, because the reality of the world is integral. In this context, music constitutes a universal language which interconnects generations and boundaries of the earth. Music remains a territory nurtured by science, art and religion in order to achieve transdisciplinarity. More than ever before, psychotherapy today uses the therapeutic valences of music. That is why, melotherapy is known as a branch of psychotherapy, integrated in art therapy, and presupposes the use of music during therapy sessions, having as a main purpose the improvement of life quality in people by facilitating communication, interconnection, learning, and emotional, social and cognitive expression. If the simple release of tensions as a result of listening to music has short-term positive effects in the life of a man, it could be observed that during the melotherapeutic process the person must understand the deepest feelings, therefore the empathic accompanying attitude of the therapist is indispensable. This new direction in therapy with the help of music is aligned to other revolutionary initiatives in the domain of psychotherapy and represents an alternative to traditional therapy, aiming to improve the quality of life.

Modern research in the field of melotherapy is vast and utilizes methods specific to the society it represents: from chemical and physical experiments in the lab, to psychological testing of groups of patients in special cabinets or hospitals; from the creation of associations, to the organization of world congresses for the ones preoccupied and involved in melotherapy; from the publication of informative journals and periodicals, to the introduction of melotherapy as a study domain in the public educational systems, etc. Theorists, researchers and even personalities in the domain of psychotherapy are recognized today worldwide and the melotherapeutic methods used became reference points in the field.

Melotherapy in Romania can be described as a recent scientific approach (that started in the 1990s), implemented in masters courses in the public system, applied in public institutions and at the departments of health and education. The Romanian partnerships with melotherapeutic institutions from abroad facilitate a specialty supervision and foster the availability of musical materials necessary for this type of therapy. All the studies, so far, show that the musical material used in melotherapy consists mainly of classical music, sounds from nature or electronic music. As for the ethnographic area of the Romanian people, the musical style confirmed as being used for therapeutic purposes throughout history is folk music. However, very close to the soul of the Romanian Christian, in the history of Christianity, remains the religious and liturgical music, which helped with the expression of the deepest feelings and of the highest values in front of the church altars of their communities. For this reason, when they lost possession of the religious books, due to the harsh historical context, the orthodox Romanians impregnated the liturgical songs with the harmony of their folk music, thus creating an autochthonous religious musical style, with undertones of the old byzantine music, especially in Transylvania. This way, liturgical music becomes more familiar for Christians, intimately connected with their soul, offering harmonies specific to their great inner torments and noble creeds and ideals. We believe that this music, together with the byzantine music, is a thesaurus of clerical and pastoral resources for the followers of the ones that contributed to its harmonization and perpetuation across centuries. Thus, it is timely to propose an opening towards addressing its therapeutic functions and trying to understand both its messages and the paths it opens towards the reestablishment of inner harmony. The liturgical medium had been offering it for centuries, using it in order to spiritually prepare the man for its encounter with Christ in the Holy Mysteries. The same medium offers the possibility to participate to the liturgical musical act, both in a receptive and active manner. In this context, a Romanian from Transylvania would teach the young children to sing carols and later interpret the most soulful religious songs, which are still echoed today in the Christian communities. This process, beyond the musical act, bears real melotherapeutic functions, helping people liberate themselves from accumulated negative energies or re-establish their emotional balance.

The use of liturgical music in melotherapeutical sessions in the contemporary Romanian society is a challenge in view of a joint therapeutic work – psychological and spiritual, addressing the Christian orthodox population. The liturgical music belongs to this ethos,

therefore we propose a return to its fundamental values, looking for resources in order to psychologically and spiritually rehabilitate the ones that often manifest dysfunctional behaviours from these standpoints. In this sense, the liturgical music is a language that must be learnt so that through it, the man can address God; it is not a purpose in itself, but a means of facilitating the human ascent beyond art, a means of transcending what is concrete in order to reach the immanent world, the only world that is not perishable. The equivalent of such spiritual level is the catharsis, which bestows upon people a state of well-being, of healthy body and soul.

The main point of reference in choosing the theme of the present paper was the contemporary context of our society, largely oriented towards spirituality. The spiritual dimension of life and the relationship with Divinity are no longer among the reference points of the contemporary man. Within this reality, the contemporary man experiences an emotional imbalance, which causes illness and suffering. When someone reaches such a level, the tendency is to resort to overdoses or extreme decisions regarding the path of their own life. Prisoner of his own decisions, the man is often captive in an ailing zone, both physically and psychologically, out of which he is trying to escape. The alternative therapies to treatments that involve medication give the hope of revitalization. In this sense, we mention melotherapy or the therapy through music. This was developed significantly during the second half of this century, and because of its non-invasive character is more and more taken into account.

The religious music – intimately connected with the being of the Romanians, and carrying the load of Romanian orthodox spirituality, is different from the religious music of other people when it comes to its melodic significance. The element intimately connected with the spirituality of the Romanian people becomes a rehabilitation resource if used at the right time under the supervision of a specialist. For this reason, the paper tries to illustrate the effects of the liturgical music within the melotherapeutic process and the opportunity to use liturgical music from a prophylactic perspective, within the liturgical and ecclesial framework.

The paper starts from the general hypothesis according to which the liturgical music has beneficial effects upon the Christian orthodox population in Romania (the active members of the Church), and furthermore can be successfully used in melotherapeutical sessions, for patients with high receptivity to it, patients that suffer from various forms of depression and aggressivity. As a result of these specialty studies recently made public in our country, according to which

depression is the scourge of our times and aggressiveness (with its different forms of violence), especially among students, registers worrying percentages, we propose the use of such available therapeutic means, from which today's man feels alienated most often than not: the liturgical music, and through it, the entire liturgical cult.

The study on the relationship between the contemporary man and this musical genre, as well as the outline of the therapeutic valences of the religious music, within the ecclesial framework and during the therapeutic sessions, becomes an important part of the aim set by this paper. Starting from the hypothesis regarding the confirmation of positive data concerning our study, the general purpose of this research is to bring to light the therapeutic dimension of liturgical music and to open in this sense a precise work level regarding Melotherapy as a science of the contemporary society.

The paper is structured into two main sections: The Theoretical Section and The Applied Section. The Introduction is a distinctive section, and it presents the importance and the actuality of the theme, it also includes a few methodological and terminological preliminaries, as well as the purpose and the objectives of the paper.

The Theoretical Section is divided into three chapters that give a general presentation of melotherapy.

Chapter I – *The current stage of Research in the melotherapeutic field*, follows both foreign modern research data and Romanian modern research. The subchapters present modern melotherapeutic approaches, theorists and researchers, important figures, world melotherapy congresses, associations and institutions that develop melotherapeutic programs, specialty journals and periodicals, practical studies in melotherapy developed abroad and in Romania. All these aspects wish to outline a general image about what this field means in the world and to present its initial stage in our country.

The practical studies performed so far reflect the beneficial effects of Melotherapy, incorporated in Medicine, as well as in Psychotherapy, a complementary act for life improvement. Both the contemporary research in the field of melotherapy and the history of this complementary therapeutic direction, observe different musical genres which have been used and are to be further used for therapeutic purposes, with emphasis on the effect of Mozart's music, of

baroque instrumental music, and of the therapy when using Orff instruments or Waldorf educational instruments, or of the therapy with sounds of nature (the music of waterfall, sea, river, rain, birds, forest, etc.). Hereby, we can talk about a vast researched and implemented repertory, as well as about various methods and work techniques, belonging both to active and receptive melotherapy. The above mentioned are used by people that are specialized in the field, within specialized institutions, including programs for theoretical and practical training. The purpose of therapy with the help of music, applied in hospitals, hospices and private educational institutions, is to help people reestablish the well-being state psychologically and physically, which would translate into calming down the outbursts of nervousness, treating the depressive states, reaching psychological relaxation, treating asthenic neurosis and neuro-vegetative disorders, diminishing exhaustion and intellectual tiredness, calming the asthma attacks, adjusting the blood pressure and stimulating brain activities after traumas, etc.

Retrospectively, we notice today that music therapy was a recognized practice throughout history in medicine, art, theology and psychology, as fields that had as an object of study the human being with its needs, problems, aspirations and abilities. Each of these domains temporarily claimed it as occasional therapeutic method (in certain circumstances), as special (regarding a specific category of patients) and as complementary (accompanying various conventional treatments). Today melotherapy is a field in its own right which presupposes the planned use of music with the purpose of reaching therapeutic objectives in the case of people with specific needs due to emotional, intellectual or social problems.

Chapter II – *Historical view over melotherapy*, attempts to present Melotherapy in its Prescientific Stage (Antiquity), the Middle Ages Stage, the Modern Stage and the Contemporary Stage. The approach is not only chronological, for it also makes reference to the relationship between man and Divinity through music during different eras, directly mentioning the cult music of the Judaic people and the Music of the Primary Christian Church.

The history of therapy with the help of music is vast and it has been around for over two and a half millennia. Ever since Antiquity, listening to music was associated with a spiritual rising that had real benefits to the life of people. Well-known in this sense was the case of Saul the biblical king, who after listening to one of young David's songs played with an instrument known as psalterion, experienced a profound recovery from his illness. Other instruments used

across antiquity, for therapeutic reasons, were: the pipe, the flute, the drum, the horn and the lyre. The first theories pertaining to the beneficial effects of music for the soul belong to Antiquity as well, and can be identified in the theories of Pythagoras, Aristoxenus and Iamblichus, who address the use of music between the 6th-4th centuries B.C. for the purpose of relaxation, liberation from worries and sorrows, for calming down in case of nervousness and for instilling an appeased sleep. The beginning of Christianity didn't bring along the annihilation of the theories regarding the effect of music onto the human soul, but gave it a new meaning. In this sense Niceta of Remesiana, while talking about the improvement in Saul's illness with the help of David's song, adds the Christian symbol of messianic sacrifice and of the wood of the cross to the song that vibrates from the cords and from the wood of the psalterion.

The early modern period (at the end of the 17th century) brings new directions in approaching disease, medicine and music. In this context, music was used as somatic remedy as well, as stimulus for the pulse and as a factor that brings balance when facing humors. Music was recommended for the relaxation of muscles for digestion, when giving birth, before sleeping and, above all, in the case of psychological disorders. The 19th century, under the auspices of romanticism, will consider music as source and remedy for mental disequilibrium. The Czech doctor Leopold Raudnitz published in 1840 a book about therapy through music as a result of his experiences at a hospice for people with mental illnesses in Prague, where he mentions that under the effect of music the ones that were in delirium no longer mumbled and the melancholic ones were calmer. During this period, Psychiatry became an individual discipline with its own classification of the diseases and methods of treatment that included therapy through music. The book *Musical doctor* written in 1807 by Peter Lichtenthal addresses to possible ways of listening to music: when the person is aware, which brings real benefits, and when the person is unaware (only physically present) which is not sufficient for the medical treatment. Unlike Lichtenthal, who perceives musical training as a constitutive part of medical training, Peter Joseph Schneider¹ imagines the creation of a discipline specialized in therapy through music, which should be part of a mental hygiene program under state patronage with specific activities taking place in hospices. The most well-known hospice that followed such an approach was Illenau (Germany), where the psychiatrists described the soul as a "rhythmical entity", and its imbalance was attributed to a state of arrhythmia, against which one could fight only through music.

¹ Peter Joseph SCHNEIDER, *Un sistem al muzicii medicale*, 1835.

Modern melotherapy sets the ground for contemporary melotherapy, outlining new approaches: clinical, educational and instructional with the help of well-known individuals such as Carl Orff, Jaques Darcroze and Zoltan Kodaly.

The beginning of the 20th century brought along music in the therapy of post-traumatic disorders in people that suffered as a result of war, and by the middle of the century, therapy through music became a science in its own right, integrated in academic study programs and different professional specializations.

Music represents means of artistic expression as well as a form of communication, relaxation, an unconventional therapy, often applied as therapy and as support, not only for psychological, but for somatic illnesses as well: cardiologic, neurological, oncological, pediatric, pneumological, geriatric, etc.

The contemporary melotherapy is perceived as one of the branches of psychotherapy. The melotherapeutic process is constructed on three fundamental elements: music therapist, music and patient, using at its core special melotherapeutic methods, of which some are recognized by the World Federation of Music Therapy. Music can be structured into repertory adjusted to the dysfunctionalities for which it is used. The fundamental role in melotherapy as a melotherapeutic process is attributed to the music therapist specially trained in this sense. This is the reason why there are specialties developed in this field, for which one needs theoretical and practical training. We encounter music therapists among clinicians, educators, psychologists, psychotherapists, etc. Melotherapy can be used therapeutically and prophylactically; if used therapeutically, we must make sure that the melotherapeutic process is authentic, in order not to accentuate some of our symptoms by using an inappropriate repertory or by applying methods that are not accurate.

Chapter III of this paper – *The Spiritual Therapy and Melotherapy*, is part of the original, pre-existential research. The role of church songs in the spiritual therapy, the role of active participation to the musical act, the purification of music from elements that are not adequate to therapy and the liturgical repertory in melotherapy are the themes of the subchapters included in the sphere of this chapter. All these elements outline liturgical music as part of a spiritual therapy. When melotherapy uses a religious repertory, it addresses a religious person. With its help, at the pre-spiritual stage, the person can get closer to the liturgical space. The

liturgical space is by excellence a therapeutic one, also making use of the musical elements appropriate for spiritual therapy. That is why the melotherapeutic religious repertory offers a selection of liturgical songs of byzantine tradition, as well as of classical and folk inspiration.

The second section, The Original Research – is structured into three chapters which detail three practical research studies.

Chapter IV – includes the *Applied Study* entitled *Reception and Impact of religious music in Christian life*; a study that has at its core the structure, implementation and analysis of a questionnaire. The structure of the questionnaire started off with data and information collected at the library in order to establish the adequate stages and criteria of this sociological measuring instrument. With the help of this questionnaire we aimed to grasp the existent reality in the contemporary society: the relationship between the Romanian Christian and the religious music; the way the music is received and the impact it has on the life of people through the feelings it determines. The research questionnaire was administered to 300 people, both from rural and urban areas, belonging to 6 age groups: elementary school age, puberty, adolescence, youth, adulthood and seniority. The data analysis and interpretation offered information regarding the age group that is most receptive to liturgical music: the elementary level children (6 to 10-12 years old) and the older people (over 65 years old). The conclusions of the study offered the information needed for starting the other two practical studies.

Chapter V – includes the Experimental Study *Relevance and efficiency of liturgical music in Melotherapeutic programs for depression reduction on the institutionalized elderly*.

The unpleasant aftermath of depression plays an important role when it comes to different diseases in today's society and it's spreading to all categories of age, therefore we can speak today about the depression of a child, of an adolescent, of adults and of older people. Portrayed as a calamity of contemporary times, depression requires different approaches according to the psychopathological field it chooses, as well as a carefully planned and applied program which uses both medical and psychotherapeutic remedies.

The experimental study was developed over a period of three months at The Home for Senior Citizens Ideciu de Sus, Mureş county, and involved 20 people, 10 people were part of the experimental group and 10 represented the control group.

The experimental study included all the required structural stages: the setting the objectives, the hypotheses, the lots of subjects, the research method, work procedures, the development of intervention sessions, as well as the techniques and methods used, the repertory utilized, ending with the data analysis and interpretation.

The conclusions of the practical study show that the melotherapeutic program based on liturgical music, applied to this category of people, lead to an abatement of the depression that was detected at first with instruments such as the Beck depression questionnaire and the Zung depression scale. After the test-retest analysis, the results indicated the depression level was diminished after the application of the melotherapeutic program.

Chapter VI – includes the Experimental Study *Liturgical music melotherapy and its role in diminishing aggressivity among children*. Aggressivity, with its forms: physical, verbal, fury and hostility, is pinpointed at an early age and affects the harmonious development of the child, becoming the foundation for violence during adolescence.

The experimental study had a three month duration, and was run at the Petru Maior Technological High School, Reghin, with 40 participants, elementary level students. The experimental lot and the control lot included each 20 children, in both cases the selected students were from 2nd and 3rd grade. The study lot went through a melotherapeutic program with liturgical music for 12 weeks (an hour a week). At the end of the program, the initial tests were administered again and the test-retest method showed that the level of aggressivity was diminished.

The practical studies of the present research started from the general hypothesis that liturgical music has beneficial effects on people, and can be successfully used in melotherapeutic program sessions, on patients with high receptivity to it, patients that suffer from various forms of depression and aggressivity.

Consequently, the initial general hypothesis was confirmed by the results of the practical studies that were carried out at two public institutions: The Home for Older People Ideciu de Sus, Mureş county and Petru Maior Technological High School, Reghin.

Final conclusions

The role played by music in the life of people is a theme deemed both as old and new by specialists. The therapeutic dimension of music has been exploited throughout history in different ways, for different purposes, but always for the benefit of the people. Therefore, nowadays melotherapy is viewed as a field in its own right. The present paper aimed to identify the effects of using liturgical music within the melotherapeutic process, which is a first step towards a melotherapeutic model based on liturgical music.

Liturgical music hasn't been researched so far as part of therapy sessions. Our study shows that it can be successfully implemented in a specific methodological and technical approach. For a Christian who finds himself in a pre-spiritual stage, this approach to psychotherapy sessions is meant to open the door for therapy from a spiritual standpoint, a dimension that is necessary in order to regain health. The rich thesaurus of liturgical music made available to Christians during church service is structured in a therapeutic manner due to the exigencies it accomplishes, in order to be part of the church canon. It offers to each Christian in accordance with their needs. During therapy sessions the repertory used is organized and applied by the music therapist, based on methods specific to the melotherapeutic process.

Theoretical conclusions:

1. The current research stage in Melotherapy distinguishes two realities: an initial autochthonous reality and an occidental reality evolved from a scientific, methodological and practical point of view.
2. Following the natural steps in its development as a science, recognized at world level, melotherapy appears as a branch of psychotherapy, framed within art therapy, promoted with the help of associations, foundations, specialty journals and periodicals; it establishes its status at world congresses in music therapy and is known to several researchers, theorists and even well-known individuals.
3. Melotherapy in Romania gained more visibility during the past ten years, with the help of partnerships with melotherapeutic associations from abroad, and was defined as a field of study in Educational Public Institutions due to the opening of the medical and didactic fields towards applying it as a complementary therapy.

4. The history of melotherapy loses its origins in therapeutic practices that used music ever since Antiquity; its characteristics reaching us especially through fields such as philosophy and religion.
5. The first Christian centuries, The Middle Ages and the Modern Period represent different stages in the evolution of this field towards what is known today as Melotherapy, a science and practice meant to help the people.

Practical and methodological conclusions, aligned to the set objectives:

1. There is a different level of receptivity of religious music when it comes to the Romanian orthodox population, of different age groups, a conclusion reached at the end of a practical study, as a result of the structure and data application and analysis of a questionnaire.
2. Two experimental lots of vulnerable people were identified (depressive and aggressive) to whom melotherapeutic programs with liturgical music were applied, they resonated very well with the program.
3. Data reports were written on the effects of melotherapeutic programs which use liturgical music, and consequently registered positive effects.
4. The structure of musical-liturgical repertory specific to the needs of the people included in the melotherapeutic program and the means of applying such repertory during working sessions.

Personal contributions to this paper pertain to the following aspects:

1. The focus is on the role of liturgical music in melotherapy for people that manifest a high receptivity towards it.
2. It brings statistical information connected to the liturgical music of orthodox people from Romania, in accordance with the age group they belong to.
3. It deepens the melotherapeutic field by initiating melotherapeutic group programs, based on liturgical music.
4. Draws the attention upon the vulnerability of elementary school children and of institutionalized senior citizens, showing their needs in the contemporary society and their involvement during therapy sessions in order to diminish aggressivity and depression.
5. It presents a Religious Repertory Compendium based on liturgical music usable during melotherapy sessions.

Suggestions for Further research, starting from studies included in the present paper:

1. The elaboration of an efficient melotherapeutic intervention model with the help of liturgical music in order to diminish depression and aggressivity.
2. The extension of melotherapeutic programs through liturgical music in order to reach other groups of vulnerable people and the writing of reports on its effects.
3. The development of musical liturgical programs that are prophylactic/therapeutic within the Church as well as the development of parallel studies.

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