

ROMEIKO ENSEMBLE PERFORMS AT NATIONAL LIBRARY OF GREECE IN ATHENS

Dec. 13, 2006

At the invitation of the National Library of Greece, Romeiko Ensemble performed a concert of Christmas hymnology in the Byzantine and post-Byzantine traditions transcribed from respective manuscripts in the Library's collection.

The National Library of Greece (NLG) preserves among its other treasures around 500 musical manuscripts of the Byzantine and post-Byzantine era. These manuscripts contain hymns and nonsense syllables texts (*terirem*) from Byzantine (12th-15th c.) and post-Byzantine (16th-18th c.) composers. The Byzantine melodies were written in the old Byzantine script (*parasemantiki*) that contemporary musicians and cantors are not able to read or perform. Few Byzantine melodies were transcribed into the contemporary musical (*psaltic*) notation of 1814 (*Chrysanthine notation*) by Chourmouzos Chartophylax (+1840) using as a transcription code the sound of 17th-18th century psaltic tradition. Musicologists of the 20th century tried to restore the Byzantine melodies into the original sound, but their attempts were not accurate. The musicologist Ioannes Arvanites (1961-) after thorough research in all Byzantine sources the last 25 years resuscitated the lost Byzantine sound of the Byzantine melodies as preserved into the Byzantine codices after defining the code of transcription of the Byzantine notation.

The National Library of Greece celebrated in 2006 its 170th anniversary of the historical building that the Valianos brothers built and donated. Romeiko Ensemble, a professional Byzantine music group, interpreted Christmas hymns in the original sound from the codices NLG 883 and 934, transcribed by Byzantine music scholar Ioannis Arvanitis, at a concert in the main hall of the National Library on December 13, 2006.