

Ion Baciú – a musician who needs to be rediscovered

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Abstract: Ion Baciú is remembered in the history of Romanian music as the organiser of a musical institution, orchestra trainer and a performer of great depth of George Enescu’s works. His exceptional achievements were the foundation and training of the new symphonic ensemble of the Iași Philharmonic, equal to the few high-performing collectives of the country, which had reached a level of European quality, the assertion of superior conceptual-aesthetic standards in deciphering the particular features of Enescu’s music. The encomiastic chronicles of the most important musical critics, the audio-video recordings, the evocations of those who knew him intimately remain precious, incontestable documents regarding the value of an artist who deserves to be brought back to public consciousness. The micro-study reproduced in what follows sketches a few defining trajectories of Ion Baciú’s personality on the basis of archival samples, from bibliographic testimonies, some of them unresearched until nowadays, to patrimony recordings, unfortunately ignored. In the year of the celebration of nine decades from his birth, of four decades from the historic version of the opera *Oedipe*, on the commemoration of 120 years from George Enescu’s birth, one should emphasise the merits of the Conservatoire professor, philharmonic manager and conductor who contributed essentially to the inscription of Iași among the important musical centres of the country.

Keywords: The *Super* Orchestra, The Philharmonic from Iași, George Enescu, conducting conception.

1. Introduction

A builder of orchestras, a poet of musical colour, a visionary. The goldsmith of sonic substance transformed in highly vibrating psychic climates of the soul. Respectfully devoted to the score, injecting it with his overwhelming sensibility. A performance creator, a subject of admiration of the most cultivated, lucid and parsimonious musical critics, a master of the public attending his concerts like a calling, freeing their inner tension through endless applause after the audition. After Constantin Silvestri, the most appropriate keeper of the keys to the treasures gathered in George Enescu’s music. A winner on the uneven ground of the recordings which often impose the restrictive picture of the construction and spirit of musical works. A conductor scrupulous-affectionate with his orchestra, to which he dedicated himself without reserve, ignoring the gates that would have opened for him the

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road to success in the wide world. A Don Quixote vanquished by the wickedness of the times and of certain people, a Human being who stayed in the memory, in the soul of the performers he trained, of the prestigious soloists partnering with him on the stage.

2. Biographic-artistic references

The first coordinates of Ion Baciú's personality can be found in his family. His father conveyed to him the Wallachians' expertise in organising their social relations, his mother, having been born in the old village of Brateiu, bequeathed to him the Saxon spirit of organisation and an acute sensibility, often marked by dreamy states. She also bequeathed to him the beautiful appearance – as Ion Baciú was later a pleasant man who convinced, conquered others. It is important that both parents were amateur musicians, his mother played the piano well (her son surpassed her regarding the technical-performing qualities) and the tradition of choirs, of the brass bands in Transylvania, including the native Brateiu, familiarised the future conductor as early as his youth with voices in an ensemble, with instruments.

However, out of all illustrious professors from the Bucharest Conservatoire, Constantin Silvestri influenced him most. Certainly *the obsessive rigour* of the details in working with the orchestra, which did not affect the freedom of treating the sonic substance, always respectful to the style, the spirit of each work, Silvestri's other creative obsession – *Enescu's music* – strongly, beneficially marked Ion Baciú's evolution. A stressful reality at first sight constituted the base of his great success later. Still a student (he had finished his third year), Ion Baciú began his conducting activity in Ploieşti, where the foundation of a symphonic orchestra was desired. The reduced dimensions of the ensemble, the performers' amateur status, despite their passion and discipline, the lack of many scores, the imposition by the politics of the time of not always valuable works of maximum accessibility did not discourage him. Passionate about this profession, once attending the specialty courses of the Conservatoire, proven to have good prospects, any student receives the advice and convinces himself of the necessity of having an orchestra available. I think this was the dream that he dreamt for one and a half decades, as long as he worked with the orchestra in Ploieşti, from 1953, until he arrived in front of the orchestra of the Iaşi Conservatoire.

The multiplication of material difficulties, the impossibility of gathering a sufficiently large, stable ensemble, as the performers had small salaries, did not receive apartments and preferred Bucharest, where in the late 1950s there were three symphonic orchestras (of the Philharmonic, of the Radio broadcasting station and of the Cinema), determined Baciú to forsake Ploieşti, where he was leaving so many beautiful memories, where he had won prestige by collaborating with the most important Romanian soloists of the time. Marin

Constantin, in 1960 deputy manager at the Music Directorate from the Ministry of Culture, proposed him the position of conductor of the Romanian National Opera from Bucharest, Ion Baciú signed the contract but at the last moment he decided to come to Iași. I think four reasons urged him to reconsider: firstly, the opera repertoire would have been restrictive for his possibilities and ambitions, despite the fact that years after he reached unique performances by leading the ensembles of the lyrical theatres from Iași and from Bucharest, reaching the masterpiece of his life, *Oedipe*, made with the Philharmonic orchestra and with the Choir of the Opera from Iași! Secondly, the positions of conductors of the three Bucharest orchestras were occupied and even if one of those had been allocated to him, he would have had to fight the egos of the titulars (George Georgescu and Constantin Silvestri would have left him little freedom of movement, as they manifested themselves towards Antonin Ciolan when he was a conductor of the orchestra of the Bucharest Philharmonic). Thirdly, he could not betray his dearest dream – of leading an orchestra, even if provincial, which he would have educated according to his exactingness and projects. I am convinced, he trusted his own powers of moulding a symphonic body, of conferring to it a top-of-the-range value status. He proved it, as much as was possible, with the small orchestra from Ploiești, he was certain he was capable of more if he had his own orchestra. Fourthly, the policy of the Romanian state in the 1960s, 70s and 80s imposed the permanent reflection of the cultural life in the other cities of the country. Chronicles and reports about the concerts of the philharmonics were frequently published in the press of the time, concerts, opera performances from Cluj and Iași were quite often broadcast on the radio – one immediately found out in Bucharest about the artistic performances reached “in the country”. Time proved that Ion Baciú thought correctly, in visionary fashion, about the four coordinates of the musical-administrative policy. Additionally, the total support of the rector of the Iași Conservatoire, Achim Soia, Ion Baciú’s meticulous, inspired work with the student ensemble had as an effect rapid, exceptional musical-artistic results, that stimulated the organisation of his tours in Bucharest, the radio-TV recordings, then the conductor’s summoning at the desk of the orchestras of the “George Enescu” Philharmonic and of the Radiotelevision, in front of the orchestras from the other musical centres of the country are important arguments.

It is equally true that the second and third part of his musical destiny were beneficially influenced by the context in which the Conservatoire and the Iași Philharmonic were found when he came in 1962, by the massive help he received from the most important musician of the place in those years. Another visionary, composer and professor Achim Stoia, the rector of the Conservatoire re-established not long before (1960), wished to employ top-of-the-range young musicians in order to create a solid musical school. Thanks to him, after

Ion Baciú, Anton Zeman, Vasile Spătărelu, Sabin Păutza were employed as teaching staff. Achim Stoia's care for the training of young performers was also visible in bringing prestigious collaborators from Bucharest – it was violinist George Hamza's case, a professional of chamber music, the leader of one of the most valuable string quartets, *Muzica*, a respected theoretician of the technique and stylistics of the string quartet performance. Hamza taught chamber music at the Iași Conservatoire, as he is credited with the appearance of a few student quartets appreciated by the chroniclers who listened to them in Iași or Bucharest.¹ Nor were the most talented students of the Conservatoire neglected. In 1964 the "Moldova" string quartet began its activity, the first instrumental ensemble of this type asserted nationally through concerts in Iași, at the Romanian Athenaeum from Bucharest, at the Philharmonic in Bacău, at the Chamber Music Festival in Brașov, whose recordings were broadcast at the Romanian Radio Company.

Praiseworthy is even now the promptness with which Achim Stoia immediately placed the right man at the right place: beginning as early as the academic year 1962-1963, Ion Baciú taught at the Conservatoire *The orchestra ensemble* and *Orchestra conducting*, which proves that Achim Stoia and Baciú were aware of the necessity of renewing the symphonic ensemble of the Philharmonic with the most valuable young people. Having just settled in Iași, Baciú found himself in the double privileged situation of being a young conductor and professor, but the owner of a rich repertoire, mastered during the years spent behind the desk of the orchestra from Ploiești, a repertoire which would be rapidly enriched. With youthful élan, with the possibilities offered to him by the progressively younger orchestra, stimulated by the liberalisation of political and cultural life, begun exactly during the years 1962-1963, Ion Baciú included in the programmes 20th century works absent until then: Igor Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, *The Firebird*, *L'Histoire du soldat*, Béla Bartók's *Concerto no. 2*, Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*, Anton Webern's *Six pieces*, Alexander Scriabin's *Poem of Ecstasy*, Claude Debussy's *The Sea*, Maurice Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé Suites*. These are a few examples.

2.1. The *Super Orchestra*

Ion Baciú began the third stage of his career as an artisan of the orchestra from Iași in 1968, after the entire collective grew younger. Once more, the circumstances favoured him: as manager of the Philharmonic, he had the legal

¹ In 1974, the quartet *Melos* held a concert at the "George Enescu" Philharmonic, in 1975 the "Cantabile" quartet. The members of the *Voces Contemporanae* quartet (as the well-known *Voces* ensemble was called first) also worked with George Hamza. "Ever since George Hamza became a chamber music professor (at the Iași Conservatoire), a categorical increase of the artistic value of the student chamber ensembles formed by him can be observed." (Bughici, 1975, pp. 32-33).

possibility to employ in one day a great number of performers, each working part-time.

I will underline once more the osmotic professional relationship between Achim Stoia and his “lieutenant”, as Ion Baciú was dubbed, whom he trusted completely, insuring all conditions for development to the professor, conductor and to the orchestra of the Conservatoire. The first concert presented in Bucharest on 28 November 1968 can even be considered an achievement. They impressed most with the overture to Richard Wagner’s *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg* and Franz Schubert’s *Symphony no. 8*. On that occasion and for the next concerts held at the Athenaeum (1969, 1971), in the “Super Orchestra”, as the students called it (a name taken over from the chroniclers of the time!), there were included a few well-performing professors, but the collective was made up of 90% students. Violinist Angela Dumitraşcu related in a TV documentary about Ion Baciú (Vasiliú, 1993) that the young people then found another formula – *the orchestra against everyone*, because of the dissatisfaction of some professors from the Iaşi Conservatoire regarding the numerous rehearsals which pulled students away from other lectures. The situation was confirmed in 1995 by Ion Baciú himself, also on television:

“Because we had certain difficulties – the classes at the Conservatoire, some professors did not agree with this situation (well, things that always happen in life...) – the orchestra received from them, the students, the name «the orchestra against everyone». Why? Because to suddenly change a set of experienced performers with 60 students shows great courage, and most of them were not in their 4th or 5th year, but in their 3rd. It was with them that I started then, we would work in the evening, after their lectures, and they would not tire...” (Vasiliú, 2005, p. 29)²

The chronicles published in the newspapers *Scânteia* [The Spark] and *România Liberă* [Free Romania], in the magazines *Muzica* [Music], *Contemporanul* [The Contemporanul Journal] and *România Literară* [Literary Romania] were encomiastic, the importance of the texts owing, of course, to the prestige of the chroniclers present in the hall. Cella Delavrancea’s analytic-stylistic impressions, displayed in an elect literary style (Delavrancea, 1988, pp. 315-317)³, have often been quoted. The third concert from February 1971 found its admirable comment signed by Alfred Hoffman, who instilled in the first phrase a subtle allusion to the disappointments occasioned by some of the programmes of the Bucharest Radio ensemble or Philharmonic.

² The interview was first broadcast in the show *Fascinaţia muzicii* [The fascination of music], TVR Iaşi, 4 June 1994, director Alex Vasiliú.

³ The chronicle was initially published in *România Literară* [Literary Romania], 13 November 1969.

“The orchestra of the Iași Conservatoire held an admirable symphonic concert, one of those that re-establish and consolidate our trust in the constant values of orchestral performance. This ensemble of young people performs with captivating freshness of inner participation, concretised in a special sonic quality, like a meticulously smoothed and shiny surface, off of which any trace of dust has been taken away. Here you can truly enjoy following the careful dosage of the dynamic planes, you can see yourself through the transparent veil of the orchestral textile, studied and shed light upon in its intimate particles, you singularise the clear unity between goal and realisation. / Ion Baciú is a musician with great power of communication, he has something cordial and pleasant in the way in which he manifests himself, but all these must not make us forget he increasingly tends towards the refinement of interpretation, beyond the – come on, boys – élan, which, by surprising us, can many times hide saddening impurities and negligence. He carries out background artistic-pedagogic work, tending to systematically build an edifice which, already displaying its essential features, will not be late in revealing its imposing proportions. One creates in Iași – it is our impression – one of the great orchestras of the country, without bombast and publicity, with modesty and seriousness.” (Hoffman, 1971, p. 8)

An analyst of finesse, acuity and beauty of expression, Alfred Hoffman never launched complacent statements, did not make speculative forecasts, but the end of the quoted chronicle reveals the qualities of the orchestra which only numbered three years of existence, qualities which would thrive under Ion Baciú's care. In fact, it was also Alfred Hoffman who analysed a decade later, with the same rigour and admiration, the programmes presented in Bucharest by the orchestra of the Iași Philharmonic, which had become on par with the ensembles in the capital city, even surpassing them in the case of the versions to some of George Enescu's works. The records published abroad under “Electrecord” licence of the recordings of the ensemble from Iași conducted by Ion Baciú are an important argument. But I will return to those artistic achievements.

After only two months from the publication of the commentary signed by Alfred Hoffman, in April 1971, another competent, severe, objective chronicler, Teodora Albescu, presented Ion Baciú downright apologetically in the preamble of an interview, in words that had only been written with regard to Sergiu Celibidache as a consequence of the first concert held one year before in Bucharest. Teodora Albescu wrote in a decidedly praising note about Ion Baciú:

“[...] we must situate him conclusively among the most enthusiastic, most willing men of arts who determined, through their work and ability, the renaissance of the musical life in Iași in the past 3 or 4 years. [...] As a conductor he is characterised by colour refinement, the clairvoyance of an efficient architectonic finalisation of the performed work, a lot of fervour, a lot of artistry of the musical pictures. [...] Most of the commitments taken

down in the press⁴ underline ‘the inner unity of the interpretations’, ‘the unmatched freshness’, ‘the young Romanian conductor’s communicative enthusiasm’, ‘the richness of colours that he knows how to realise on each stave’. Closing the portrait sketch that prefaced the interview, Ion Baciú was considered ‘a prestigious representative of a specific interpretative profession.’” (Albescu, 1971a, p. 24)

After only a few pages of issue 4 from April 1971 of the magazine *Muzica*, Teodora Albescu was evaluating the second concert held in Bucharest by the orchestra of the Iași Conservatoire under Ion Baciú’s leadership.

“[...] leaving aside some technical impurities of execution, a certain dose of roughness in the attack of the wind players – elements justifiable through the age of the band – I could appreciate, however, an interpretative tendency searching the dramatic substance, the transparency of the architectonic construction, sonorities of impressive colour refinement. [...] However, the presentation of Richard Strauss’s symphonic poem *Death and Transfiguration* stood out in relief as much more conclusive for the true performing availability of the ensemble. To conclude: measured against the time and point of the outset, the orchestra of the Iași Conservatoire demonstrates an impressive qualitative leap; competitively it draws near to the level of the best orchestras in our country, which I don’t see as surpassing the figures of 2 or 3.” (Albescu, 1971b, p. 30)

To this flattering and courageous statement is added the final phrase of the chronicle – a phrase which constituted, beside the criticism of the eternal disinterest of many experienced and beginner musicians towards the artistic results of their colleagues, the urge to mind the approach of an important competitor:

“I would like to believe that the following presence in the Capital city of the ensembles of the Iași Conservatoire will also finally determine the ‘collegial curiosity’ of the students and professors of the “Ciprian Porumbescu” Conservatoire.” (Albescu, 1971b, p. 30)

The quality of the versions of the young symphonic collective from Iași determined the Radio broadcasting station and especially the Romanian Television to record the concerts held in Bucharest in 1968-1969. I wrote “especially” regarding the Television because not all symphonic and chamber manifestations were paid attention by the institution, quite few were printed, but the programmes of the orchestra from Iași, presented in the capital city and at headquarters, were broadcast frequently. Fortunately, some films have been kept. Thanks to these documents, Ion Baciú’s technique, conducting style can

⁴ T. Albescu was referring to chronicles published in the countries where Ion Baciú had held concerts until 1971 as a guest conductor (the former Yugoslavia, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, former East Germany, Poland, France, USA, Canada).

be observed now. I will describe them in the following chapter. For now I will only stipulate that Richard Wagner's overture to the opera *The Mastersingers from Nurnberg*, Mozart's *Symphony no. 40 in G minor K. 550*, Franz Schubert's *Symphony no. 8 in B minor*, George Enescu's *Prelude at unison* from the *Suite I in C major*, Maurice Ravel's *2nd Suite "Daphnis et Chloé"*, which would become pieces de resistance of his repertoire, were performed in those memorable concerts. Professor Baciu's ambition of realising difficult programmes with the orchestra made up of students is obvious, programmes filled with problems of dramatic construction, of underlining inner dynamics, of refined sonority, of fixing the well-known melodies in the space of novelty, of well-tempered fervour – everything defining the "voice", the personality of an orchestral ensemble. The problems did not belong to conductor and pedagogue Baciu, they belonged to the orchestra made up of students, which lacked, explicably, in experience. Those versions can be studied thanks to the CD edited by the Romanian Radio Broadcasting Company.⁵ Other incentives for the young performers were the confirmation in value of their maestro, often invited to lead the symphonic programmes of the Philharmonic in Bucharest, of the Radiotelevision. Obviously, the tours held later by the new orchestra of the Iași Philharmonic abroad mattered a lot.

2.2. The ascent. Bucharest successes

At the beginning of the 1971-1980 decade, Ion Baciu had become used to the concert halls from Bucharest, as a guest or together with his young orchestra, offering the audition of Romanian and international opera. Jean Victor Pandelescu, for instance, was informing (Pandelescu, 1971, p. 26) about the performance in absolute first audition of the symphonic work *Masa tăcerii* [The Table of Silence] by Tiberiu Olah with the ensemble of the Bucharest Philharmonic⁶, composer Mihai Moldovan had praising words as a consequence of the programme of the orchestra of the Iași Philharmonic. The performances of the *Prelude to Act I*, of the ending of the opera *Tristan and Isolde* by Richard Wagner, of the symphonic poem *Till Eulenspiegel* by Richard Strauss nurtured an analytical commentary but one filled with superlatives shedding light on the originality of Ion Baciu's vision. Mihai Moldovan was writing about the opera by Wagner and Strauss:

“[...] a symphonic page which we consider to have no equivalent in the genre of musical theatre constituted a moment of amplitude of the symphonic. Ion Baciu

⁵ Ion Baciu. *Orchestra „Super” a Conservatorului „George Enescu” din Iași. 1969-1979* [Ion Baciu. The 'Super' Orchestra of the "George Enescu" Conservatoire from Iași. 1969-1970]. Editura "Casa Radio", ADD 177. 2005, The Romanian Radio Broadcasting Company.

⁶ 21 May 1971, The Romanian Athenaeum, concert recording – The Romanian Radio Broadcasting Company.

proved again that he is a refined and delicate colourist (I heard melodic lines, which at other times escaped me⁷), as well as an admirable constructor. The performing perfection – maybe even in the performative sense – of the symphonic poem *Till Eulenspiegel* by Richard Strauss, the often modified tempos (some of the soloist moments being, for that reason, sacrificed) were compensated by the dose of humour that I have scarcely come across, in such quantity and quality, in a different sonic equivalence of the score. The observations that I have formulated in this succinct material are a duty towards the incontestable quality of the conductor and his orchestra. The concert was a indisputable success (maybe even more, a fact which entitles us to wish for an ever more often presence of the artists from Iași in Bucharest), but since they themselves raised the bar of quality it is opportune to pass from the phase of the amazing renaissance to that of appreciating the performing act along the criteria that the great ensembles require.” (Moldovan, 1972, p. 33)

Out of an impressive list of works from the international musical creation presented in Bucharest by Ion Baciú I will only remind of William Schuman’s *Symphony no. 8*, *The Songs of a Wayfarer* by Gustav Mahler⁸, the music of the ballet *The Firebird* by Stravinsky, *The Dance of the Seven Veils* from the opera *Salome* by Richard Strauss, Shostakovich’s *Symphonies no. 5 and 9*.

Numerous testimonies have remained about the versions of important works in the world music of the 20th century, versions brought by Ion Baciú to a high-performing qualitative level, with an impact on experienced listeners. An edifying example is Iosif Sava’s chronicle about the concert in 1975, held by Ion Baciú together with the orchestra of the Radiotelevision. As this ensemble was used, one may say excessively, in the weekly concert which imposed a vast, oftentimes difficult repertoire, and in the numerous special studio recordings with not always valuable Romanian symphonic works, a working programme which diminished the performers’ energy, weakened their reaction to the requirements of the – many – conductors which followed each other at its desk, the promptness with which the Bucharest performers answered Ion Baciú’s requirements in performing one of Shostakovich’s tragic symphonies, *No. 5 in D minor op. 47* remained praiseworthy. One cannot know now whether the programming of the opus took into account the anniversary in 1975 of four decades from the composition and first audition of the monumental work⁹. But the chronicler’s impressions remained fixed onto the printed page:

“From the Faustian theme of the introduction to the energetic measures of the ending, Ion Baciú found in Shostakovich’s score the framework necessary for

⁷ ... an ultra-praising appreciation from a musician of the scale of Mihai Moldovan!

⁸ The first concert in which Ion Baciú conducted the Orchestra of the Radiotelevision.

⁹ In fact, more than four decades had passed, since the first absolute audition is dated 21 October 1934.

the assertion of his stylistic culture, for his knowledge of capitalising on the expressive resources, of the technique of the ensemble due to his power of emphasising the essential ideas of a score, of organising sonic matter, of “building” the moments of tension of the progress. Signalling the enthusiasm of the ensemble, we must also underline the exceptional quality of some soloist interventions: Ion Năstase (flute), Petre Ignăţoiu (clarinet), Mihai Nenoiu (bassoon), Petre Szilei (oboe), Dumitru Florea (kettle drums).” (Sava, 1975, p. 22)

Emphasising conductor Ion Baciú’s predilections and exceptional achievements, stable in time, especially with his orchestra from Iaşi, forces us to go back in time a few years. Having as an instrument a yielding collective, which he had built and continued to polish its qualities, acquiring together with his “children”¹⁰ a vast, Romanian and international repertoire, Ion Baciú simultaneously entered even more profoundly, in the years 1972-73 in the *stages impressionistic music – Enescu’s music*. Tested as early as the foundation of the *super orchestra*, during the first concerts in Bucharest, then with the new orchestra of the Philharmonic in the headquarters programmes, the two tracks led the conductor and the orchestra from Iaşi to historic successes. But the undertaking of the reminded trajectories was possible firstly at home, because the 1973 debut of the conductor and his ensemble in the “George Enescu” festival revealed only the understanding and the complete expression of the *Concerto for string orchestra* by Sigismund Toduţă, the option for Ravel’s music, as the festival organisers ignored Baciú’s predilection for Enescu’s works. Maybe this predilection had not yet manifested itself plenary in Bucharest, maybe the memory of the versions to *Till Eulenspiegel*, to *Daphnis et Chloé*, presented in past years at the Athenaeum, were the reasons behind the choice of the Iaşi musicians for French pianist Philippe Entremont, who wished to perform the two *Concertos* by Maurice Ravel. Anyway, the critics’ impressions were expressed in the superlative.

The beginning of the second track towards historic successes of conductor Ion Baciú together with his orchestra was constituted by the premiere presentation in Iaşi, in a concert formula, of George Enescu’s opera *Oedipe*. The occasion was the commemoration in 1975 of two decades since the composer’s disappearance. Although the title was changed “from above” from *The Festival of Romanian Music* to *The Week of Romanian Music*, the concert in Iaşi had the dimension of a national event thanks to the participation of performers, musicologists and chroniclers from the other musical centres. The presentation of the *Oedipe* opera required choosing the best vocal soloists of the time, among whom I mention only the baritone David Ohanesian,

¹⁰ As he called them in his last televised interview in 1994.

performing the titular role. Critic Grigore Constantinescu's opinions are revealing:

“[...] without a doubt, the main merit belongs to Ion Baciú, this enthusiastic musician who had the power to create a new Oedipus, of a clarified ancient beauty. The dramatic planes, the clearness of the melodic textures, the enveloping atmosphere of the sonorities prove to obey a spirit of great clarity and force, who does not repeat previous solutions but finds the truth of Enescu's opera in deepening the meanings of the score. One can speak, in Ion Baciú's case, of the opportunity of a special recording of the work, aesthetically valid and pregnantly personal.” (Constantinescu, 1975, p. 34)

The chronicle excerpt can be read between the lines. Stating that Ion Baciú “does not repeat previous solutions”, Grigore Constantinescu was referring first of all to Constantin Silvestri, the author of the absolute premiere of the opera *Oedipe* in Romania (1958)¹¹, which had remained a milestone, then to Mihai Brediceanu, who took over the leadership of the performance and made the special recording of 1964. The exceptional value of the 1975 version signed by Ion Baciú comes out of the last quoted sentence, targeting the urgency of a studio recording, because it was considered a new milestone. Grigore Constantinescu's thought would only fulfil six years later, but not as a consequence of a Romanian initiative...

2.3. *The concert diary* – Liliana Gherman

The explainable dimensions of this study do not allow the marking of all of Ion Baciú's artistic achievements. I will only mention the invitations received quite frequently for a while of conducting the orchestras of the Radiotelevision and of the philharmonics in the country, of the opera theatres in Iași and Bucharest, the records (an entire series reflecting, unfortunately, only the relationship of the conductor and of the Orchestra of the “Moldova” Philharmonic with soloists of great class, it is true, among which I mention mezzo-soprano Viorica Cortez, soprano Eugenia Moldoveanu and pianist Dan Grigore), the great number of tours abroad – together with his ensemble or as a guest conductor.

The step-by-step evolution of conductor Ion Baciú and of the orchestra of the Iași Philharmonic can be observed in the *concert diary* of the institution, published weekly by Liliana Gherman in the magazine *Cronica* for 29 years (1966-1995). The lines ordered in one of the many chronicles which interest us in the context of the theme of these notes, would firmly urge us to believe in

¹¹ The recording was censored by the authorities because Silvestri left the country for good that year, immediately after having conducted the premiere of *Oedipe*. Certainly, at the date the quoted chronicle was published, the sonic document from the premiere was known to Grigore Constantinescu.

the author's subjectivity: "It is quite difficult to write about conductor Ion Baciú: he is too much one of ours, we're gotten used to him too much" (Gherman, 2003, II, p. 52).

And the following phrase essentialises the relationship of the conductor with his orchestra, concretised musically in so many high-performing achievements: "The orchestra, whose componse we owe to him to a large degree, realises together with him a sort of symbiosis which shines through a characteristic sonic colouring and an unmistakable performing manner" (Gherman, 2003, II, p. 52). This element constituted one of the keys of his strategy, remaining a problem which increasingly loses relevance in our time. Unfortunately. I will argue over the course of this study.

Although impressed, much like so many composers, performers and chroniclers, by Ion Baciú's outstanding musical qualities, Liliana Gherman permanently demonstrated balance, an understanding of the contexts which marked the existence of the Iași Philharmonic, a cult for the truth, objectivity in elaborating the chronicles. I am writing the word "elaboration" because her texts do not reveal the hurry of the publishing effort in weekly rhythm for almost three decades, but the calm of choosing, of clarifying each word, each expression, additionally mirroring reality with the measured gift of metaphor. That is why her notes can mirror both the evolution and the involution of the conductor-orchestra binomial at the Iași Philharmonic. The second phrase reproduced above has the quality of generality for all that Liliana Gherman wrote analytically, in a non-partisan manner, about conductor Ion Baciú's destiny in Iași – a destiny of not only national value, as the chroniclers in Bucharest underlined, as, of course, the en titre chronicler from Iași underlined.

At the first steps of the *super orchestra*, in 1968, L. Gherman underlined:

"[...] the conducting technique, perfected and much nuanced, had acquired precision and concision that one can only come across at the true masters of the baton¹². The first of the two concerts conducted recently (which featured the overture to Beethoven's *Fidelio* and Carl Orff's cantata *Carmina Burana*) was registered among those rare events, which impose execution milestones." (Gherman, 2003, I, pp. 22-23)

Two years later, the chronicler was outlining "the exceptional performance of Ravel's *Suite 'Daphnis et Chloé'*, refined to the last sound, unravelling in a fascinating timbral variety, with a perfect mastery of the nuances, followed masterfully in their whimsical succession, with freshness, relaxation, entwined naturally, harmoniously." (Gherman, 2003, I, p. 50)

¹² ... after becoming acquainted with American and Austrian orchestras in their home, but also in relation to the pedagogical nature of professor and conductor Baciú's work with the student orchestra in Iași.

What was Beethoven's music like in Ion Baciú's vision? Here is a first answer of chronicler Liliana Gherman, dating from 1974, after having listened to *Symphony No. 9*:

“The grandeur of the ending, evinced in a realisation [as in] this season-opening concert, has a force capable of melting everything in a unique and overwhelming emotional flow. I believe, in fact, that this is the merit, the characteristic feature of conductor-performer Ion Baciú: the ability to organise and master successive tensional stages in continual ascent; even if not all details were always observed, the perspective is clear and revealing. I would underline a moment which seemed to me completely special: the manner in which, after reminding the main themes of the previous movements in a feverish search, the theme of the ending appeared as a seed of new life. It is possible that the moment was also electrifying for the performers, because all together, the orchestra, the united choirs of the Philharmonic and of the Opera (trained by Ion Pavalache and Anton Bişoc) and the four soloists making up a prestigious vocal quartet (Emilia Petrescu, Marta Kessler, Valentin Teodorian and Gheorghe Crăsnaru) coalesced under Ion Baciú's baton into a harmonious whole, of grave sonic luminosity, raising the musical and literary text to the height of a moving message of staggering actuality.” (Gherman, 2003, I, p. 125)

Since Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9* is all over the world a reference of philharmonic programmes, which offers, in principle, the promise of audience success, it was also performed often at the Philharmonic from Iaşi. Praiseworthy for Ion Baciú is that the chronicler-analyst Liliana Gherman found every time new performing-conceptual qualities of the tireless orchestra leader.

2.4. *Oedipe* again

Another peak moment in his career and in that of the Iaşi orchestra, in tight connection with Enescu's music, can be considered the new special recording of the opera *Oedipe*, owed to Ion Baciú¹³. In the year of the centennial of the composer's birth – 1981, the initiative did not belong to a Romanian institution, but, as I anticipated, to the BBC British Television, which financed the audio recording, made in Iaşi, a basis for the video editing in the studios of the Romanian Television. An entirely significant fact, the limited partners chose Ion Baciú as a conductor of the orchestra of the Philharmonic, the choirs of the Philharmonic and of the Romanian Opera from

¹³ In 1981, most musicians and the public thought that Baciú was doing the second professional recording of Enescu's opus, after the one signed by conductor Mihai Brediceanu in 1964. The truth was different: there was also the sonic document from the premiere performance of 22 August 1958, led by Constantin Silvestri, but censorship would suppress it for another 26 years. That is why the recording with Ion Baciú can be considered, at the level of the year 1981, the third in chronological order.

Iași. The BBC's option was explainable through the performing qualities proven years on end and through the exceptional versions of George Enescu's works, already circulating on the international record market, especially in England, where the Romanian records with the Iași orchestra were sold under license, the British company indicated, through the appreciative opinions of the British cultural diplomats in Bucharest, who were paying attention to the musical values of the country. One might say that the history which had happened exactly 25 years before regarding Ion Baciú's conducting professor, Constantin Silvestri, thus repeated itself. In 1956, Silvestri was signalled by chronicler Malcolm Rayment to the London Philharmonic as an exceptional conductor, so that on 25 January 1957 the Romanian musician held a concert in the well-known Festival Hall, beginning his fulminatory world career. But the difference was great: Constantin Silvestri accepted the invitation of the London Philharmonic, while Ion Baciú rejected the tempting offers of permanently leading symphonic ensembles from abroad, preferring to return to Romania, to his orchestra in Iași... Only one of the dramatic effects of this option, for him and for Romanian culture, is that in the exactly 40 years passed up to now, since the recording of George Enescu's *Oedipe* opera was made, to which Ion Baciú, the ensembles from Iași and a redoubtable team of soloists, still having as a protagonist the baritone David Ohanesian, took part, it has not been fixed on a disc, despite its value of international level, it is not even periodically, fragmentarily broadcast by the Romanian public radio stations. Critic Grigore Constantinescu's perfectly grounded suggestion of 1975, of having Enescu's masterpiece recorded in Ion Baciú's version, has not found its way to musicians and the public. One might say that Ion Baciú, the disciple, once again followed his maestro, Constantin Silvestri...¹⁴ Will there have to also pass 53 years so that Baciú's recording enters the patrimony of Romanian culture, as it deserves?

It is curious that in the year of the Enescu centennial, 1981, as Ion Baciú's exceptional value as a performer of Enescu's works, all the more so of the opera *Oedipe*, was very well known to the musical fora and the political authorities of the time, a value signalled, as I have mentioned, with chronicle quotes, as early as 1975, the performance was not included by the organisers of the "George Enescu" International Festival in the Baciú version, the titular of the representation in that moment being Mihai Brediceanu. One of the written testimonies of the way in which the new version was thought out, of the performing value level which *Oedipe* had then reached in the performance of the Iași ensembles led by Ion Baciú, is Liliana Gherman's chronicle:

¹⁴ The printing of the 1958 *Oedipe* opera, supervised by Silvestri, was only published on a CD in the year 2001!

“The execution, in the given [concert] form prepared minutely under conductor Ion Baciú’s leadership, required on the one hand a contraction of the real dimensions of Enescu’s grand opus, and on the other a dilation of the vocal instrumental apparatus. Both actions remain in a way debatable, by reference to the conceptional integrity: the only fragmentary presentation of acts III and IV, after the integral one of the first two, modified the dramaturgy of the work; hyperbolically amplified, the orchestra and the choir force, in general, the soloists into a subordinated position, improper to a lyrical-dramatic performance. And yet... it was a definite success! First of all because the singing was very good, in numerous moments even impressively beautiful and suggestive, and secondly because the *symphonic-oratorical* formula adopted was the most propitious one to a profitable reception on the part of a non-homogenous public from the point of view of musical training.” (Gherman, 2003, II, p. 91).

The great prestige that Ion Baciú enjoyed in the Romanian musical world also in regard to the performance of Enescu’s works, the first “Oedipe exam” passed with flying colours in 1975, were undeniable arguments for the programming of his version, *finis coronat opus*, in the closure of the 9th edition, from September 1981, of the “George Enescu” International Festival. After the *symphonic-oratorical* concert and the recording from Iași for the television edit, the representation in Bucharest impressed professionals, the audience, finding reflection in the chronicles of the most important musical critics. I am choosing only Luminița Vartolomei’s notes, published immediately in the magazine *Muzica*:

“[...] the performance-concert version of the Oedipe opera proposed by conductor Ion Baciú (to which is also owed the training of the musician team, but also the collaboration with the famous ensemble Eurythmeum from Stuttgart, with a view to completing the stage picture of Enescu’s score) represents one of the most important contributions to date to the sonic and visual materialisation of Enescu’s masterpiece, to its imposition in the conscience of the audience in this country (and not only, given the much wider possibility of circulation of this formula, compared to the enactments made for lyrical theatre). / On both its dimensions – on the musical and the stage plane – the performance-concert marked substantial updates, beginning with the more intense exploitation of the richness of orchestral details and ending with finding the ideal solution of embodying, in tragedy, the crowd with which the heroes are confronted one by one, are judged by or experience together the joy of victory and the pain of misfortune. A vocal-instrumental collective constituted by the orchestra of the ‘Moldova’ Philharmonic, the ‘Gavriil Musicescu’ choir of the same concert institution (trained by Ion Pavalache) and the choir of the Romanian Opera from Iași (led by Anton Bișoc) knew how to follow and realise with maximum professionalism and admirable abnegation conductor Ion Baciú’s intentions. The latter’s performing vision, personal and innovative to a considerable measure, springs

neither from the wish to rebel against consecrated models, nor from that of originality at any cost, but from a profound knowledge of Enescu's score, through an own effort of penetrating and understanding the text, which determined not only the respect for its **letter**, but also the creative attitude towards its **meanings**." (Vartolomei, 2003, pp. 170-171)

After pointing out the soloists' and the characters' names, Luminița Vartolomei gave a last description of the performance:

"[...] one of conductor Ion Baciú's altogether unneglectable merits is that of having divined that the most fitting hypostasis for a contemporary conception about the way in which stage movement appeared in ancient Greek tragedy could be realised not by choreography, but by eurythmy. Austere and suggestive, of great artistic effect, the to-and-fro of multicoloured veils in which the movements and the attitudes of the dancers coordinated by Else Klink permanently change thus composes an ideal framework for the heroes' evolution, even if its line was not – as it would have been natural – rethought as well, but is taken over almost identically from the staging created almost a quarter of a century before by director Jean Rânzescu for the Romanian premiere of *Oedipe* on the stage of the Bucharest opera." (Vartolomei, 2003, pp. 170-171)

Brilliant moments in Ion Baciú's career were the versions of other Enescu opera: the *Vox Maris* symphonic poem, *The Concert Overture*, *The Chamber Symphony*, *The Octet for string instruments*, *The Dixtuor for wind instruments*, *Symphonies No. 2 in A major* and *No. 3 in C major* – performed in concert, followed by encomiastic chronicles (including composer Pascal Bentoiú's comments), almost all recorded with the orchestra of the Philharmonic from Iași, with some of the ensemble members, with quartets *Voces* and *Euterpe*, only one, *Symphony No. 3*, being printed with the orchestra and the choir of the Philharmonic from Cluj-Napoca. As far as recordings are concerned, one achievement should be underlined: some prints from concerts in the "George Enescu" Festival were published by *Electrecord* **on the following day** on document-records, without any musical editing, subsequently distributed under license in the West (especially in England and Germany)!

2.5. A dramatic ending

The last of conductor Ion Baciú's top achievements together with the orchestra of the Iași Philharmonic can be considered heroic, because in the decade 1981-1990 the situation of the cultural institutions in Romania worsened: the drastic decrease of funds, self-financing, the cold imposing humiliating working conditions. The philharmonic manager Ion Baciú had to require money from managers of industrial companies, who, preoccupied with their own problems of the same nature, could help him for a while, the result being the worsening of the musician's relations with the local communist

authorities. The wage problems, of which Ion Baciú was not guilty but could not solve anymore either, despite all his efforts, also woke the explainable discontent of some of the orchestra performers, feeding the tense climate, the progressively degrading the quality of the symphonic programmes. The irritation of the manager and prime-conductor Baciú, annoyed by the disastrous situation, an irritation impossible to mask, invited the indirect reaction of the authorities. The almost weekly presence on the stage of the Iași Philharmonic could not be rarefied, but he was almost never invited again to hold concerts in Bucharest, which explains the absence of chronicles from the central press. His name does not appear in the chronicles publishes in the year 1984 in the magazine *Muzica*, as late as in October 1985 the prestigious critic Ada Brumarú having the occasion to comment, how else than praisingly?, a rare presence of Ion Baciú as a guest conductor. Only in Iași, Liliana Gherman continued to write the “diary” of the concerts weekly. The last top artistic achievement was constituted by the participation of the collective of the “Moldova” Philharmonic in the 1985 edition of the “George Enescu” Festival, when *Symphony No. 2 in A major op. 17* was performed.

The inevitable happened for Ion Baciú in the year 1987, when he had to leave Iași because he could not achieve anything anymore in the city where the exceptional performances of the orchestra he had moulded began. Seven years later, in 1994, the musician confessed to me during a televised colloquy:

“I did not leave Iași for nothing – who squanders away a lifetime’s work? [...] We were being decimated day after day! I had to sack people, I had to place them in different positions, it was something I could not stand... I was fortunate enough to generally enjoy a lot of love from everyone. Wherever I went, doors were thrown open to me. And under these conditions, I could not handle it anymore!” (Vasiliú, 2005, p. 28)

I wrote that Ion Baciú left Iași, he did not forsake it. Having returned to the Philharmonic in the Ploiești of his first creative beginning, he often came back onto the first Moldavian stage, but without replicating the sublime moments from the not so distant past. The financial penury, the difficult working conditions were kept until the end of the year 1989, when the Ceaușescu regime fell, but the tracasserie, the afflictions suffered for a long time, the sometimes superhuman efforts of reaching artistic achievements, to save what could be saved in the Iași Philharmonic, ground his health, the rhythm of his stage appearances decreased, hospitalisation in Sweden followed. During the last concert held with his orchestra on 3 June 1994, the conducting gestures essentialised to the maximum betrayed the diminution of his physical energy. But his “children” in the orchestra, as he nursed them the last time in front of the cameras, “related” again the fairy-tale of *Daphnis et Chloé* almost by themselves, as they had “related” it so many times for 25 years on end under

the sometimes shivery, sometimes energetic gestures of the maestro! I cannot forget the crowd of musicians, music-lovers, colleagues and acquaintances who filled the conductor's room at the Philharmonic and the hall on which so many waited to meet him! Very many met him again, upon separation, in November 1995, in order to accompany him along the road which ended in the cemetery "Eternitatea" of Iași!

Conductor Ion Baciú's exceptional qualities, the originality, the profoundness and the vitality of his works with a powerful effect upon listeners, the charm of his human personality fed the impressions, the always respectful, many times emotional memories, filled with regret, of the musicians he collaborated with. Beginning with performers in the orchestra he trained, to composers, soloists, chroniclers and directors of radio-tv broadcasts, who confessed to me in the presence of the microphone and of the camera. I am now mentioning only mezzosoprano Viorica Cortez, soprano Eugenia Moldoveanu, baritone David Ohanesian, bass Gheorghe Roșu, conductor Gheorghe Victor Dumănescu, publicist Iosif Sava, professor and musicologist Grigore Constantinescu, professor, publicist and musicologist Liliana Gherman and professor Ioan Morna, decades on end the leader of the 2nd violin section in the orchestra of the Iași Philharmonic.

I have insisted up to here on defining moments from the life, especially from the activity of conductor Ion Baciú because his achievements, important for the history of Romanian music, must be known by the young generation, as well. It is no less true that our fast-moving life, the prevalence of the new and, why should we not admit it, the Romanians' custom of forgetting their values, of ignoring their past, have removed Ion Baciú's name from the circuit our musical life, as the young have feeble chances of knowing this music Creator. The chances are feeble because, outside of the mentioned CD, which records sequences from the concerts of the orchestra of the Iași Conservatoire held in the years 1969-1970 in Bucharest, a CD which was not destined to be commercialised, the other master-recordings found in the library of the Romanian Radio Company, published decades ago on vinyl records at *Electrecord* are not broadcast because the young generation of musical radio professionals does not know them, the recordings of very good quality from the musical point of view and from the point of view of sonic capture are not transferred onto digital technology, they do not circulate on modern magnetic supports.

3. Testimonies about the conducting conception. Stylistic features

Ion Baciú offered to me the explanation of the orchestral sonority fashioned with the orchestra of the Iași Philharmonic at the beginning of the colloquy we had in the year 1994.

“The important thing was the following: I was sent to Vienna, to the Arts Academy, on time. But it was not the Academy, which gave me something additionaly, but the musical life in Vienna, especially the orchestra of the Philharmonic. After a year or two I was sent to America and listened to the orchestras there. This is how in my mind a symbiosis was formed between the softness and the beauty of the string instruments (the violins, the cellos a. s. o.), as I heard the Austrians play them, and what downright impressed me with the Americans, the sonority of the wind players. This sonority probably comes from somewhere, from jazz...¹⁵ Absolutely fantastic precision, no reduction as far as technique was concerned, all of them virtuosos!... And then, upon returning home, I began to work with our orchestra according to the models I spoke to you about. I remember, I was in the concert hall, in Boston, and when I heard a chord – in *Daphnis et Chloé* – I stood up, during the concert, and then I sat down again! A single chord! I couldn’t imagine that so much brilliance was possible! So, only if you see it somewhere, if you know it is possible to reach such a sonority, will you do it as well!” (Vasilii, 2005, p. 28)

Until now I have gathered two explanations of the rapid success obtained by Ion Baciú with an orchestra made up mostly out of students: the synthesis of two types of sonority (American and Austrian), the young people’s determination, from the points of view of self-assertion and of material stimulation, of working intensely with their professor and conductor. Ion Baciú revealed as early as 1971 the coordinates of his actual working style:

“A general tendency of the Conservatoires injects the mentality of the performer student with the predilection for the soloist activity. It is well-known, however, that out of most graduates, natural selection reserves such a career only for a few. And it is natural that that should happen, since the Conservatoire is only a personnel seminary for the most diverse musical activities. What *élan*, however, what professional abnegation, what love for the profile of his work in the orchestra will a performer bring, who has been educated in school only towards a soloist activity? [...] I believe, therefore, that it is high time musical education asked themselves this matter more intently, guided and discovered for the student the beauty of the work in a collective, determined him to love the activity in an orchestra, because this is much more difficult than soloist work. One requires maximum meticulousness of individual study, severe artistic discipline towards oneself and towards others, team spirit and, no less, the capacity to renounce a certain individual personality in order to be able to serve the creation of a collective personality – the orchestra.” (Albescu, 1971 a, p. 25)

¹⁵ Which is true, but one must also consider the American instrumental musical school, which also has as a foundation the high-performance element as technique and sonority, just as important being the superior quality of the instruments.

Related to the work in a collective, explaining from a strictly musical point of view, Ion Baciú was underlining years later that one of his first worries at the beginning of the training of the orchestra of the Iași Conservatoire, the future symphonic ensemble of the Philharmonic, was to educate the young to listen to each other during the playing in the ensemble.

“[...] the conductor should not only keep time..., as he does so he outlines, to say so, his wishes and asks the orchestra to play in a certain way. Keeping time can be elegant, athletic or swordsman-like or gymnast-like, but keeping time must contain in it the music you have in that moment! However, if the orchestra becomes accustomed to the sound (and very fixed) keeping of time, then the performers stop listening to each other, they look at you and play according to your hand. But I said one must play by the ear, no by the hand...¹⁶” (Vasiliu, 2005, p. 27).

Also related to working with the orchestra is, of course, the *air drawing* of the music. Now is configured the fourth rule that Baciú observed.

“[...] cultivating gesturing in itself I think is a position of artistic periphery. Of course, one must master with excellence the technique of conducting movements [...] it should not result from this that I reject the idea of a certain dose of momentousness. No! Moreover: I consider that the conducting profession also requires some acting attributes (of course, within limits clearly determined by common sense, by good taste). The drawing of the movement is dictated, however, by the music you interpret, and it is essential that the gesture depart from what happens at that point in the orchestra, and not from calculus, from previous preparations. Of course, for a conductor the foundation is constituted, nevertheless, by his capacity to express himself through any movement, attitude, look, his capacity of communicating to the orchestra his will, his expressive intention. Here also intervenes the necessity of temperament, too (there is, however, a difference between nervousness and musical temperament).” (Albescu, 1971, pp. 24-25)

Of course, that his complete professionalism determined Ion Baciú to acquire a vast repertoire in short while, in which the symphonic and concert works from the classical and romantic eras with secure public success entered firstly. It was a *sine qua non* condition in the period of his beginning as a conductor in Ploiești (1953-1962), when the communist state policy permanently required the accessibility of art, when the reduced dimension and the limited quality of the orchestra did not allow the inclusion of difficult scores in programmes. The second type of works which he had to learn fast and as well as possible were the Romanian opera composed over time. Not all of a high value level, but all mandatory for the concerts of the symphonic

¹⁶ “By the ear”, obviously, in the sense that performers need to listen to each other in the orchestra.

orchestras in the country. It was a law that Ion Baciú observed, however, quite easily, because he had the capacity of learning rapidly, his musicality, balance, common sense helping him to “exploit” even the bland staves for whatever could be reached musically. One should not debate anymore the accredited values of contemporary Romanian creation, the patrimony ones, which he capitalised on completely. Examples can be found in *Moldavian landscapes* by Mihail Jora, *Symphony No. 1 and Rhapsody No. 2* by Paul Constantinescu, *Motives from Maramureş* by Corneliu Dan Georgescu, *Harmonies I*, the Suite *Mihai Viteazul* by Tiberiu Olah, the opera *Doctor Love* by Pascal Bentoiu.

But, outside the Romanian and international repertoire, which included masterpieces of public success joined by the mandatory, beginning scores of symphonic programmes, Ion Baciú was able to manifest his stylistic predilections because he was the permanent conductor of an orchestra, in Iaşi, moreover, he held the position of manager of a philharmonic, having the possibility of ordering the repertoire of a season, thinking out the concert strategy a few years in advance. Which allowed him to reach, through reprises of some works, peaks of his musical conception, high qualitative standards for the orchestra of the Philharmonic. I have in mind the two *royal ways* towards the superlative (from all points of view): *impressionism and Enescu’s works*. Both conceptual-sonic worlds allowed him to develop his taste for colour, for nuances – even more than with Wagner for majestic, brilliant, solemn sonorities. By contrast, the attraction for the sonorities and timbres which express inner vibes, wistfulness, that *longing without space* so well expressed by Enescu. If evanescent landscapes and the rhythmic unchaining from the the 2nd ballet *Suite Daphnis et Chloé* brought the sonic-musical picture to incandescence and paroxysm, transforming everything in a *game of the contraries* of the inner performance versus the extrovert performance, if the poem *Death and Transfiguration* was for Ion Baciú an arduously, overwhelmingly musically “uttered” meditation on the final point in life, if Shostakovich’s *Symphony No. 5* was the parade scene from which an almost overlooked door let in the chilling draft of suffering – Enescu seems, in Ion Baciú’s understanding, to have featured them all. Additionally, the landscape of the doina-wavy space, nowhere else to be found. Truly revealing for the musical matter weaved by Enescu were the lights projected by Baciú onto the *Suite No. 1 in C major, op. 9*, on the poem *Vox Maris*, onto the *Symphonies No. 2 and 3*, onto the *Octet*.

3.1. Constantin Silvestri – Ion Baciú, the teacher and the disciple

It is customary to establish the influence of the professor, of the maestro, in the beginning of an evocation. I have chosen to shed light now on the connections between Constantin Silvestri and Ion Baciú, because the two conductors’ passion for Enescu’s music, the overwhelming interpretations,

which they left to our memory and to magnetic memory open the series of affinities, likenesses, of the tragic ending which awaited them both. Each musician who has reached the age of great fulfilments and successes evokes respectfully the teachers with whom he worked closely. In the interviews given over time, Ion Baciú did not speak about his pedagogue in conducting from the Bucharest Conservatoire, Constantin Silvestri. The reason is political but the reticence belonged first of all to the journalists, who never questioned him about this topic. The avoidance of a discussion about Silvestri is explained through his status of forbidden musician in Romania until the year of his death, 1969¹⁷, through many people's fear of publicly speaking about him, of researching him, like a willing prolongation of silence, although, immediately after the disappearance of the great conductor and composer, the publication of some scores, the broadcasting of a record recording¹⁸, the evocation in two books published at publishing house Editura Muzicală¹⁹. Nor in the ample interview, almost two pages long, made by Teodora Albescu, published in issue 4 of 1971 of the magazine *Muzica*, was Silvestri's name pronounced, his influence on Ion Baciú's conducting conception was not even suggested, when he was asked to explain his predilection for Enescu's music.

Many of Constantin Silvestri's experiences were taken over by Ion Baciú. First of all, their capacity of work, the dedication without limits for their orchestras. Both had a huge power to fascinate – Baciú with another type of performativity, by “veiling listeners in”. Both understood, expressed Enescu through all the fibres of their musical intelligence and sensibility. Both transfigured in sound and expression life as a fight, death as absolution in new embodiments of the hero Manfred, a hero that can have their face, should we consider this carefully. Silvestri and Baciú created out of the opera *Oedipe* events which equalled rigour and fantasy, the archaic and the modern.

The differences are understandable but not fundamental for their creation as performers. The phlegmatic Silvestri was an antithesis of the charming Baciú. After having produced musical events in a Bucharest retreating in front of novelty, of experiment but charmed the public and musicians by shedding even more light on the meanings of known masterpieces, after having stood political humiliations and manoeuvring, Silvestri made for the wide world, where he found unrestricted success, an orchestra to model. Ion Baciú was, in his turn, an architect of musical events in Iași and Bucharest, he was lucky

¹⁷ Because of his refusal to return to Romania after 1958, which resulted in him being sentenced to death.

¹⁸ *Symphony No. 10* by Dmitri Shostakovich in the interpretation of the Orchestra of the Radiotelevision, conductor C. Silvestri (Electrecord, ECE 0663), a recording reedited for the first time after Silvestri's death, in the year 1972.

¹⁹ Pricope, Eugen (1971). *Dirijori și orchestre* [Conductors and orchestras]; Bălan, Theodor (1976). *Prietenii mei, muzicieni* [My musician friends].

enough to experience the short political liberalisation (1962-1971) but, in the same way, his value and prestige did not help him when political power brought him, too, into the *winter of our discontent*. As opposed to his teacher, Baciú remained, like a *Don Quixote* fighting ever larger wind mills, in order to pay with his life here the passionate work, the successes and torments he did not merit. Both lost the fight when they still had plenty to achieve, both still wait to be rediscovered: Silvestri – the composer, Baciú – the conductor.

Musicians Constantin Silvestri and Ion Baciú's destiny has another common trait: the conductor as a permanent presence at the desk of an orchestra. It was a status which they profited by, a status which may maintain them in an unreturnable past. Even at home, in Romania, where he had to fight the envy, the jealousy and the manoeuvring of some colleagues (the most notorious was George Georgescu), Silvestri reached achievement by tending to conduct the orchestra of the Philharmonic in Bucharest and the orchestra of the Radio Broadcasting Company. The performers wanted him, they knew that could make real music with him, that they could have great success. Once abroad, he was required to take over the leadership of an orchestra without a name from the British resort town of Bournemouth, which he brought in a few years on a par with the three symphonic ensembles in London, with other ensembles of this type in the world. The Swedish wanted to enter the top of symphonic orchestras with Silvestri's help, too.

Ion Baciú proved to be the same, an architect and a constructor. He raised, he cultivated an orchestra of students until the age of high-performing maturity – the orchestra of Conservatoire, turned into the orchestra of the Iași Philharmonic, which he led for nineteen years²⁰. Everything the two musicians realised was owed to the freedom they had as Philharmonic managers and conductors of a symphonic ensemble.

By answering in 1971 to Teodora Albescu's statement *What do you think is essential for the artistic profile of a conductor?*, Ion Baciú was debating on his chances in two hypostases: as a guest and as a permanent member of an orchestra collective. After having led for six years the orchestra of the philharmonic in Ploiești and, until the moment of the interview, for nine years the orchestra of the Philharmonic from Iași, Baciú was pleading, of course, for the status of permanent conductor. Especially in Iași he had managed fast, previously unthought of achievements, which I have evoked in the previous pages. I describe selectively passages from his argumentation:

“The artistic ideal that I believe in, the wish to serve music totally as much as possible, on a par with my possibilities, has sawn into me the preference for the activity in which I situate myself as a permanent conductor of the

²⁰ I have not taken into account the old ensemble, with which he held concerts from 1962 until 1968.

orchestra. [...] Outside the realisation of a good concert, of a convincing interpretation [...] the greatest contentment of the permanent conductor, that additional satisfaction which he experiences, remains the duty to ascertain the professional evolution of his orchestra. [...] This does not mean that the entire season unravels only under the baton [of the permanent conductor]/ Not at all! But a single “hand” should be responsible for the supervision, the control of the collective, for insuring a work discipline. When there are several permanent conductors, the degree of interest for the ensemble itself diminishes, and instead of being preoccupied with its evolution, we are mainly preoccupied with what is ours: our concert, our programme, etc. But this is not a way for an orchestra to grow. [...] For a more unitary vision of the concert programmes, I believe that the practice of the cyclical principle will prove to be much more advantageous (this has been demonstrated a couple of times already). In other words, I declare myself the adept of a season made up on the basis of a series of concerts with a single (permanent or guest) conductor.” (Albescu, 1971a, p. 25)

Ion Baciú, the architect of a symphonic orchestra, the visionary of the repertoire that defined his personality and style, had enough models in order to argue the fabric of his own work, the concept displayed as early as 1971 in the magazine *Muzica*: Ernest Ansermet (the Suisse Romande Orchestra 1918-1968!), Wilhelm Furtwängler (the Orchestra of the Berlin Philharmonic 1922-1945; 1947-1954), George Georgescu (the Orchestra of the Bucharest Philharmonic 1920-1964), Theodor Rogalski (the trainer and educator of the Radio Romania Orchestra (1930-1950)), Arturo Toscanini (the NBC Orchestra 1937-1954), Evgheni Mravinski (the Orchestra of the Philharmonic from Sankt Petersburg 1938-1988!), Herbert von Karajan (the Orchestra of the Berlin Philharmonic 1955-1989), his conducting professor Constantin Silvestri (leader of the orchestras of the Bucharest Philharmonic and of Radio Romania). There are plenty of other examples. And the accuracy of the constant, permanent activity of a conductor with an orchestra was confirmed yet again in his case.

3.2. Enescu’s works in Ion Baciú’s vision

Near the two important anniversaries – 120 years from George Enescu’s birth and 90 years from Ion Baciú’s birth, one should underline the conductor’s merits in deepening the meanings of Enescu’s music, in revealing other semantic-expressive folds in a new manner, which observed the letter and the spirit of the scores. Explaining for the first time publicly, for a media channel which transformed immediately into a written document found for half a century at the disposal of whoever was interested, the special attraction of George Enescu’s music, Ion Baciú was stating:

“The first and the immediate justification is found in the beauty of rare expressive deepness of this oeuvre, in its meanings scrutinising the depths of human existence, in its sensibility speaking of that great purity of the

Romanian soul. I have thought many times that Enescu's music can be compared with a sonic picture over centuries of our wonderful Moldavian monasteries. In short (and it is meaningless to insist on reasons of value), nothing is more natural than that honest joy, honest emotion that I experience as a performer whenever I come across Enescu's scores. It is an artistic world [which] convinces me, with which I can communicate, and especially, which allows me to serve it from the position of that noble ideal of sincerity and performative dedication." (Albescu, 1971a, p. 25)

The confession dates from 1971, Ion Baciú had only begun for a few years the deep interpretation of Enescu's works together with the orchestra of the Philharmonic from Iași or with other ensembles from the country – the great confrontations and the great victories regarding the symphonies, the *Oedipe* opera, were still to come. Because Ion Baciú's constitutive resonance, his continuous research of the scores were finely tuned with the smoothing of the young orchestra, with its training in the study and the expression of Enescu's texts and ethos. The evolution allowing clarification, which required time. The exceptional consequences were the first representation in concert form of the opera *Oedipe* (Iași, 1975), *Symphony No. 3 in C, op. 21* (1977, recording on an *Electrecord* record), the special Radio Romania recording (Iași) and the second representation of the *Oedipe* opera (Bucharest, 1981, the "George Enescu" International Festival), *Symphony No. 2 in A, op. 17* (1985, the "George Enescu" Festival, published on the following day on an *Electrecord* record). These are a few examples. I am choosing for a succinct comment two opera performed by Ion Baciú – *Symphonies No. 2 and 3*. The versions, with orchestras trained at different conducting schools, activating in two specific ethno-cultural areas, transpire, of course the distinct, original personality of the one who led them at the moment of the performing act.

Symphony No. 2 in A, op. 17 offered to Ion Baciú repeated occasions of expressing stylistic areas, writing modes, soul climates which represented him plenary: Neoromanticism, the technique of the orchestral development *in a cascade*, with pronounced rhythmic and nuance adversities, with gulfs, with static moments specific of Richard Strauss²¹, with sublimated Romanian reveries. The variant of the *Overture to the opera "The Mastersingers of Nurnberg"*, presented to the Bucharest public in the year 1970 by Ion Baciú in a spectacular version²², can also be considered one of the keys of his interpretations with regard to Enescu, because the Wagner-Strauss connection makes visible the untroubled continuity of the melodic flow, which had not yet

²¹ In the symphonic poems *A Hero's Life, Death and Transfiguration*, in the *Symphony of the Alps*.

²² Ion Baciú. *Orchestra „Super” a Conservatorului „George Enescu” din Iași. 1969-1979* [Ion Baciú. The 'Super' Orchestra of the "George Enescu" Conservatoire from Iași. 1969-1970]. Editura "Casa Radio", ADD 177. 2005, Romanian Radio Broadcasting Company, track 8.

transformed, in the years 1912-1914, when it was composed, *in a tornado*, as it would happen with *Symphony No. 3*. Like Strauss, Enescu watched from the cross of 19th century romanticism the dawn of 20th century modernism, keeping the distance ignored by the radicals Stravinsky and Bartók. This we understand thanks to Ion Baciú, who furthermore proved that the Romanian author became more involved than Strauss in the dramatic adventure marked by conflict, in the jungle of the romantic-modern synthesis procedures and styles, leading us towards the shore of inner joy. As stated before, the version presented in 1985 by the orchestra of the Iași Philharmonic, led by its maestro at the International Festival in Bucharest rightfully enjoyed in advance the trust of the leadership of the Festival and of the *Electrecord* Label, with the certainty of masterful success. Thus, on the following day the recording was published on a document-record, and a year later an album was printed in an increased number of copies, with the encomiastic presentation of composer Doru Popovici.

I have not noted down impressions about the *Symphonies No. 2 and 3* in the chronological order of their composition because I want to emphasise once more the superior understanding, the refinement reached by Ion Baciú as early as the decade 1971-1980 (more precisely, in 1977, when the recording was made) through the repeated immersions up to then in the ocean of Enescu's symphonic works, relatively little researched until then. Especially since the *opus no. 17 in C*, no very far removed in time from the preceding one (it was composed in another two-year interval, 1916-1918), surpasses it from all points of view: of elaborating the musical substance, of the sonic spectrum developed through the addition of the organ and the choir, through the height of the philosophical thought reached in music. Ion Baciú clarified the imponderable melodic line, multiplied in developed motifs, a melody which cannot be caught in the polyphonic web, its high flight over the areas of Romanian modalism, the impressionistic harmonic lack of focus being, however, attracted by the German monumentality. The idea of synthesis is clear in the conductor's conception: the synthesis of the orchestra and the choir, also thought out by Enescu as an integrated instrument, not one added to the orchestra, **the synthesis** of the three musical cultures – German, French, Romanian – in a form foreign to pastiche, to folklore. Very few Romanian conductors managed before 1977 to also transform *Symphony No. 3* from the complicated *pearl game* materialised in apparently anfractuous strings into an intelligible, fascinating performance played in the spacious apron of the maturity creation left from Enescu. Apparently burdened by the complexity of the ideation and of the writing, *Symphony No. 3* is, as far as the composer is concerned, the proof of the refinement and virtuosity with which music can still be composed in the tonality of C major, and as far as conductor Ion Baciú is concerned, the certainty that he was capable in the concert hall, it remains through the recording, capable of also familiarising the listener with this complex

“symphony of symphonies”, the way analyst Pascal Bentoiu called it, delighted by Baciú’s version, which he considered “superb” (Bentoiu, 1984, p. 218).

Saddening is that exactly half a century has passed since Ion Baciú expressed his discontent as to the way in which Romanians related to the man Enescu and his music in the year 1971, and the situation has remained unchanged.

“[...] my predilection for Enescu’s oeuvre is also determined by a second main factor. We speak a lot about Enescu, we have dedicated an international contest and festival to him, we have fathomed his music in countless musicological studies, etc. I dare, however, to state that outside the circle of specialists (I am not only referring to musicians, but to most of the men of arts in our country), the true value significance, the true and concrete musical significance of Enescu’s pages mostly escapes the wider audience. We have shown in mass conscience a symbolic respect towards the **name** but we have not managed yet to properly familiarise the wider audience with his music, we have not managed to ensure this opera the popularity of Sadoveanu or Arghezi’s writings, for instance (in order not to surpass the reference era). The **Romanian rhapsodies** are known at most, but not the works which truly represent Enescu’s great art. And, on a national level at least, such a situation seems unnatural too me.” (Albescu, 1971a, p. 25)

4. Conclusions

4.1. The permanent conductor – the invited conductor

As comes out clearly from these notes, all unique achievements related to Ion Baciú were possible thanks to his triple position as conductor, professor and philharmonic manager. Conductor Ion Baciú had an experience of fifteen years when he put together his orchestra in Iași. Baciú, the manager of the Philharmonic, had the legal instruments available in order to assemble it. Professor Baciú had the institutional framework in which he worked intensely, a lot, efficiently with the students at the “George Enescu” Conservatoire from Iași. Stability allowed him to model the orchestra according to his own criteria, to fulfil its performative style and sonority, to crystallise the repertoire which defined his personality and that of the instrumental collective. It was a fundamental law that great conductors of the world wished and observed. Beside the recordings, which will have to be unearthed immediately, what remains exemplary in Ion Baciú’s exceptional story? Are there any chances of there appearing a new visionary conductor, an exceptional professional capable of forming a symphonic ensemble also recognisable from recordings? The answer is dualistic. There are and there will be very good conductors with a personality, capable of forming an orchestra. The problem is whether the philharmonics of the world – by mimetism, the philharmonics from Romania – want to have a conductor mastering their orchestras. It becomes ever more obvious that no. The reasons can be explained up to a point, but not fully. I

finally chose the opinion of Cristian Mandeal, a perfect connoisseur of the problem, because he led for shorter or longer periods the orchestras of the Philharmonics from Cluj, from Bucharest, with which he realised memorable concerts and recordings, he has the experience of the main guest conductor of the well-known Halle orchestras from Manchester and from Copenhagen, of guest of other prestigious symphonic ensembles and opera theatres from abroad.

“Globalisation, on the one hand, the commercialisation which has reached us, on the other hand, are fearsome factors, which change things, in my opinion not altogether for the better. The good side is that there is nowadays a great diversity of figures, a greater commercial offer for the audience, who, of course, wishes to see as much, as new, as varied, as young as possible. On the other hand, however, we lose, I believe, something that before was characteristic of the great orchestras – respectively a certain sound, a certain specific approach of the classical repertoire, this being the product of the direct work of the conductor. Of course, the Furtwängler era has disappeared, the Mravinski era has disappeared, even the Bernstein or Karajan era has disappeared, you see that in the past five years various conductors were rolled even at the Berlin Philharmonic. I don’t know whether it’s for the good of the music or for the mental and bodily health of the orchestra, but rather for the immediate profit of the ticket sellers, of the respective musical institutions, which mostly live out of profit in almost all places in the world where, of course, the earnings determine the survival of an orchestra.” (Vasiliu, 2019)

4.2. Ion Baciú – Defining features of his conducting art

Even if he had not been warned regarding his prestige and popularity as a conductor, the person who listened for the first time to works interpreted by Ion Baciú was forced to pay full attention to him until the end, gradually joined by admiration. These are effects which have been maintained thanks to the recordings. The general explanation has in view the ambivalent spectacular character. First of all, Baciú shed light on the architectonic elements of the opus, “see” the sonic construction in all external dimensions, from the support pillars to the last lines of the roof. The melodic conduct not only had a well outlined drawing, but a significance, an evolutive course which could be sinuous, insurgent, as the Romantic style individualised by Wagner, Schubert or Strauss requires it. Baciú impressed the musical substance, also when he was conducting symphonic orchestras where he was a guest, with an emotion, an entirely special experience, which did not change, did not decrease depending on the character of the music. The dramatic or Apollonian soul climate veils listeners even now in, bringing the whole sonic display in the area of performance.

The exceptional quality of Ion Baciú’s versions also transpires from the *inner performance* of the content in the score. Debussy, Ravel, especially

Enescu bring the alchemist Baciú into the foreground. He would always find the chromatic ambient – the colour, the nuance (from the obvious to the infinitesimal one), which characterised *the musical pictures*. As the inner performance was first “directed” by the composer, Ion Baciú fundamentally observed his indications. This observation is plenary valid in the case of Enescu’s music. Because from the multiplication, combination, pulverisation and permanent recomposing of the ideas, motifs, melodic cells the musical flow is concretised, for instance in *Symphony No. 3* or in the opera *Oedipe*. Enescu cannot be understood and displayed in his complexity, refinement and splendour without a comprehensive, synthetic stylistic experience. His music is a great synthesis, which includes suggestions from Classicism, Romanticism, Impressionism and early modernity, which lacks radicalism. Without the understanding, without the empathy for these stylistic areas and climates, the signs of Enescu’s music cannot be totally decoded.

Transylvanian Ion Baciú’s amazing special resonance to the wavy, remiss Moldavian climate, to the aspect of old walls is added, of course, to the mentioned parametres (we remember the evocation of the monasteries in Bukovina, related by the musician in the 1971 interview with Enescu’s music).

If we have in mind the permanent illumination of the dramatic character in the performed music, an introverted or obvious character (examples can be found in some of Shostakovich’s symphonies performed by Ion Baciú with the orchestras of the Philharmonics from Iași and from Bucharest), we find another reason to consider every musical act he signed a performance. A performance full of ideas and affects, which even now overwhelms listeners after the sounds have ended. These seem to me the great qualities of the conducting art which bears Ion Baciú’s name.

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