

Serbian chant: Aspect of improvisation in a process of krojenje

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Serbian chant, which is formed on the territory of the Metropolitanate of Karlovci in the late 18th century, has been transmitted for a long time primarily by oral tradition, despite numerous attempts to make church melodies available for liturgical use by making miscellaneous collections. In the process of oral transmission of the melodies belonging to the so-called short chant, hymns of the Osmoglasnik (Octoechos) serve as a basis for krojenje, (literally: tailoring) which means adaptation of music to a text. The procedure of krojenje involves simultaneous detaching Osmoglasnik melodies from their original texts and attaching them to the texts from other liturgical books without notation. Since this is a process of adapting existing melodies to the new texts, realised orally, krojenje is inherent in improvisation, which is an integral part of the process of creating a musical work during the act of performing, even in the cases when musical work is not created by improvisation completely, as is the case with hymns of contemporary Serbian chant. This fact initiated our interdisciplinary –psychological and musicological– research, with an aim to determine the contribution and importance of improvisational process in shaping of melodies in Serbian chant, based on analysis of psychological, i. e. musical-cognitive aspects of improvisation, manifested during the process of krojenje. The main goal is to answer the question whether and to what extent the way in which improvisational process could be explained by the existing relevant cognitive models of musical improvisation. This paper presents analysis results which are in favor of conclusion that general laws of cognitive functioning, as well as psychological principles of spontaneous creative activity/improvisation which takes place within other musical genres, could be applied to the process of krojenje in Serbian chant.

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