

EDITORS' NOTE

This instalment of the Journal of the International Society for Orthodox Church Music appears at a significant juncture in the life of the Society. 2025 marks the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the International Society for Orthodox Church Music (ISOCM) by the late Protopresbyter of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and world-renowned composer, Ivan Moody. As Maria Takala-Roszczenko remarked in the editorial note for Volume 8, Issue 1 of this Journal, with the passing of Fr Ivan Moody in January 2024, it is with sorrow and yet deep gratitude that we acknowledge the significant contribution of Fr Ivan to the ISOCM and the sacred music of Orthodoxy.

Fr Ivan was the chairman of the ISOCM and editor-in-chief of the Journal for many years. And as the ISOCM celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2025, a year that saw the Eleventh International Conference on Orthodox Church Music take place at the University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu, 10–15 June 2025, the joy of the event was inevitably mingled with bittersweet nostalgia. However, the theme of the Conference, 'Eternity', was a fitting tribute to the paradox of timelessness and mortality that the music of the Orthodox Church evokes and navigates. The 20th anniversary of the ISOCM is also an occasion to celebrate the growth of scholarship and global conversation exploring Orthodox church music the Society has engendered through its Journal, conferences and other activities. The latest issue of the Journal reflects the breadth and depth of this ongoing and fruitful dialogue.

In the peer-reviewed section, the article by Taíssa Marchese and Ana Telles investigates the Orthodox dimensions of "Prayer", which was composed by Maka Virsaladze 2016, employing topical theory to elucidate the theological and musical dimensions of Virsaladze's work. The article is a beautiful insight into Marchese's research for her doctoral dissertation, which she successfully defended in the summer of 2025. The next article by Karim Guirguis examines the embodied dimensions of liturgical experience, portraying the Eucharist as the climax of sensory and ritual participation. Guirguis's article builds on his conference paper at the 2023 ISOCM Conference, which explored the theme of 'Church Music, Food, and Nourishment', probing the theological, liturgical and personal significance of the Eucharist, which St Nicholas Cabasilas characterised as the "final mystery" of the Church. As Guirguis remarks: "All things are to be offered up to God in thanksgiving, and therefore, all human experience finds its telos in the Eucharist."

In the conference papers section of the Journal, Abbess Sidonia (Freedman) explores Georgian hymnography for the Feast of the Living Pillar, bringing it into dialogue with patristic and paraliturgical traditions. One of the most interesting aspects of the article is how Abbess Sidonia engages closely with passages from St Hippolytus of Rome's commentary on the Song of Songs, "a mystagogy on chrism extant primarily in Georgian, which finds many echoes in later hymnography for Holy Week, especially Great Wednesday, and Pascha". The beautiful sibilance in the title of the paper, 'Stichera, Scents, Stitches, and Self-Emptying', still resonates in the memories of those who attended the 2023 ISOCM Conference and experienced Abbess Sidonia's masterful presentation on this complex yet compelling topic.

This issue of the Journal concludes with two obituaries. Dimitrios V. Laskos commemorates the life and work of Dimitrios K. Balageorgos (1966–2023), while Nataša Marjanović offers a tribute to Danica Petrović (1945–2024). Both contributions highlight the significant legacies of scholars who have advanced the study of Orthodox musical traditions.

This year also marks a moment of transition in the editorial responsibilities for the Journal of the ISOCM. With the passing of Fr Ivan Moody, the Society acknowledges with gratitude his vision and many years of dedication as editor-in-chief, which were instrumental in shaping this publication into an internationally esteemed chronicle of scholarship and dialogue. Following the election of a new Chairperson of the ISOCM, Alexander Lingas, and a Vice-Chairperson, Maria Takala-Roszczenko, in 2025, the ISOCM Board has passed on the editorial leadership of the Journal to Andrew Mellas and Alexander Lingas who will share this responsibility. Together with the broader editorial team, and as the ISOCM enters its third decade of activity, we are committed to supporting an international community of scholars, composers and musicians, and, in doing so, cultivating a deeper understanding of the richness and beauty of Orthodox Church Music. However, we can never forget that we stand on the shoulders of giants and, therefore, we are forever grateful. Eternal memory!

Andrew Mellas and Alexander Lingas