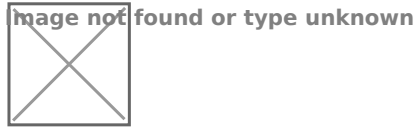


In Historic First, School of Byzantine Music of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America Participates in International Conference of Byzantine Music and the Psaltic Art



In a historic first, the School of Byzantine Music of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America participated in an international conference on the thematic relevance of Byzantine Music and the Psaltic Art. The 9th International Conference of Byzantine Music and the Psaltic Art, organized by the Institute of Byzantine Musicology of the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece,¹ was hosted by the Sacred Metropolis of Thessaloniki.

The main theme of discussion was “Academies and Schools of Byzantine Music and the Psaltic Art” and honoring its international character, offered a podium to institutions who operate outside Greece and teach in other languages as well.

The theme highlighted the framework for the participation of the School of Byzantine Music of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America to present its achievements, progress, and vision.

The 9th International Conference was held in Thessaloniki between November 28 and December 1, 2024, with the blessing of His Beatitude Archbishop Ieronymos II of Athens and All Greece, with the co-organizing auspices of His Eminence Philotheos Metropolitan of Thessaloniki, and the academic support of the Department of Byzantine Music Studies of the University of Athens.

The participants in the Conference were welcomed by Professor Grigorios Anastasiou, President of the Institute of Byzantine Musicology, Prof. Achilleas Chaldaeakis, who conveyed the Patriarchal Blessing and Greeting of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and Metropolitan Philotheos of Thessaloniki, which initiated the opening of the conference and its activities.

The School of Byzantine Music of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (SBM) was represented by its Director, Archon Mousikodidaskalos Georgios

Theodoridis, as well as faculty and staff of the School, including Rev. Fr. Romanos Karanos, Assistant Professor of Byzantine Liturgical Music at Holy Cross Hellenic College, MA, Dr. Nikolaos Giannoukakis, Protopsaltis of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Pittsburgh and Samuel Herron, Protopsaltis and Director of Music Ministry at St. Nektarios Church, Charlotte, NC.

Their presentations at the conference, united in a thematic spirit, began with a presentation of the beginning and development of the Psaltic Art in America, through periods and figures – from a “trembling immigrant music” in a golden age, to the confident representative of the “musical citizen abroad” and the traditions of the Mother Church. This presentation offered by Dr. Giannoukakis, covered historically regional training programs in Byzantine Chant that have existed in the United States since 1970, especially at the Theological Seminary in Brookline, MA, and concluded with a pan-American, unified and uniform approach in accordance with the traditions of the Mother Church of Constantinople, the Ecumenical Patriarchate and how this present status is the product of the vision and leadership of His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America. Then, Archon Theodoridis gave a comprehensive overview of the position and role of the cantor in America, as well as the necessity and challenges of staffing the sacred chant stands of our Archdiocese. He also presented running programs and future publications, under the auspices of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, for the cultivation and development of the role of the Cantor. Rev. Fr. Romanos presented an analytical overview of the evolution and progress of the teaching and learning of Byzantine Music at Holy Cross Hellenic College and mentioned local and national institutions dedicated to the cause of disseminating Byzantine Music. Finally, Mr. Herron introduced the conference participants to the reality of the need for English ecclesiastical hymnology, demonstrating an eloquent process of aligning the translated text as closely as possible to the Greek-original with the help of the musical patterns of Byzantine Music (theseis). Mr. Herron’s presentation was embellished by a short demonstration, with a choral ensemble that consisted of all representatives of the SBM, who chanted the “Axion Estin” adapted in English and set to music by the aforementioned in Grave Diatonic heptaphonos Mode.

Throughout the conference period, in the evening hours, Byzantine Music concerts were presented in the magnificent and historic churches and cathedrals of Thessaloniki, by representatives of all conference delegations as well as local choral ensembles and Byzantine Choirs. His Eminence Metropolitan Philotheos of Thessaloniki attended all events and greeted those gathered and shared pastoral and theological reflections. On the last day, the Director of the SBM together with all representatives of the SBM, performed a Byzantine Music concert in the English

language at the historic Church of “Panagia Acheiropoietos” joined by local students and cantors.

This historic participation of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and scientific contribution of the School of Byzantine Music, for the first time, to such an internationally renowned conference was appreciated by the wide range of participants, colleagues and clergy as well as Metropolitan Philotheos, who expressed his congratulatory enthusiasm to the Director of the SBM and gratitude to His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros for sending such a prestigious representation.

1 The Institute of Byzantine Musicology (IBM) was established by the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece during its 87th meeting that took place on 24 June 1970, following a proposal initiated by the late Metropolitan of Serbia and Kozani Dionysios, who addressed the synodical committee of Sacred Worship and Art Synod Committee. The Institute operates according to the regulation 17/1981 of the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece (ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ, year 57, Vol. II, No 3 Sep. 16, 1981, and the Official Government Bulletin #135, Vol. Nov. 11, 1982.

The first scientific collaborator of the Institute, and later from 1999 to 2022, Director and Editor of the Institute’s publications, was Mr. Grigorios Th. Stathis, Professor Emeritus of the University of Athens. In recognition of his service, the Holy Synod awarded him the title of Honorary Director of the IBM.

Since 2022, the Institute has been chaired by Dr. Grigorios Anastasiou, Professor and Protopsaltis.

Photo: Holy Metropolis of Thessaloniki.

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