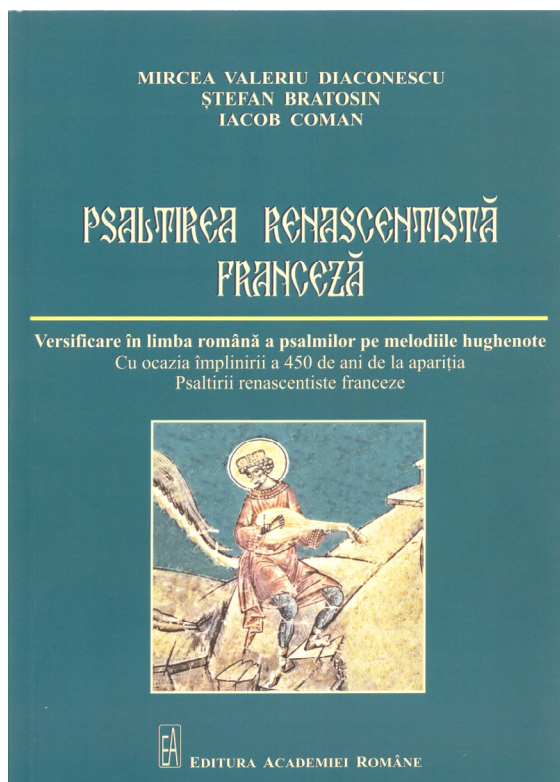


**THE RENAISSANCE FRENCH PSALTER.  
(THE ROMANIAN VERSIFICATION OF THE PSALMS WITH HUGUENOT  
MELODIES. ON THE OCCASION OF CELEBRATING THE 450<sup>th</sup>  
ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST FRENCH PSALTER, 1562-2012),**  
Academy Publishing House, Bucharest, 2012  
(435 pages, ISBN 978-973-27-2277-0)



*The Renaissance French Psalter* published by the Romanian Academy, addresses the ecclesiastic community as well as the academic one, by restoring a Christian heritage of great cultural and spiritual value. Celebrating 450 years since the first *French Psalter* (*Le Psautier français*) at Geneva (1562), the book represents the second Romanian version of the *French Psalter*, after the *Psalter* published in 1673 by Dosoftei, Bishop of Moldavia and it is the result of the work of 18 composers and poets and 13 scientific referents from Romania, France, Germany and USA, under the coordination of Mircea Valeriu Diaconescu (composer, Germany), Ștefan Bratosin (Univ. Prof. Ph. D, Paul Valéry University Montpellier 3)

and Iacob Coman (Reader/Associate Prof., Th. D, Pentecostal Theological Institute of Bucharest).

The Renaissance *Genevieve French Psalter* was the expression of Jean Calvin's religious convictions that the protestant reformation must be accompanied by a reformation of the church music. Calvin strongly believed in the Psalms as the most adequate text for the Christian song, given their profound and purifying/therapeutic substance: "The other

scriptures contain the commands which God enjoined his servants to bear to us. But here (in the psalms) prophets themselves conversing with God, because they lay bare all their inmost thoughts, invite or hale every one of us to examine himself in particular, lest aught of the many infirmities to which we are liable, or of the many vices with which we are beset should remain undetected.” (J. Calvin, *Commentary on the Psalms*, 1557-58).

The first comprehensive edition of the French Psalter appeared in 1562 with the title *Les pseumes mis en rime francoise, par Clément Marot & Théodore de Bèze* and it included the 150 psalms translated in french meter by the above mentioned poets, with 123 melodies by Guillaume Franc, Louis Bourgeois and Pierre Davantès.

If in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the *French Psalter* defined the identity of the protestant Huguenot Church in a historical context that was marked by religious wars and cruel persecutions, soon enough though, it penetrated the other Christian denominations as well. The huge popularity of the *French Psalter* determined many French and foreign composers to create, during centuries, armonisations and arrangements of the original melodies. One of the first composers was Claude Goudimel (1510-1572), whose homophonous Psalms in Renaissance style made the humanist philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau declare later: „their harmony is, without any doubt, the most majestic I have ever heard”. Goudimel’s modalism is mostly diatonic with the use of Ionian, Dorian Mixolidyan and Eolian (natural or transposed), of many root position chords and only of a few chromatisms: the leading tone to the V chord and sometimes to other chords, cross-relations, the use of major chords in intern and final cadences and the chromatic caesura step. The specialists in lutheran music believe that Goudimel’s psalms had a great influence on the first homophonous harmonisations of the lutheran chorals, made by Lucas Osiander in 1586.

The Romanian volume *The Renaissance French Psalter* keeps Goudimel’s harmonisations for mixed choir (SATB) with a few revisions, also including new harmonization of some 27 psalms that were neglected by Goudimel. The harmonisations and arrangements are signed by: Veronica Anghelescu (composer and journalist, Romania), Valeriu Burciu (composer, USA), Mircea Valeriu Diaconescu (composer, Germany), Gabriel Dumitrescu (composer, USA), Cezar Geantă (composer, Romania).

Although the lyrics are new, “directly inspired from the Bible and Dosoftei’s Psalter” (Mircea Valeriu Diaconescu, *Foreword*, p. xii) they match the original poetic meter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The versifications have been created by Veronica Anghelescu (composer and journalist); Hanna Bota (poet), Ștefan Bratosin (poet, France), Ion Buciuman (priest), Valeriu Burciu (composer, USA), Benone Burtescu (poet, USA), Benoni Catană

#### BOOK REVIEW

(priest), Romulus Chelbegeanu (priest, USA), Mircea Valeriu Diaconescu (composer, Germany), Cezar Geantă (composer), Cornelius Greising (poet, Germany), Mihaela Ionescu (musician, France), Cornel Mafteiu (poet), Paul Săn-Petru (poet), Cleopatra Tolici, Nelly Tutunaru.

At the end of the book the reader will find a series of interdenominational studies, signed by specialists in philology, theology and music:

- Ștefan Bratosin (Univ. Prof. Ph. D, Paul Valéry University Montpellier 3, France): *Singing the psalms: the unique canonical way of nouthesia*
- Iacob Coman (Reader/Associate Prof., Th. D, Pentecostal Theological Institute of Bucharest): *The psalms as a dogmatic and doxological expression of the revelation*
- Mihai Himcinscki (Univ. Prof. Ph. D, "1 December 1918" University of Alba Iulia): *The Psalter in the Orthodox Church*
- Emanuel Marcus (Lecturer/Assistant Prof., University of Bucharest, representative of the Jewish Community): *Tehilim - the psalterial homage paid by the People of the Book*
- János Molnár (Univ. Prof. Ph. D, Babes Bolyai University, Cluj Napoca): *Ecclesiastical musicians and singers*
- Corneliu Simuț (Univ. Prof. Ph. D, Th. D, Habil, Emanuel University of Oradea): *The relevance of the dogmatic ground of the Huguenot Psalter for a Protestant Romanian Psalter*
- Ștefan Tobler (Univ. Prof. Ph. D, Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu): *Psalms and music in Martin Luther's theology*
- Daniel Olariu (The Romanian Adventist Theological Institute of Cernica): *Introduction to the Book of Psalms*
- Daniel-Sorin Duță (Lecturer/Assistant Prof, Ph. D, The Romanian Adventist Theological Institute of Cernica): *The influence of music on the human mind*
- Anamaria Mădălina Hotoran (Reader/Associate Prof, Ph. D, Emanuel University of Oradea): *The Huguenot Psalms in the context of the Protestant Reformation*

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- Doru Radosav, Maria Lucreția Radosav (Univ. Prof. Ph. D. and Reader/ Associate Prof. Ph. D, Babes Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca): *“Psalt-Lire” or about the psalms reading*
- Felician Roșca (Univ. Prof. Ph. D, West University of Timisoara; president of the Romanian Society of Hymnology): *The Huguenot Psalm between the orthodox psaltic song and the Romanian protestant choral*

Our hope is that this gift to the Romanian hymnology will find an echo and will inspire future projects of similar amplitude.

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