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On the Similarity of the Principles of Church Singing Interpretation of the *Sequentia* and the *Bezstrochen* in Western European and Russian Hymnography*

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Abstract. The article is devoted to the issue of comparative study of the Russian and Western European church singing traditions, making it possible to reveal not only a common conception of their development (which has already been undertaken in music scholarship), but also to correlate concrete principles of interpretation of church singing. The author examines and juxtaposes for the first time the principles of the *sequentia* and the *bezstrochen*. Separately from each other, these two terms are familiar and have been elucidated in music scholarship. The term *sequentia* denotes a textual and musical form based on repetition of melodic lines. One of the first scholarly definitions of “bezstrochen” has been proposed by the author of this article, one that is based on an 18th century manuscript. The term *bezstrochen* connotes the principle of interpretation of church singing which allows to “fit” a poetical text of different length into the limited space of particular melodic lines. In the article, the regularities of the indicated principles are analyzed based on examples of the European (the sequences *Rex Caeli* and *P(C) langant, filii, plorationa uno*) and the Russian traditions of church singing (the *bezstrochen* in the *podobens Yegda ot dreva* [When from the Tree] of the 2nd glas and *V tretii den' voskresl* [You Arose on the Third Day] of the 6th glas). The identicalness of the compositional structures of the church chants confirms the commonality of the church singing traditions in singing *na podoben* and also makes it possible to assert about a historical evolution of the practice of church singing from a minimal level of melodization to the highest level of chant singing.

Keywords: Western European art of chant singing, Russian art of chant singing, singing *na podoben*, *sedmichnyi* chant, *sequentia*, *bezstrochen*

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О схожести принципов певческой интерпретации *sequentia* и «безстрочен» в западноевропейской и русской гимнографии

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Аннотация. Статья посвящена проблеме сравнительного изучения отечественного и западноевропейского церковно-певческого искусства, позволяющего выявить не только общую концепцию их развития (что уже предпринималось в науке), но и соотнести конкретные принципы певческой интерпретации. Автором рассматриваются и впервые сопоставляются принципы *sequentia* и «безстрочен». Отдельно друг от друга эти термины науке известны и объяснены. *Sequentia* обозначает текстомузыкальную форму, построенную на повторении мелодических строк. Одно из первых научных определений «безстрочна» было предложено автором статьи по рукописи XVIII века. Термином «безстрочен» обозначается принцип певческой интерпретации, который позволяет «уместить» поэтический текст разной протяжённости в ограниченное количество мелодических строк. В статье на примерах европейской (секвенции *Rex Caeli* и *P(C) langant, filii, plorationa uno*) и русской («безстрочен» в подобию «Егда от древа» 2-го гласа и «В третий день воскресл» 6-го гласа) певческих традиций анализируются закономерности обозначенных принципов. Единство композиционной структуры песнопений подтверждает общность певческих традиций в пении на подобен, а также позволяет утверждать об историческом движении певческой практики от минимального уровня мелодизации к наивысшему, распевному уровню.

Ключевые слова: западноевропейское певческое искусство, русское певческое искусство, пение на подобен, седмичный распев, *sequentia*, безстрочен

Scholarly Hypothesis

Comparative analysis of the Western and Eastern traditions of church singing presents a direction of music scholarship which was set during the time of the establishment of written notation in church singing, i.e., in the Middle Ages. Comparison was one of the most important methods of medieval theory, one that was stipulated by the necessity of specifying its sources. The Western European and the Russian theories drew different comparisons, because they pursued different aims. The Western European theory aspired to connect with the Ancient Greek tradition, in which the sought-for quality was its *antiquity*

(despite the pagan period of the history of culture) and, consequently, the contingent primacy in regards to the others, including the Eastern, Byzantine tradition. [1] In the Russian church singing tradition, the filial relation to the Byzantine tradition has been emphasized, regardless of the time of its formation. What was sought in the Russian tradition was not as much the ancientness as the *genuineness* of the church singing traditions. What was primary was the content, the spiritual value of culture as a phenomenon of the Christian world in that section of which that had preserved the Orthodox Christian tradition in unchanged form. [2]

But, notwithstanding the *theoretical* opposition to Byzantine culture, the *practical*

arrangement of the Western European art of church singing has preserved traces of those systemic phenomena that were intrinsic to the supposedly “antagonistic” culture, including, as we presume, *na podoben* singing.¹ At present, it is customary to examine this systematic rule solely in the context of the Eastern church singing tradition, whereas the European practice connected with it, likewise, provides material for such kinds of research. In other words, *na podoben* singing makes it possible to speak of a common history of the European and Russian church singing traditions, their single foundation and lengthy interaction. The question regarding what kind of foundation it was — whether it was early Byzantine or early European, — remains an open one, at present, since it requires research of the historical layer, which up to the present has not been confirmed by notated sources. [Ibid.] Nevertheless, it remains possible to speak of a commonality of the church singing traditions in such a systemic manifestation.

The Russian *Bezstrochen* and Its Structure

Let us examine the principles of *bezstrochen* (i.e., a “chant without a line”) and *sequentia* lying within the field of view of *na podoben* singing (about the systematic rules of the church singing traditions, see: [5]) demonstrated in the church music manuscripts, starting from the earliest ones, containing musical notation of ecclesiastical chants. In the European tradition, such manuscripts have been preserved starting from the 9th century, they contain the notated *sequentia* successions that shall be presented in this article. It is likely that in Russian culture, the phenomenon of the *bezstrochen* has also been known for a lengthy period of time,

but the term itself appeared only in sources starting from the 16th century. We shall start from them. Let us remind ourselves that *na podoben* singing presumes the compilation of church chants (προσόμοια in Greek) along the lines of those already existent (αυτόμελα in Greek). In the Russian tradition, this idea came to be known as *podoben*. Its incipit is indicated in the notation of the church chants, for example, “the sticherion *Gospodi, vozzvakh* [To the Lord I Called], glas 2, the *podoben* — *Yegda ot dreva* [When from the Tree].”

The Typikon (i.e., the Liturgical Regulations) connects singing *na podoben* with the levels of the melodiousness of the texts. Archpriest Boris (Nikolayev) writes: “Those expounders who call the melodies of the *podobens* as ‘sedmichnyi’ [seventh] are correct <...> in the *podobens* the psalmody, which, as it is known, presents the core of our ‘verbal service,’ is somewhat extended and adorned, but not in an arbitrary manner and not at the expense of the meaning, but in full correspondence with the text. The melody puts the stresses in the correct spots <...> In the cases when the Typikon expresses special respect towards an event of a particular day or a saint (church and other holidays with vigils), the church chants determined by the regulations as pertaining to *na podoben* are relegated as pertaining to the ‘great holidays’ and may be chanted as a *samoglasnyi* [original] chant or in the manner of a ‘great melody’ (we shall call it so conditionally), signifying the highest level of the breadth of church liturgical psalmody.” [6, p. 62] Thereby, the researcher determines three levels of melodiousness of the liturgical text: the psalmody, the *sedmichnyi* [seventh] melody and the *samoglasnyi*, or great (great

¹ About the preeminent role of the Eastern Christian tradition in relation to the Western European, see: [3]. If we base ourselves to the customary chronology of the Middle Ages, we must speak about a very extended period (lasting over half of a century) of the “Latinization” of the church singing culture. See: [4].

holiday). Singing *na podobn* corresponds to the intermediary level of melodiousness, at which “the melody makes stresses at the appropriate spots” and “is expanded and adorned, but not arbitrarily, not at the expense of the meaning, but in full correspondence with the text.” [Ibid]

Following the indicated requirements, starting from the 15th century, the church chant manuscripts have classified the chants of the *podobens* into the following categories: *krylosnyi* [i.e., wing-like] or *priimoshnyi*² (corresponds to a *sedmichnaya* melody sung on a daily basis), as well as *velikii* [great] or *znamenny* (corresponds to the Typikon’s regulative definition of *velikoprazdnichnyi* [pertaining to the great holidays]) (see Table 1). In the literal sense, among these, only the *sedmichnyi* chant sung daily pertains to singing *na podobn*.

Starting from the 16th century, the term *bezstrochen* begins to appear in Russian church chant manuscripts, complementing the notation

of the daily *sedmichnyi* chant (the *krylosnyi* and the *priimoshnyi*). The term *bezstrochen* denotes such a principle of interpretation of church chants that makes it possible to “fit” poetic texts of various lengths into the limited number of particular melodic lines (from two to four). In other words, a *bezstrochen* presents a sequence. We also encounter detailed descriptions of its structure. The melodic lines are called *ryadovoi* [“standard” or “derived from a set”] and their repeated sequence is called *ryad* [a “set”].³ The numbers of *ryadovoi* lines and *ryads* may be varied.⁴ For example, in the *podobn* *Yegda ot dreva* [When from the Tree] there are three full “sets,” a curtailed fourth, *zachinnyi* [initial] and *konechnyi* [final] lines (Example No. 1); in the *podobn* of the 6th glas *V tretii den' voskresl* [You Arose on the Third Day] — “there are two initial lines and two more standard lines” (Example No. 2).

From one manuscript to the next, the *bezstrochen* chant is written out without

Table 1. The Levels of Melodiousness, as they are Determined in the Typikon (Liturgical Regulations), and their Signification in the Church Chant Manuscripts

The Typikon (Liturgical Regulations) [5]	Church Chants from the 15th Century
The <i>sedmichnyi</i> melody sung daily (extended psalmody)	The <i>krylosnyi</i> or <i>priimoshnyi</i> chant of the <i>podobens</i>
The festive, <i>velikii</i> [“great”] melody (psalmody extended to the highest degree)	The <i>velikii</i> [great] or <i>znamenny</i> chant of the <i>podobens</i>

² For more details on the *priimoshnyi* and the *znamenny* chants of the *podobens*, see: [7].

³ The terminology of the structure of the *bezstrochen* may be found in 18th century manuscripts. See: Russian State Library (RSL). F. 178, No. 9371, 18th Century.

⁴ Out of more than twenty *podobens*, only four received the definition of *bezstrochen*: *Yegda ot dreva* [When from the Tree] (of the 2nd glas), *Raduisya, Zhivonosnyi Krete* [Hail, Life-Bearing Cross] (of the 5th glas), *V tretii den' voskresl yesi* [You Arose on the Third Day] (of the 6th glas), *Gospodi, ashche i na sudishchi* [Lord, You Will Be at the Judgment] (of the 8th glas). See: [8].

Example No. 1

The *bezstrochen Yegda ot dreva*
[When from the Tree].⁵ Fragment

Initial Line



First Set (Standard Lines 1-2-3)



Second Set (Standard Lines 1-2-3)



Example No. 2

The *bezstrochen V tretii den' voskresl yesi*
[You Arose on the Third Day].⁶ Fragment

Initial Two Lines (1-1)



Standard Two Lines (2-2)



⁵ The chant of the *podoben Yegda ot dreva* [When from the Tree] is cited from the list of the RSL. F. 178, No. 9371, 18th century.

⁶ The chant of the *podoben V tretii den' voskresl* [You Arose on the Third Day] is cited from the list of the RSL. F. 138, No. 168, 17th century.

any significant variants.⁷ It must be noted that a comparison of the manuscripts of the *bezstrochen* and the *upotrebitel'nyi napev* [commonly sung tune] shows that the daily *sedmichnaya* melody constructed according to the principle of repetition of the “sets” of melodic lines remained the predominant one in liturgical church singing practice up to the present day.⁸

The Western European *Sequentia* and its Structure

Now let us turn to the examples of the *sequentia* in the Western European tradition.⁹ Contemporary musicology defines the sequence as a textual-musical form musically constructed on repetition of melodic lines. [11, pp. 38–39] We shall leave aside the regularities of the text disclosed by philologists from the Ancient Greek theory of rhythmic prose, since in Russian hymnography they are scattered and cannot present a criterion for comparison. [12] Let us turn our attention to the variants of the organization of the melody.

We shall permit ourselves a conditionality and transfer to the European *sequentia* the terminology that elucidates the phenomenon of the *bezstrochen* in Russian manuscripts. What is meant here are such definitions of melodic “lines” as the *zachinnaya stroka* [the “initial

line”] (i.e., the introduction), the *ryadovaya stroka* [the “standard line”] (i.e., the repetition), the *konechnaya stroka* [the “final line”] (i.e., the conclusion), as well as the indication of the *ryad* [“set” or “row”] (i.e., the succession of repeating “standard lines”). The repetition of melodic lines in the *sequentia* and the *bezstrochen* makes it possible to sing out a verbal text of any length. There is a certain regularity present in the quantity of the repeating “standard lines” in the *sequentiae*: the earliest musical specimens, for the most part, possess one or two “standard lines,” while the later ones (starting from the 12th century) have two or three.¹⁰

One of the earliest notated *sequentiae* *Rex caeli* [King of Heaven] — is comprised of six different melodic lines¹¹ (Example No. 3). Each line is the only one in its “row” and is repeated two or four times. In a similar manner the *bezstrochen Tridneven voskresl yesi* [You Arose from the Dead in Three Days] of the 6th glas was organized, each “row” of which consisted of one melodic line, albeit repeated several times (see Examples Nos. 2 and 3).

In Example No. 3, only the beginning of the sequence *Rex caeli* is shown. The scheme of the first section is brought in its entirety in Table 2, as is that of the second section,

⁷ In the 20th century Old-Believers’ manuscripts, the melodic lines of the *bezstrochen* are reduced to one repeated *napevka* [tune]. See: [8].

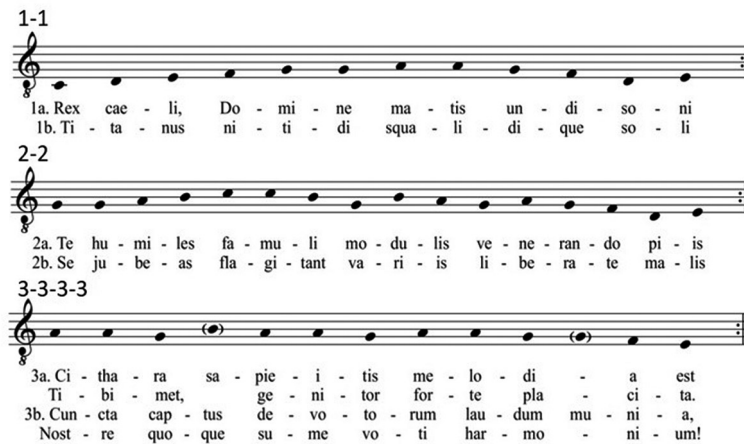
⁸ The *intonational* content of the *bezstrochen* and the contemporary *upotrebitel'nyi napev* coincides in the abstract, most of all, in terms of the construction of the line. See: [9, p. 8].

⁹ The article presents note-line transcriptions of the *sequentiae* *Rex caeli* and *P(C) langant, filii*, written down by means of Adiasthematic notation in the manuscripts: Bamberg, Staatsbibliothek, Var. I.f. 64, 10th century; Oxford, Bodleian Library, 775 (2558), 10th – early 11th centuries. The publication of facsimiles of the manuscripts and the sources of the transcriptions into five-line notation may be found in: [10, pp. 38, 40].

¹⁰ Researchers among the philologists make use of the term “colon” or “period” for the *sequentiae* from the period between the 9th and the 11th centuries and “line” for the *sequentiae* starting from the 12th century. [11] In the present article, the Western European *sequentia* is defined by terminology of the Russian system of singing *na podoben*: the “colon” of the *sequentia* corresponds to the “standard line” of the *bezstrochen*, while the “period” of the *sequentia* corresponds to the *ryad* [“set” or “row”] of the *bezstrochen*.

¹¹ The overall quantity of prosaic lines of this sequence amounts to over forty. [13, p. 115]

Example No. 3

The *sequentia Rex caeli*
[King of Heaven].¹² Fragment


1-1
1a. Rex cae - li, Do - mi - ne ma - tis un - di - so - ni
1b. Ti - ta - nus ni - ti - di squa - li - di - que so - li

2-2
2a. Te hu - mi - les fa - mu - li mo - du - lis ve - ne - ran - do pi - is
2b. Se ju - be - as fla - gi - tant va - ri - is li - be - ra - te ma - lis

3-3-3-3
3a. Ci - tha - ra sa - pie - i - tis me - lo - di - a est
Ti - bi - met, ge - ni - tor for - te pla - ci - ta.
3b. Cun - cta cap - tus de - vo - to - rum lau - dum mu - ni - a,
Nost - re quo - que su - me vo - ti har - mo - ni - um!

which presents a precise melodic repetition of the first section. The only thing that is changed in the second section is the text; thereby, in this sequence, we observe a middle-ground binary form (with a refrain). The role of the refrain is played by the first melodic line passing twice in the first section and twice in the second (Table 2).

Table 2. The *sequentia Rex caeli*[King of Heaven].
Fragment

First Section	Second Section
1-1, 2-2, 3-3-3-3 (Example No. 3)	1-1, 2-2, 3-3-3-3
1-1, 2a-2a-2a-2a, 5-5-5-5, 6-6	1-1, 2a-2a-2a-2a, 5-5-5-5, 6-6

The groups of lines headed by the first melodic lines may be examined as “sets.” In such a case, the structure of the sequence *Rex caeli* is close to the structure of the *bezstrochen Yegda ot dreva* [When from the Tree] with the three “standard lines” in each “set” or “row” (see Examples Nos. 1 and 3). The

change in the melodic lines (from 2 to 2a) and the introduction of other ones (such as 5 and 6) may be explained by the improvisational dynamics of the sequence, not entirely usual for the later time period. It is possible that the example of *Rex caeli* presents one of the first notated testimonies of the formation of the sequence from the simple strophic form of church chant.

Let us cite a fragment of another early sequence — *P(C) langant, filii, plorationa uno* [Let us Sing, my Children, the Sad Song of the Winged Swan] (Example No. 4). Here it is possible to single out two lines participating in the structure of the melody. They are the most discernible at the beginning of the sequence: the first line is in the range of $f - \uparrow c - \downarrow g$, the second — $c - \uparrow d - \downarrow a$. The lines are repeated and are presented one after the other, forming the first “set”: 1-1-2-2. The second “set,” as can be seen from Example No. 4, also begins from the first line, repeated four times. The second line is presented imprecisely and passes twice. What turns out is approximately the scheme of the second “set”: 1-1-1-1-2a-2a

¹² The complete musical and poetical texts of the chants is presented by the present author’s *Khrestomatiya po kursu istorii zarubezhnoi muzyki* [Chrestomathy for the Course of the History of Music Outside of Russia], which is currently being prepared for republication (Second Edition, Supplemented). First Edition: [10].

(see Example No. 4). The third “set” (not given in Example No. 4) transforms the line in such a way that it leads essentially to the composition of a new melodic line, which we shall label as the third: 2b or 3–3–3–3. The remaining part of the sequence (and this amounts to almost half of the entire chant) is built on a repetition of the third line. Such a variance upon repetition is a characteristic feature of the melodic musical thinking revealed in Gregorian chant and *znamenny* chant upon its through strophic structure.¹³

Both of the demonstrated Western European sequences, it must be emphasized once again, are found in the earliest notated manuscripts of the 9th and 10th centuries. The intonational reserve and syllabic organization of the melodies make it possible to relate them to the tradition of that very *sedmichnyi* daily sung melody of the *podobens*. In comparison with psalmody, it is more melodious and varied in its melodic repetitions.¹⁴ Moreover, we must emphasize that these examples of Western European hymnography, upon first glance, testify

Example No. 4 The *sequentia P(C) langant, filii, ploratione uno*
[I Shall Sing, My Children, a Sad Song of a Winged Swan]. Fragment

1-1

Al - le - fi - li - i plo - ra - ti - o - ne lu - ia

1. Plan - gant fi - li - i plo - ra - ti - o - ne u - na

2-2

2a. a - li - fis cy - gni, qui trans - fre - ta - vit ae - quo - ra

2b. O quam a - ma - re l'a - men - ta - ba - fur a - ri - da

1-1-1-1

3a. Se - de - re - li - quis - se flo - ri - ge - ra et pe - tisse al - ta ma - ri - a.

3b. Ai - ens in - fe - lix sum a - vi - cu - la heu mi - ni quid a - gam mi - se - ra?

2a-2a

4a. Pen - nis so - lu - ta in - ni - ti lu - ci - da non po - te - ro Hic in stil - la.

4b. Un - dis qua - ti - or, pro - cel - lis hinc in - de al - li - dor ex - su - la - ta.

2b or 3

5a. A - ngor in - tar ar - ta gur - gi - tum ca - cu - mi - na ge - mens a - la - ti - zo, in - tu - ens mor - ti - fe - ra non con - scen - dens su - pe - ra

5b. Ce - mens co - pi - o - sa pi - sci - um le - gu - mi - na non que - o in - den - so gur - gi - tum as - su - me - re a - li - men - ta op - ti - ma.

¹³ The varied nature of the correlations of melodic lines in the chants of Russian hymnography is researched by Yulia Yevdokimova. [14]

¹⁴ Music scholarship brings out the phenomenon of the *sequentia* out of the melismatic chants of the *Alleluia*, connecting it with the composition of words called to transform the chant from a melismatic to a syllabic type for the convenience of memorizing. [11, p. 38]

It remains unclear, how this should be dealt with the principle of repetition. In the chorale, the melismatic chants were constructed as a constantly renewed melodic “paraphrase,” and not a literal repetition of short melodic lines. In the case of the sequence, it must be presumed that either this method generated a didactic phenomenon in which the “sectors” of the chant were repeated twice (or more) in order to be remembered better, or the sequence has particular origins of its own.

of a transitory stage of musical form, which moves from a strophic type, entirely explainable by the structure of the text, to a “compositional” type (to use Yulia Yevdokimova’s term [15]), bringing into the sound of the chant or chorale special musical characteristic features, such as, for instance, repetition of melodic lines unconnected with the text.

Apostolic Typology

Thereby, both the *sequentia* and the *bezstrochen* may be regarded as a demonstration of the natural historical evolution from the melodious singing of psalms established by the Typikon (the Liturgical Regulations) of the Orthodox Church on the primary level of melodization, to composing *samoglasnaya* melodies for the major holidays at the third, most melodious level. [5] Even the Apostle St. Paul spoke of the existence of three links of church singing practice, denoting “the psalms, anthems and sacred songs” of the first Christians. It does not arouse any wonder that this Apostolic Typology presents a symbolically ternary “scheme” for the sacred culture of church singing for all times. It must be reminded that the principle of the *bezstrochen* — if we apply to it the apostolic definition of the “anthem” — has also become predominant in the present-day practice of liturgical service, indicating at the preservation of the “regulations

of church singing” stemming from the times of the Apostles. Coexisting together at various times, most likely, each of these three principles, at alternate times, have taken on the roles of, respectively, the leading, the lagging behind or the equal with the others.

Thus, the basis of the content of the present article is comprised of the hypothesis of the similitude of the principles of the singing interpretation in the Western European and Russian church singing hymnography of the *sequentia* and the *bezstrochen*. In conclusion, it is deemed important to remind that the comparative method of study of church singing, familiar from the time of the formation of the theory of the art of church singing during the epoch of the Middle Ages, has obtained additional scholarly substantiation in contemporary times. It is referred to the theory of the shared stages of development of musical culture of the peoples of the world, [16] making it possible to complement knowledge about one tradition with the aid of the other. Fairly recently, such a correlation with the Western European tradition aided the transcription of neumatic notation of the Russian early *polyphony*. [14; 17; 18] The present research demonstrates that the comparative method has not been exhausted and may show results in the study of the regularities of church chant *monody* at the present time.

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