

## Religious choral music in Bessarabia and the contribution of the composer Vladimir Ciolac in the development of this genre

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**Abstract:** *The sacred choral music in Bessarabia represents the most fundamental side of the national culture. The traditions of the sacred choral music have been developed over the centuries. The musicologist Larisa Balaban points out evidently: "The contemporary composers find unexpected artistic resources in the field of sacred music compositions."<sup>2</sup> In the last 20 years of 20th century, a number of choral compositions that belong to religious genre were created. The works of Moldavian composers, based on religious texts, contain as a benchmark the addressing problems of human existence, the philosophical perception of life and the joy of communion with spiritual truths – all being conveyed, suggestive to the listeners. These works are distinguished from each other by the manner of exposure, the development of the musical material, the implementation of individual compositional techniques, and last but not least, by the achievement of the proposed artistic aims.*

**Key-words:** *Vladimir Ciolac; choral creation; religious themes*

### Introduction

The spiritual creations of Vladimir Ciolac are a real gallery of spectacular images, full of light, that reevaluate the melodic expressiveness and the progress of the choral structure. His spiritual works can be classified in two categories: one category that belongs to orthodox cult, and the other category that belongs to catholic rite.

Modern composers in Bessarabia have a visible inclination towards the field of church music and sacred musical genres, which leads them to rediscover the tradition of religious music and to put aside the *unbelief* and *doubt*. In the last 20 years of the 20th century, an impressive number of choral works have appeared in the genre of cult music. The creations of local composers were including canonical or poetic texts, which reflected their own feelings and thoughts. According to Larisa Balaban, the author of the thesis on contemporary religious music in Moldova, she kept the distinction between orthodox liturgical singing and sacred music, inspired by the Bible. These compositions are no longer addressed to the Worshiper, but to the listener in the audience. Therefore, the spiritual choral creations, during the last decades, can be classified in **two categories**: creations intended especially for the Liturgies, and religious creations on liturgical texts, intended for concerts.

**The first category** includes the following compositions:

- *Liturgy no.1 and no.2- Saint John Chrysostom [Imnele Sfintei Liturghii nr.1 și nr.2. Ioan Gură de Aur]* OP22, by Serafim Buzilă.
- *The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom [Imnele Sfintei Liturghii Ioan Gură de Aur]*, by Teodor Zgureanu.

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<sup>2</sup> Balaban, Larisa. 2006. *Genres of religious and choral music in the works of composers of the Republic of Moldova [Genurile muzicii corale-religioase în creația compozitorilor din Republica Moldova]*, Vol.1-2. Canada: Lucian Badian Editions, p. 552.

- *The Liturgy and the Choral Concert* [ *Liturghia și Concertul coral*], by Nicolae Ciolac.
- *The Vigil* [*Всенощное бдение (Priveghere)*], by Vladimir Ciolac.

**In the second category**, there are much more works:

- *Oratory of Psalms* [*Oratoriul Psalmilor*], by Teodor Zgureanu.
- *The Night of Saint Andrew* [*Noaptea Sfântului Andrei*], by Teodor Zgureanu.
- *Stabat Mater; Requiem; Messa* , by Vladimir Ciolac.
- *Only the earth is unwavering forevermore* [*Numai pământu-i neclintit în veci*], by Zlata Tcaci.
- *Our Father* [*Tatăl nostru*], by Ghenadie Ciobanu.
- *Mariengebete*, by Dmitri Chițenco.

Most of the religious creations, written for different types of choir, at the border of the XX-XXI centuries are presented in the table below. The table indicates that few authors addressed the genre of choral music with spiritual-religious content. But composers such as: Serafim Buzilă, Teodor Zgureanu, Dmitri Chițenco, Ghenadie Ciobanu, Nicolae Ciolac and Vladimir Ciolac they approached extensively and developed this kind of music. If for most of them, this sphere of creativity is secondary, then for Vladimir Ciolac, this genre is one of the main directions of his compositional activity. His creation offers us a deep perspective in the vision of the spiritual tradition, a variety of genres and forms of performing compositions.

COMPOSER	WORK	INSTRUMENTATION	YEAR	PREMIERE
Serafim Buzila	Liturgy, no.1, op.22 <i>Saint John Chrysostom</i>	Mixed choir with reciter	1991	
Serafim Buzila	Liturgy, no.2, op.25 <i>Saint John Chrysostom</i>	Mixed choir	1994	
Teodor Zgureanu	<i>Maskil of David</i> , no.119, No 50 <i>Alleluia</i>	Mixed choir a cappella	1994	
Teodor Zgureanu	<i>The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom</i>	Women's choir a cappella	1997	Oct 10, 1997- Chisinau –The festival <i>The days of the new music</i>
Tudor Chiriac	<i>Our father</i>	Mixed choir a cappella		
Dmitri Chițenco	<i>Our father</i>	Mixed choir, soprano-bass	2002	
Dmitri Chițenco	<i>Messa</i>	Mixed choir, soprano-bass	2003	
Dmitri Chițenco	<i>Our father</i>		2003	

Ghenadie Ciobanu	<i>Axion</i>	Men's choir a cappella	1990	Feb 05, 1990- Chisinau - National Philharmonic orchestra and church choir <i>Greeting the Lord</i> conducted by Vladimir Ciolac
Ghenadie Ciobanu	<i>Seven Choirs on Liturgical Theme</i>	Mixed Choir a cappella	1993	
Ghenadie Ciobanu	<i>Our father</i>	Mixed Choir a cappella	1994	Oct 12, 1995- Chisinau, Organ Hall, Academic choral capella <i>Doina</i> conducted by V. Garstea
Vladimir Ciolac	<i>The Vigil</i>	Mixed Choir and soloists	1990	Dec 14, 2003, Academic Choral Capella <i>Doina</i> Conducted by Vl.Ciolac
Vladimir Ciolac	<i>The Hymns of Holly Liturgy of Saint John Chrisostom</i>	Women's choir a cappella	1993	May 6, 1994- Chisinau- National Museum of History
Vladimir Ciolac	<i>The Hymns of Holly Liturgy of Saint John Chrisostom</i>	Mixed choir	1993	
Vladimir Ciolac	<i>Miserere</i>	Women's choir a cappella	1995	
Vladimir Ciolac	<i>Requiem</i>	Women's choir, soloists and organ	1995	
Vladimir Ciolac	<i>Requiem</i>	Mixed Choir and soloists		
Vladimir Ciolac	<i>Dies Irae</i>	Mixed Choir a cappella	1995	
Vladimir Ciolac	<i>Stabat Mater</i>	Mixed choir, organ and string orchestra	2005	Sep. 9, 2005- Choral Capella <i>Moldova, Credo</i> Choir –National chamber orchestra, conducted by Vl. Ciolac

Vladimir Ciolac	<i>Ave Maria</i>	Women's choir and chamber orchestra	1999	Jun.6, 2000- Chisinau, at organ hall, the festival <i>The days of new music, Renaissance</i> choir, conducted by Teodor Zgureanu
Vladimir Ciolac	<i>Magnificat</i>	Women's choir, solists and symphonic orchestra	2004	May 27, 2005 <i>Credo</i> choir, choral Capella <i>Moldova-National Symphony orchestra of Teleradio - Moldova</i> conducted by Oleg Palymski
Vladimir Ciolac	Choir Concert <i>Christ is risen</i>	Mixed Choir a cappella	2005	
Vladimir Ciolac	<i>Messa</i>	Mixed choir, solists and symphonic orchestra	2012	Oct. 31, 2012- Chisinau, at Organ Hall, National chamber orchestra and choir, conducted by Vl. Ciolac

### Regarding Vladimir Ciolac's compositions

Among the most representative works can be considered: *Christ is risen* [*Hristos a Înviat*]; *Psalmody* [*Psalmodia*]; (dedicated at anniversary of 2000 years of Christianity), *Requiem*; *Stabat Mater*; *Magnificat*; *Ave-Maria*; *Laudate Dominum*; *Salve Regina*; Liturgy *Saint John Chrisostom*. Here, we agree with Elena Sambrish, which expressed her point of view about analysis of *Stabat Mater*: „No doubt, Vladimir Ciolac is one of the most important representative of choral music in Republic Moldova. Through activity, the enormous work in this field was extended; moreover, there is a renaissance and a developing of sacred music in Republic Moldova. This process reveals the spiritual and etic potential of sacred music, proving one more time the relevance and the importance of this music in the modern society.”<sup>3</sup>

The choral compositions, with spiritual theme, fits naturally in Vladimir Ciolac's music, they embrace secular works, like: *Choral Symphony* [*Simfonia corală*], for choir, a cappella; *It's Midnight* [*Se bate miezul nopții*], for women's choir and orchestra; *Miserere* [*Miserere*], for choir a cappella, choral cycles a cappella- *At four A.M.* [*La patru dimineața*]- choral cycle on Mihai Eminescu's lyrics: *O, mama* [*O, mamă*]; *Amongst Hundreds Masts* [*Dintre sute de catarge*]; *To Star* [*La steaua*]; *It's Midnight* [*Se bate miezul nopții*].

The connection between Vladimir Ciolac and choral sacred music is argued by his attitude for spirituality. During one interview, Vladimir Ciolac sais to Larisa Balaban: "The people come to faith in different ways: by suffering, by spiritual wandering and by seeking the

<sup>3</sup> Sambrish, Elena. 2013. *Sambrish E. - Features of the musical language and drama Stabat Mater Vladimir Cholac*. [Sambrish E. - Specificul limbajului muzical și a dramaturgiei în Stabat Mater a lui Vladimir Ciolac]. In: *Development of culture and art in modern Transnistria* Materials of the VII Republican Scientific and Practical Conference. October 27, 2012 Tiraspol: Publishing House of the Transnistrian University.

truth. I came to faith through church singing and I firmly assert now, that my serve in church helped me to become a better composer and conductor. In the church I make the acquaintance with choral works of many composers from different periods. I sipped from these styles and colors of music that become like a school for me... I felt, literally, the tremendous advantages of singing in church choir, developing not only musical ear, the voice, musical sensibility, the harmony- but also, the most important thing- the human soul that helps to understand its mission, that shows us the path to salvation and spiritual accomplishment."<sup>4</sup>

It is doubtless that most of Vladimir Ciolac's compositions are choral works, based on religious theme; these works are, as well, classified in **two groups**:

**First**, choral works, with orthodox cult: *The Vigil [Priveghere]* -1990- for mixed choir, a cappella, soloists; *The Hymns of Saint John Chrysostom [Imnele Sfintei Liturghii Ioan Gură-de-Aur]* -1993- for choir, a cappella, soloists; *Christ is risen [Hristos a Înviat!]* -2005 - Choral concert.

**The second**, choral works that belong to **catolic cult**: *Requiem*-1995 - for choir, soloist and orga; *Stabat Mater* - 1997 - for choir and orchestra; *Miserere*; *Ave Maria*- 1990 - for mixed choir and chamber orchestra; *Laudate Dominum; Magnificat*- 2004 - for mixed choir, soloist and orchestra; *Messa*-2012; *Salve Regina*- 2007 - for mixed, soloists and string orchestra.

His predilection to choral compositions with catolic religious theme, can be, at first sight, unusual. "The orthodoxal religious music is a priority for Ciolac. Being born in a christian family in Izmail, he admires since his childhood, the sacred music."<sup>5</sup> Further, the author mentioned: "It's known the fact that all the flow of spiritual contemporary music is divided in two directions: first, works that are composed under catolic genre, based on traditional stylistic (a renovated stylistic through individual lexicon) and the second one, "which homologates elements of spiritual culture corresponding to author's thought"<sup>6</sup>

Many of contemporary composers have used catolic religious theme, but Vladimir Ciolac considers that spirituals genres, of any religion, represent a major significance to create and he does not see any impediment to approach to this genre, because human being is always searching for spiritual pillars.

### Biography Ciolac Vladimir



<sup>4</sup> Sambrish, Elena.2013. *Sambrish E. Features of the musical language and drama Stabat Mater V. Cholak*[*Sambrish - Specificul limbajului muzical si a dramaturgiei în Stabat Mater a lui Vladimir Ciolac*] In: *Development of culture and art in modern Transnistria*. Materials of the VII Republican Scientific and Practical Conference. October 27, 2012 Tiraspol: Publishing House of the Transnistrian University.

<sup>5</sup> Mironenco, Elena;Taraeva, Galina.1994. Christian symbolism in the musical language [Semantica limbajului muzical: conventii, traditii, interpretari: In baza materialelor de la conferința științifică Internațională de la academia rusa de muzică „Gnesins”. In: *Musical Art and Religion: Conference Proceedings*. RAM them. Gnesins. Moscow, pp. 129-148.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem* [pp. 129-148].

Composer, conductor, professor, was born on April 22, 1956 in Ismail, Ukraine.

He studied piano at music school with Kuzmencho Luiza.

At Music College *Ștefan Neaga*- Chisinau- he studied choir conducting with Arcadie Luxemburg, composition with Vladimir Bitkin.

At National State Conservatory *Gavriil Musicescu*- 1986-1991 - he studied composition with Pavel Rivilis.

He become senior lecturer. In 1992, Vladimir Ciolac become professor at the National State Conservatory *Gavriil Musicescu*. In 1987, he become the member of *Moldavian Association of composers and musicologists*.

### **Awards:**

in 2000- *Maestro of Art*

### **Choral music:**

- *Choral Symphony [Horovaia Simfonia]*1985 - for mixed choir a cappella.
- *On the cold lunnasting stone [Na holodnon traurnom camne]*.
- *Rushing sleigh [Mciatsea sani]*.
- *Lullaby [Kolâbelinaea]*.
- *I believe in human [Veriu v Celovecha !]*.
- *Punish, God, Fleece [Bate-i, Doamne, pe ciocoi!]*- 1987 - for mixed choir and piano.
- *The Fireplace [U camina]*.
- *Evening Bell [Vecernii zvon]*.
- *Chime of Khatyn [Clopotele de Hatîni]* - 1989 - poem for mixed choir.
- *It's Midnight [Se bate miezul nopții]*- 1989 - choral cycle on Mihai Eminescu's lyrics.
- *O, mama [O, mamă]*.
- *Amongst Hundreds Masts [Dintre sute catarge]*.
- *How Stirred Ocean Become Enraged [Cum oceanu-n tărîtat turbatu]*.
- *To Star [La steaua]*.
- *Ave Maria*- 1999 - for mixed choir and piano.
- *Laudate Dominum*- 2001 - for mixed choir and piano.
- *Ave Verum*- 2017 - for mixed choir and piano.

### **Vocal - Symphonic Music:**

- *The Vigil [Всенощное бдение (Priveghere)]* - for mixed choir and soloists.
- *The Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom [Imnele Sfintei Liturghii Ioan Gură-de-Aur]*-for women's choir and soloists.
- *Miserere* -for women's choir, mixed choir, soloists and orchestre.
- *Stabat Mater* -for choir and string orchestra.
- *Ave Verum* -for soprano, mezzo soprano, string orchestra, vibraphone and triangle.
- *Magnificat* -for mixed choir, soloists and symphonic orchestra.
- *The Clock Beats Midnight [Se bate miezul nopții]*- for mixed choir and sextet.
- *Christ is risen! [Hristos a Înviat!]*- for choral concert.
- *The Cherubim Hymn [Imnul Heruvim]*.
- *Salve Regina* -for mixed choir, soprano and symphonic orchestra.
- *Messe* -for mixed choir, soloists and orchestra.
- *Requiem*

### Choral Music:

*Sacred Songs* [Cântece sacre], (2015 Album):

- *Our Father* [Отче наш (Tatăl Nostru)].
- *The King of Heaven* [Царю Небесный (Împărate Ceresc)].
- *Joseph the Good* [Благообразный Иосиф (Fericitul Iosif)].
- *Most Holy Lady Theotokos* [Всемилолюбивая Владычице моя (Mult Milostivă Maică)].
- *The Prayer of Saint Efreim of Siru* [Молитва преподобного Ефрема Сирина (Rugăciunea Preacuviosului Efreim Siru)].
- *Prude Ladies* [Мироносицам Женам (Femeilor Mironosițe)].
- *Come to venerate* [Придите, поклонимся (Veniți să ne închinăm!)].
- *From my heyday* [От юности моя (Din tinerețile mele)].
- *Christ is risen!* [Христос воскрес (Hristos a Inviat!)].
- *Happy Anniversary!* [Многая лета (La multi ani!)].
- *Ave Verum* - for mixed choir and piano.
- *Lux Aeterna* - for eight voices and mixed choir, a cappella.
- *O, Jesus Christ* [O, Iisuse Hristoase !] - for mixed choir, a cappella.
- *Smooth Light* [Lumină Lină] for men's choir and solo baritone, a cappella.

### Conclusions

**Vladimir Ciolac** reproduces in his works some peculiarities of genres of Catholic music and Orthodoxal religious music contributes to the enrichment of the treasure of local music, discovering new possibilities for updating and, at the same time, for reviving the spiritual values that have been preserved in past, giving them both contemporary and individual treatment.

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