

## Transcending Polyphony: Transcriptions and Premieres of Select Masses by Palestrina and Monteverdi for Solo Piano

**Field of Study :** Musicology

### SUPERVISORS

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### KEYWORDS

Palestrina; Monteverdi; Piano Transcription; Musical Innovation; Third Mission

### ABSTRACT

This doctoral research, "Transcending Polyphony," innovatively intersects musicology, performance arts, and cultural heritage studies by transcribing selected masses by Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina and Claudio Monteverdi for solo piano. Situated within the CHORAL program's framework, this project not only contributes to the intangible cultural heritage and identity narratives but also significantly enhances the accessibility and dissemination of these historical works.

The research entails an interdisciplinary exploration of Palestrina's and Monteverdi's compositions, involving field studies in Italian archives to understand their cultural and historical contexts deeply. This process aligns with the CHORAL program's emphasis on engaging with local communities and heritage sites (historical libraries and archives) within the UNITA Alliance territories. The project aims to bridge the gap between historical choral traditions and contemporary solo performance, resonating with broader narratives of cultural identity, memory, and religion.

Further, by adapting these choral pieces for piano, the project advocates for innovative methods in music education and heritage management. The transcriptions will be made available to educational musical institutions across Europe, fostering an appreciation for these works among new generations of musicians and scholars. The use of digital tools in transcription and dissemination, including recordings and online platforms (all major streaming sites including but not limited to Spotify, Apple Music, Amazon Music, YouTube Music, and so on), aligns with CHORAL's focus on digitization and storytelling.

The culmination of this project in a series of concerts and the publication of a doctoral thesis represents a comprehensive effort to enhance public engagement with cultural heritage. By presenting these revered compositions in a new format: as transcriptions for piano, easing their study, interpretation, and dissemination, the project invites a re-examination of historical music, encouraging a dialogue between past and present, tradition and innovation, thus embodying the core values of the CHORAL program.

## Research aims and methodology

### Research Aims

#### Main Objective

To create solo piano transcriptions of select masses by Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina and Claudio Monteverdi, thereby bringing these pivotal works of choral music into a new realm of performance and study.

#### Specific Aims

1. **To Bridge Historical and Contemporary Music Practices:** Uniting the rich traditions of Renaissance choral music with modern piano performance, thereby enhancing the accessibility and appreciation of these works.
2. **To Contribute to Cultural Heritage Studies:** Engaging in an interdisciplinary exploration that contributes to the understanding and preservation of intangible cultural heritage, in line with the CHORAL program's focus.
3. **To Foster Educational and Cultural Exchange:** Making these transcriptions available to educational institutions encourages a new generation of musicians to engage with and reinterpret historical music. This narrates the history and rationale of these works and sets them within the context of popularization.

#### Methodology

#### Research and Analysis

1. Conduct in-depth research into the selected works of Palestrina and Monteverdi, including historical context, musical structure, and performance practices. This will involve field studies in relevant Italian archives and libraries to access original manuscripts and source materials, as for example
  - a. <https://archivodistatorino.beniculturali.it/strumenti/archivi-della-musica/>
  - b. <https://bibliolmc.uniroma3.it/node/969>
  - c. <https://bibliolmc.uniroma3.it/node/924>
  - d. Universitätsbibliothek der mdw Wien: <https://bibliothek.mdw.ac.at/>
2. Literature review

#### Transcription Process

Develop a unique methodology for transcribing choral music to solo piano. This will include:

1. **Musical Analysis:** Breaking down the polyphonic structures of the original compositions to identify key themes, motifs, and harmonic progressions.
2. **Adaptation Strategies:** Adapting these elements for solo piano while retaining the essence and complexity of the original works.
3. **Performance Considerations:** Addressing interpretative aspects such as dynamics, tempo, and articulation to ensure the piano versions are not only technically feasible but also musically expressive.

#### Collaboration and Feedback

Engage with experts in the fields of musicology, performance arts, and cultural heritage studies for feedback and guidance. This will ensure the transcriptions are academically sound and artistically authentic.

#### Dissemination and Implementation

1. Plan for the publication of transcriptions and doctoral thesis
2. Studying and recording the piano transcriptions
3. Organizing concerts and presentations in collaboration with cultural institutes and other institutions.
4. Use of digital platforms for wider dissemination

This structure aligns with the CHORAL program's emphasis on cultural heritage and interdisciplinary research.

## Relevance and added-value of the proposed research in relation to the current state of knowledge

### 1. Emphasis on the Importance of Two Italian Renaissance Composers

#### Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (1525 – 1594)

Palestrina's work, notably the example of his celebrated Missa Papae Marcelli, which remains a cornerstone in Catholic liturgical music, has and has had a profound influence on sacred music. His prolific output, including over 100 masses, 300 motets, and 140 madrigals, demonstrates a remarkable versatility across both sacred and secular compositions. Many of his masses are notable for their basis in polyphonic works, plainchant, or popular melodies, reflecting a deep engagement with various musical traditions.

#### Claudio Monteverdi (1567 – 1643)

Monteverdi, recognized as a pivotal figure in the transition from the Renaissance to the Baroque period, is celebrated for his innovative contributions to opera and for his ability to convey human emotions through music effectively. His standing as a "modern" composer in his time and his eclectic approach to composition have made him particularly appealing to contemporary musicians and scholars. His works represent a bridge between historical practices and modern artistic expressions.

### 2. Bridging Historical and Contemporary Practices

#### Revitalizing Renaissance Music:

The project brings to light these composers' significant contributions by transcribing their works for solo piano. This not only pays homage to their original compositions but also presents them in a novel, more accessible format for modern audiences.

#### Interdisciplinary Insight:

By focusing on these composers, the project provides a unique interdisciplinary insight into the evolution of music from the late Renaissance to the early Baroque era, enhancing our understanding of this critical period in music history.

### 3. Cultural and Educational Impact

#### Enhancing Musicological Knowledge:

The transcriptions offer a new perspective on Palestrina's and Monteverdi's compositions, contributing significantly to musicological research and providing fresh material for academic study and performance.

#### Fostering Educational Exchange:

By making these works accessible to students and performers through piano transcriptions, the project encourages a deeper engagement with Renaissance music, promoting cultural exchange and dialogue.

This project bears a high significance in the context of music history, highlighting the importance of Palestrina and Monteverdi and offering a fresh perspective on their works. It ties their historical importance to the contemporary relevance and educational value of the transcriptions.

The interdisciplinary nature of the research together with the alignment with the CHORAL program and complementarity expertise of the teams

## Interdisciplinary Nature of the Research

### Integration of Multiple Disciplines

1. **Musicology and Performance Arts:** The project merges musicological analysis with the practical aspects of piano performance. By transcribing choral works into piano arrangements, it bridges historical music studies with contemporary performance practice.
2. **Cultural Heritage Studies:** The research contributes to the understanding of Renaissance music as a vital part of European cultural heritage, aligning with UNESCO's definition of intangible cultural heritage. It explores the historical context of the compositions and their influence on modern musical heritage.
3. **Digital Humanities:** Utilizing digital tools for transcription and dissemination (e.g., music notation software, digital archives - for example, <https://www.diamm.ac.uk/>, <https://imslp.org/>, <https://rism.info/>, etc.), the project incorporates elements of digital humanities, crucial for modern cultural heritage studies.

## Alignment with the CHORAL Programme

### Promotion of Cultural Exchange:

The project supports the CHORAL program's objective of fostering international research and cultural exchange. The planned concert tours and collaborations with cultural institutes across Europe exemplify this goal.

### Engagement with Local Communities:

By involving local archives and libraries in Italy for field research and planning concerts in collaboration with cultural institutes, the project engages with local communities, resonating with CHORAL's focus on local relevance in cultural heritage.

## Complementarity Expertise of the Teams

### Leveraging Diverse Expertise

1. **Academic and Artistic Collaboration:** The involvement of experts in musicology, cultural heritage, and piano performance ensures a comprehensive approach to the project. This collaboration brings together academic rigor with artistic creativity.
2. **International and Inter-Institutional Partnerships:** The collaboration with institutions like the University Transilvania Brasov and potential co-supervisors from other universities within the CHORAL network leverages diverse academic perspectives and resources. This ensures a rich, multi-faceted exploration of the subject matter.
3. **Industry Partnerships:** The partnership with Veritone Records and potential publishing houses like Universal Edition Vienna brings industry expertise in music production and dissemination, crucial for the successful execution of the project's practical components.

### Leveraging Diverse Expertise

This section of your proposal clearly illustrates the interdisciplinary nature of your research and its alignment with the CHORAL program's objectives, highlighting the synergies created by the complementary expertise of the involved teams.

## Expertise of the Supervisors and of the PhD Scholar

### Main Supervisor: Professor Dr. Petruta Maria Coroiu, University Transilvania Brasov

1. **Extensive Academic and Practical Experience:** Professor Petruta Maria Coroiu brings a wealth of knowledge with a doctorate in music and extensive studies in piano performance, pedagogy, music



composition, and musicology. Her academic journey includes postgraduate studies in musical composition and aesthetics, highlighting her profound understanding of musical forms and history.

2. **Distinguished Career in Music Education and Research:** As a professor and doctoral supervisor at the University Transilvania Brasov, her areas of expertise encompass musical forms and analyses, musical aesthetics, and musical semantics and hermeneutics. Her experience as a piano teacher and her involvement in musicological research and publication, with over 25 specialized volumes and numerous studies, attest to her comprehensive grasp of the field.
3. **Multilingual and Communication Skills:** Proficiency in English, Italian, and French, coupled with excellent communication skills, enhances her capability to engage in international academic discourse and collaborative projects.

#### Co-Supervisor: Silvia Pireddu, Professor from the University of Torino, Italy

1. **Historical Research and Methodology Expertise:** The co-supervisor from the University of Torino - partner of the CHORAL network of universities - offers specialized knowledge in historical and linguistic research and methodologies, also pertinent to the Renaissance era, which is very important for the focus on the life and works of Palestrina and Monteverdi. Her understanding of this period provides crucial insights into the cultural and historical contexts that shaped these composers' musical contributions.
2. **Networks and Resources:** Prof. Pireddu will facilitate the management of archival materials and scholarly resources. These networks are essential for the comprehensive study of the selected works and their historical backgrounds.
3. **Multilingual Proficiency, Cultural Insight and third mission expertise:** Multilingualism and cross-disciplinary insight enhance the research team's ability to delve into original sources and literature. Third mission expertise will support the interpretation of historical documents and engaging with local communities, enriching the project's depth and authenticity.

#### Multilingual Capabilities of the Team:

Prof. Dr. Petruta Maria Coroiu, the main supervisor, is fluent in **Italian, Romanian, and English**, apart from her particular further language aptitudes. Prof. Silvia Pireddu is an expert in **English and Italian**. This linguistic proficiency is particularly advantageous in conducting in-depth research and analysis of Italian Renaissance music and its dissemination. It facilitates direct engagement with primary sources, enhances communication with local experts and institutions in Italy, and fosters a deeper understanding of the cultural and historical context surrounding Palestrina and Monteverdi.

These factors clearly outline the unique qualifications and expertise of the team members, demonstrating how their combined skills and experience contribute significantly to the success of the project.

### Output plan including publication and dissemination activities

#### Publishing of the Thesis and of the Transcriptions

1. Collaboration with Publishing Houses:
  - a. The thesis will be published at the Editura Universitatii Transilvania.
  - b. Transcriptions: aim to publish the transcriptions through renowned publishing houses such as Universal Edition Vienna. This publication will not only validate the academic and artistic quality of the work but also make it accessible to pianists and music scholars worldwide.
2. Open Source:
  - a. the publication on open-source servers will be discussed as per the regulations of participating universities

#### Audio and Video Recordings

1. **Production:** Plan to produce high-quality audio and video recordings of the transcribed works, culminating in the release of CDs, vinyl records, and DVDs/Blu-Ray discs.
2. **Streaming Platforms:** Integrate digital distribution through various streaming platforms to ensure



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accessibility and broader reach.

### Collaboration with Veritone Records

1. **Partnership:** Work in collaboration with the Viennese label Veritone Records for recording, publishing, and releasing the audio and video products. This partnership will ensure professional quality and effective distribution.
2. **Funding Considerations:** The collaboration is contingent upon securing appropriate funding, emphasizing the importance of financial support for the realization of this project.
3. **Promotional and Educational Activities**
  - a. **Presentation Video:** Accompany the recordings with an informative presentation video, which will offer insights into the transcription process, historical context, and artistic choices.
  - b. **Press release and interviews:** collaboration with press and television representatives in Romania, Italy and Austria to ensure dissemination of the project and its results.
4. **Engagement with Audiences:** Utilize digital media and social platforms to engage with a diverse audience, including music enthusiasts, scholars, and students. This includes online talks, webinars, and interactive sessions about the project.

### Concert Tour

1. **International Concerts:** Organize a concert tour showcasing these transcriptions and recordings in various countries, including Romania, Italy, Austria, Israel, and others. The interpret of the concerts will be an internationally acknowledged concert pianist.
2. **Collaboration with Cultural Institutes:** Partner with cultural institutes from Romania, Italy, and Austria to facilitate these concerts. This collaboration will enhance cultural exchange and deepen the impact of the project in different cultural contexts.
3. **Collaboration with music and cultural associations worldwide:** for example with the Verein für Musik und Kunst Wien in Austria.

### Impact on Cultural Heritage

This project contributes to the preservation and innovation of cultural heritage through the reinterpretation of very specific and valuable classical works.

Its educational outreach will ensure engaging with educational institutions and music conservatories to incorporate these transcriptions into teaching and performance curricula.

#### 1. Enhancing Musical Heritage

- a. **Preservation and Accessibility:** This project preserves a vital part of Italian and European cultural heritage by transcribing renowned classical works from Palestrina and Monteverdi into solo piano arrangements. This approach makes these historically significant compositions more accessible to a broader audience.
- b. **Facilitation of Study and Performance:** The transcriptions simplify the study and performance of these works, eliminating the need for a large orchestral and vocal ensemble. This adaptation opens up opportunities for individual pianists and smaller venues to engage with these pieces, enhancing their reach and relevance in contemporary musical culture.

#### 2. Educational Outreach

- a. **Integration into Academic Libraries:** The transcriptions will be offered to the libraries of leading music universities across Europe, including mdw Vienna, Transilvania Brasov, UNMB Bucharest, prominent Italian music universities, Cambridge Colleges, and others. This distribution ensures that these valuable resources are readily available for academic and research purposes.
- b. **Concerts and Presentations:** Organize concerts and presentations at these universities to introduce the transcriptions to faculty and students. These events will not only showcase the artistic and academic merits of the transcriptions but also foster a deeper appreciation and understanding of Palestrina's and Monteverdi's works among the academic community.
- c. **Album for Music Schools:** Produce an album featuring simpler excerpts of these transcriptions, tailored for students at various levels of advancement. This album will be presented to music

schools in Romania, Italy, and Austria, thereby supporting music education and encouraging young musicians to engage with classical music heritage.

The project has a substantial contribution to the preservation and dissemination of cultural heritage, it bridges historical music with modern performance and education, by thus effectively aligning with the CHORAL program's objectives of enhancing cultural heritage and fostering international collaboration.

## Estimated schedule

### Year 1: September 2025 - August 2026 (PPUA - Anul I)

1. Initial Research and Analysis (Sep-Dec 2025): Begin in-depth research into the works of Palestrina and Monteverdi. Field study in Italy. Start the Introduction and Background section of the thesis.
2. Winter Exam Session (Jan - Feb 2026): Complete exams for Semester 1 courses.
3. Development of Transcription Methodology (Jan - Mar 2026): Analyze the original compositions. Develop the Methodology section of the thesis.
4. Semester 2 (Feb - May 2026): Continue individual study and specialty exam preparation. Begin the Literature Review section.
5. Specialty Exam Session (Mar - Sep 2026): Undertake specialty exams.

### Year 2: September 2026 - August 2027 (PCS - Start of Research Phase)

1. First Draft of Transcriptions (Apr - Aug 2026): Create first drafts of transcriptions, and begin the analysis of the Selected Works section.
2. Continued Research and Development (Sep 2026 - Aug 2027): Further scientific research. Develop Performance Considerations and Comparative Analysis sections. Continue refining the transcriptions.

### Year 3: September 2027 - August 2028 (Completion of PCS and Thesis Preparation)

1. Finalize Research and Transcriptions (Sep 2027 - May 2028): Complete transcriptions. Finalize Analysis of Selected Works and Performance Considerations sections.
2. Thesis Writing and Completion (Jun - Aug 2028): Compile Impact on Musical Heritage and Education section. Draft Conclusion and Future Directions. Complete and submit the thesis. Prepare for the defense.
3. Defensio at the University Transilvania Brasov, Faculty of Music

### Year 4: Post-Doctoral Phase

1. Publication of Thesis and Transcriptions (Sep-Dec 2028): Publish the doctoral thesis and transcriptions.
2. Recording and Production (Jan - Apr 2029): Proceed with audio and video recording sessions.
3. Preparation for Concert Tour (May - Aug 2029): Finalize details and preparations for the international concert tour.

### Post-Year 4: Concert Tour and Further Dissemination

1. International Concert Tour (Starting Sep 2029): Begin the concert tour.
2. Ongoing Dissemination and Outreach (2030 Onwards): Continue promoting the project.

This schedule integrates the key components of the thesis throughout the three-year doctoral program as funded by CHORAL, aligning the academic research and writing with the practical aspects of transcription and performance.