

Samohlasen Tone Four in the Carpatho-Rusyn Prostopînije

The omission by oversight from Bokšaj's *Церковное Простопѣніе въ Мукачевской греко-Католической Епархii установленное* (1906) of the model samohlasen of Tone 4 would appear unfortunate at first glance. However, the practical disadvantage cannot have amounted to anything; a quest for a Rusyn who could not sing this melody, according to the custom of his or her parish, from memory would have been fruitless. And in fact the version of this melody sung in the cathedral of Uzhhorod by its cantor at that time, Iosyf Malynyč, was published; only not with the Slavonic text. The chant book was published also in a Hungarian-language edition – Boksaj János and Malinics József, *Egyházi Közénekek* (Uzhhorod: 1906), p. 22 – and in this the sticheron is printed in its expected place.

Bokšaj's was the only collection of Carpatho-Rusyn chant to attain widespread recognition, and when it became hard to obtain, several collections based on it were published. Intimate familiarity with the chant and a supply of trained cantors were more difficult to maintain among Rusyn Americans in later years, and in any case the omission marred the systematic presentation of the eight tones, so in these collections the lacuna was filled. In each case, it was filled independently, without reference to the Hungarian Bokšaj or to any other Bokšaj spin-off.

The earliest of these offshoots was compiled and published (by *samizdat*) by Theodore Racyn (Ratsin, Ratsyn), a cantor in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, who in 1925 brought out an expanded edition, the text produced on the typewriter and the notes written by hand. In addition to the original contents of Bokšaj, he added a number of chant melodies, especially for the Triodion (taken from the Irmologion of L'vôv), thus bearing witness to high standards in observing proper melodies in North America in the first half of the twentieth century.

After the Second World War, Slavonic was still the predominant language of services, but knowledge of the Cyrillic alphabet was declining and increasingly the Latinica was used instead. Neither Bokšaj's nor Racyn's chant book could be easily found, so Andrew Sokol compiled two books of material extracted from Bokšaj, with the text converted to Latin letters: *Plain Chant*, containing the ordinary of the three liturgies and several other services along with some popular paraliturgical hymns, was published in 1945, and *Basic Chant*, containing the eight tones and the ordinaries of Vespers and Mattins, in 1955.

Finally, in postwar Slovakia the Cyrillic alphabet was increasingly superseded by the Latin, here in connection with a government-supported Slovakization of the Rusyn populace. A thoroughly reëdited version of Bokšaj was prepared by Štefan Papp, Romanized, reorganized, and with a number of editorial changes, some of them unfortunate.

Each of these three derivatives of the original Slavonic edition of Bokšaj supplied the missing samohlasen in its own way.

In addition to Bokšaj, there was one other major collection of Prostopînije, that of Ioakim Choma (Khoma, Хома), containing the chant of the St Nicholas monastery at Mukačevo. Unlike Bokšaj, this collection is intended to be a supplement to the Irmologion of L'vôv. It is quite independent of Bokšaj, and of course contains the *stichera samohlasnyja*, which are sung a bit differently in the former Kingdom of Hungary (the Irmologion, of course, provides them as sung in Galicia). Choma's collection, printed from hand-drawn stencils on the shapirograph, was published in 1930, but never attained wide circulation, and indeed was probably intended for use only in monasteries.

Michael P. Hilko (Хилько), the prominent cantor, choir director, and composer, served for many years in a parish of Carpatho-Rusyn origin (St John's Church, Passaic, New Jersey), and made considerable use of the chant tradition of his parish. He recorded in a manuscript notebook the samohlasen melodies as sung in the parish; many years ago he kindly provided me with a photocopy, thus providing a version taken independently from oral tradition.

The most recent collection known to me is a booklet prepared by Imrich Marinčák and published in Prešov in 1997. It contains melodies in the Prešov style for the ordinary of the Liturgy, and an abridged *osmohlasnik* including the samohlasen melodies.

As a result we have seven different versions of the samohlasen melody of Tone 4; if Bokšaj's book had not omitted it, we would have four. The cloud has a silver lining. An outstanding contemporary connoisseur of Prostopinije, Fr Stephan Meholick, has expressed regrets that Bokšaj did not include variants of the melodies, as Stevan Mokranjac did in his Serbian *Osmohlasnik* of 1922. One can only agree. In this case, we can supply some variants from the books surveyed above.

To appreciate the variation they exhibit, the first step is to analyze the melody into its constituent phrases. These are the psalm verse preceding the sticheron, and five phrases of the sticheron itself: a unique opening phrase, three phrases repeated in order as needed, and a unique concluding phrase. I shall designate the melody for the preceding versicle as V, the unique opening phrase as A, the iterative phrases as B, C, and D respectively, and the concluding phrase as Z.

Next let us construct a table to exhibit two chief characteristics of each phrase: the reciting note and the phrase final. Let us identify both by solfege syllables and by the numerical code devised by the Hungarian muscologists, in which the final of the melody is 1, the next degree above it is 2, and so on; and let us place a colon between them. (Since this melody does not enter the plagal range we need not here consider the lower octave, designated in the Hungarian system by Roman numerals). Let us enter the several sources in chronological order. Note that Slavonic Bokšaj does give the melody for V, and this is reproduced in the three collections based on Bokšaj (although Papp then transcribes the sticheron a third below and has to change the key).

	V	A	B	C	D	Z
Bokšaj	4 (mi):	1 (ti):	3 (re):	4 (mi):	4 (mi):	2 (do):
	1 (ti)	4 (mi)	4 (mi)	2 (do)	3 (re)	1 (ti)
Racyn	4 (mi):	1 (ti):	3 (re):	4 (mi):	4 (mi):	4 (mi):
	1 (ti)	4 (mi)	4 (mi)	2 (do)	3 (re)	1 (ti)
Choma	2 (do):	1 (ti):	3 (re):	4 (mi):	4 (mi):	2 (do):
	1 (ti)	4 (mi)	4 (mi)	2 (do)	3 (re)	1 (ti)
Sokol	4 (mi):	1 (ti):	3 (re):	4 (mi):	2 (do)	2 (do):
	1 (ti)	4 (mi)	4 (mi)	2 (do)	3 (re)	1 (ti)
Hilko	4 (mi):	1 (ti):	3 (re):	4 (mi):	4 (mi):	2 (do):
	1 (ti)	4 (mi)	4 (mi)	2 (do)	3 (re)	1 (ti)
Papp	4 (mi):	2 (do):	3 (re):	4 (mi):	4 (mi):	2 (do):
	1 (ti)	4 (mi)	4 (mi)	2 (do)	3 (re)	1 (ti)
Marinčák	4 (mi):	1 (ti):	3 (re):	4 (mi):	2 (do)	2 (do):
	1 (ti)	4 (mi)	4 (mi)	2 (do)	3 (re)? ¹	1 (ti)

Run your eyes down the columns, and the exceptions to the consensus become obvious: phrase V in Choma, A in Papp, D in Sokol and Marinčák, Z in Racyn. These are not, of course, the only differences; Racyn for example, often includes in a phrase an initial melodic movement (intonation), while Sokol eschews them. But differences in the features exhibited in the table are probably the most structurally significant. They both allow us to analyze the overall structure of the melody and serve as clues to the history of the melody. However, to make use of them in the latter capacity we would have to set them in a wider context, including the Galician chant, the samohlasen melodies that appear (rarely) in the old irmologia, the Kievan Chant of Russian tradition, and

¹In Marinčák, the last visible note of phrase D is indeed *re*, but it is an eighth-note (quaver) when all other phrases end in quarter-notes (crotchets), and both the flag of the note and the last letter of the underlying syllable of the text are cut off at the end of the line, suggesting that in fact there was a further note, or more likely two of them (in such figures, eighth-notes usually com in pairs, and the final should be a quarter-note); the real final was therefore lost because of a printing error. However, no other version has a three- or even two-note figure in this position, so we simply do not know how to reconstruct the staff at this point, and can draw no firm conclusions.

ultimately also the Lesser Znamenny Chant of Russian tradition. I venture to predict that such a comparison would not only give us some account of the history of the melody, but would also suggest that these melodies have a much longer history than is generally believed nowadays.

In Papp's version, note that the *b* is always preceded by either a flat or a natural except in phrase A; it is natural in C, flat in the intonation of B (second occurrence) and in Z. I believe that a flat was omitted by oversight in A; had Papp not chosen the odd procedure of assigning the sticheron to a different key from the one in that Bokšaj chose for the versicle, it would have been marked as flat by the signature. No other version has a raised note in the position; Racyn uses a slightly different melodic figure in the phrase termination here, and the note in question does not appear; all the rest have a note a half step above its predecessor, and while I cannot prove that Papp did not intend a whole step it seems unlikely – try singing it that way!

One more point to observe: while the rest all give the model text *Životvorjáščemu tojemu krestú* six phrases (ABCDBZ), Choma divides it into seven (ABCDBCZ); he ends a phrase on *voschod*. None of the others does this, and they all agree with one another in phrase division.

Stephen Reynolds
10/23 March 2004
Wednesday of the Fifth Week of Lent
Forefeast of the Annunciation NS