

Romanian Music in the 20th Century: *How? Where? Why?*

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Abstract

The Romanian music *does* and *does not* exist in Europe. Among the causes which reduce its' "visibility" there are: less or even lack of information; the lack of foreign languages into the specialized database.

Comparing Romanian musical genres with similar European ones, we notice a spontaneous correlation in technique and value.

Remedies: much larger communication channels *from* and especially *to* the Romanian musical culture.

Key words: *Romanian music, Composers Union of Romania, BBC, Schönberg, Verklärte Nacht, Enescu, Octet*

The present approach isn't a new or a long one is not a frustration result; as a matter of fact it is a determination, an amount of arguments and points of view.

The First Point of View

A long time ago – maybe forever – there were questions, simple or complex, regarding the Romanian music. Among these: *where* happens to be our music on the European cultural map, in the 20th and 21st centuries? It is impossible to give a complete answer to this question. Therefore we shall enclose a few suggestions.

The First Suggestion - *the Composers Union of Romania web site* "a national importance forum, whose purpose is to support and promote the Romanian musical values, to protect the professional, moral, social and material interests of its members"¹ – quote from the foreword signed by the President in charge, the composer Adrian Iorgulescu. We do not include or comment the entire text or the ones signed by Valentina Sandu-Dediu and Constantin Secară. What we intend to do is to judge this web site as a foreign musician, who would be interested in new repertoire, in new research areas, new bibliography, biographical and stylistic information regarding the Romanian music and musicians. Well, all these are impossible actually! *Why?* Because this part of the site is written in Romanian *only!*

¹ <http://www.ucmr.org.ro/> 13.02.2012

How can we possibly remedy this problem? *No*, we think it is not a *money* matter. We believe the solution is the *perseverance* and the *initiative*. Whether each composer, each researcher would expose their work both in Romanian and (let's say) in English, they will save a huge amount of effort and money. The solution is an internet database – a sort of *WikiROmusica* for instance (it's only a suggestion). Such an encyclopaedia supposed to be administrated by professional musicians and musicologists. In the case such a project does not occur where it is expected to be, it could be initiated by another institution of the kind, like a university of arts.

By the way, did you know that actually a project like this *already exists*? It is the one named *MusicWiki*². In the home page, we may read (in Romanian only, of course!): “This *Wiki* wishes to become a vast encyclopaedia, about Music. By this project, we intend to help everyone. *In the case this project becomes successful we intend to translate it in English to inform the foreigners!*”

Till now the site includes seven items only, among them one of 40 words about... Michael Jackson! What is the target of this sort of web sites? How successful could they be? *No comment!*

The Second Suggestion

Recently we learned of the existence of a site called *Encyclopedia of Romania*. The home page looks like this:



No foreign language again! We were certainly curious to know what Romanian composers appear³, and here there are:

² http://ro.muzica.wikia.com/wiki/Pagina_principal%C4%83

³ http://enciclopediaromaniei.ro/wiki/Enciclopedia_Rom%C3%A2niei 10.11.2011



Would be needed further comments?

We don't think so!

The Third Suggestion concerns a BBC radio channel. It's useless to justify this choice, as well as the BBC importance in the international media. We have been curious to find out how the Romanian music and musicians are perceived by Radio BBC and then offered to its audience. Using key-words like *Romanian Composers* and *Romanian Musicians* we have chosen one of the first links that appeared, *BBC Radio 3 – Romania: Discography*, which included a CDs list⁴. The recordings are proposing exclusively traditional music, organized by the main cultural areas in Romania: *Transylvania, Wallachia & Moldavia*. It could be also found recommended recordings, as well as information about the music and the performers.



As it can be seen above, there is a list of abbreviations and a dictionary helpful to all those who wishes to know what is, in the tenderers opinion, representative and valuable in this kind of music.

The dictionary divides the music in two zones: the one of Transylvania and the Lowland Music. For Transylvania, most of the titles are in Hungarian.

⁴ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio3/world/guideromaniad.shtml> 13.02.2012

The repertoire proposals include Hungarian, Romanian, Jewish and Gypsy traditional music. Below there are some excerpts of the list:

Sándor "Neti" Fodor

Neti Fodor (born 1922) is the most respected Gypsy fiddler of the Kalotaszeg region.

CD Hungarian Music from Transylvania:

Sándor Fodor

(Hungraton, Hungary)

On this compelling disc of both Hungarian and Romanian music from Kalotaszeg, Neti plays with some of the best táncház musicians from Budapest - who've become his disciples. The energy and bite is fantastic. One of the essential Transylvanian records.

Mihály Halmágyi

Halmágyi is a veteran player of Csángó violin music from Gyimes. He plays a five-stringed fiddle, the extra string running under the playing strings to add overtones and fill out the sound. He was for years accompanied on the gardon by his wife Gizella Adám, who recently died.

Muzsikás

Hungary's leading táncház band and the leading ambassadors of Transylvanian music. See Hungary discography (p.165) for more recommendations.

cd Máramaros - The Lost Jewish Music of Transylvania

(Hannibal/Ryko, UK)

Music from a tragically vanished people in Transylvania revived with the help of two veteran Gypsy musicians who played alongside Jews before the war. For more on this and the Jewish music of eastern Europe see the Klezmer article in The Rough Guide to World Music Volume 2.

Őkrös Ensemble

Csaba Őkrös is a tremendous fiddler and his traditional ensemble is one of the best Budapest táncház groups. They often work together with village musicians from Transylvania.

Soporu Band

Soporu are one of the fine Gypsy bands from the Cimpia Transilvaniei, led by Dandoric Ciurcui.

cd Taraful Soporu de Cimple

(Buda/Musique du Monde, France)

Several suites of dance tunes and songs sung by Vasile Soporan.

Szászcsávás Band

Szászcsávás (Ceud in Romanian) is a predominantly Hungarian village in the Kis-Küküllő region of Transylvania. Their Gypsy band, led by István "Dumnezu" Jámbar, is one of the best in the region.

etc...

Regarding the Lowland – Wallachia & Moldavia – we find remarkable recordings, like *Zece Prajinii's Peasant Brass Band* and *Les Leutari de Clejani*, as well as...

Nicolae Gutsa

A Gypsy singer, Nicolae Gutsa was born near Petrodeni in 1967 and now works in Timidoara in the Banat region of western Romania. A very popular singer, he performs traditional music in a contemporary style.

cd The Greatest Living Gypsy Voice

(Auvidis/Silex, France)

Despite the absurd title, this is a great disc with excellent vocals and some wild instrumental playing, notably from Ion Trifoi on violin and Remus Kiroaci on sax in a band that also includes piano accordion, guitar and synth.

Trio Pandelescu

Vasile Pandelescu (born in 1944) is a virtuoso accordionist who played for many years in a group with Gheorghe Zamfir. His trio includes double bass and Vasile's son Costel on hambal.

etc.

The Second Point of View

It is about a parallel between Romanian music excerpts and similar ones from the Western music. The only observations we want to make are the following:

1. Our intention is not to suggest *copying* or *plagiarism* – far from that!
2. On the contrary, we consider as an amazing and irrefutable European spirit the alert rhythm of the Romanian music evolution – in its different genres and styles, especially during the last 200 years or so – and its undisputable concordance with the European culture.

During a verbal exposal, using audio-video resources, we presented several musical excerpts – belonging both to Romanian and Western cultural spaces – including similar or comparable true values. The single attribute which separates them is the relationship *known–unknown*, favourable of course, to the Western music. Therefore...

Oaş/Maramureş Dance	Celtic Dance
Nectarie Protopsaltul – <i>Axion mode 8</i> Mid. 19 th Cent.	<i>Gregorian Gradual "Protector noster"</i> 10-13 Cent.

Ed. Caudella – <i>Serenade</i> op. 28 No. 2 1895?	Dvořák – <i>Slavonic Dance</i> op. 72 No. 2 1886
Enescu – <i>Octet</i> op. 7, 3 rd mvt. 1905	Schönberg – <i>Sextet Verklärte Nacht</i> op. 4, 1 st mvt. 1899
Enescu – Symphonic Poem <i>Vox Maris</i> op. 31 1950	Debussy – <i>De l'aube à midi sur la mer</i> (<i>The Sea</i>) 1903–1905
Enescu – <i>Oedipus</i> op. 23 1931	Bartok – <i>Count Bluebeard's Castle</i> op. 11 1911–1917
Silvestri – <i>Pesante. Schezando – Sostenuto</i> , Piece No. 1 from <i>Three String Pieces</i> 1933, rev. 1950	Britten – <i>Simple Symphony</i> op. 4, 1 st mvt. 1934
P. Constantinescu – <i>Și auzind Irod împăratul...</i> from <i>Christmas Byzantine Oratorio</i> 1947	Orff – <i>In taberna quando sumus</i> from <i>Carmina burana</i> 1936
Th. Rogalski – <i>Gaida</i> from <i>Three Romanian Dances</i> 1950	Mussorgsky-Ravel – <i>Samuel Goldenberg und Schmuyle</i> from <i>Pictures in an exhibition</i> 1922

In a written exposal, the above analogy becomes worthless, so we preferred to compare two excerpts from Schönberg's *Sextet Verklärte Nacht* op. 4 and Enescu's *Octet* op. 7.

Arnold Schönberg, Strig Sextet *Verklärte Nacht*, op. 4, Introduction

Sehr langsam.

1. Geige.
2. Geige.
1. Bratsche.
2. Bratsche.
1. Violoncello.
2. Violoncello.

pp
immer leise
pp
immer leise
pp
immer leise
pp
immer leise
immer leise
immer leise
immer leise
immer leise
immer leise
immer leise
immer leise
immer leise
immer leise

The image shows the first system of a musical score for a string sextet. It consists of six staves, labeled from top to bottom: 1. Geige (Violin), 2. Geige (Violin), 1. Bratsche (Viola), 2. Bratsche (Viola), 1. Violoncello (Cello), and 2. Violoncello (Cello). The tempo marking is 'Sehr langsam.' The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is common time (C). The first system shows the beginning of the piece. The first two violin parts have rests for the first two measures. The viola and cello parts enter in the first measure with a melodic line. The dynamic marking 'pp' (pianissimo) is indicated. The phrase 'immer leise' (always softly) is written above the notes in the viola and cello parts. The second system continues the melodic development, with the first two violin parts entering in the third measure. The dynamic marking 'pp' and the phrase 'immer leise' are repeated throughout the system.

etc.

George Enescu, *String Octet* op. 7, Third Movement

Lentement ($\text{♩} = 42$)

The first system of the musical score consists of six staves. The top staff is for the 1st Violin, marked *pp* *archet* and *(avec sourdine)*. The second staff is for the 2nd Violin, marked *pp* and *(avec sourdine)*. The third staff is for the Violas, marked *pp* and *(avec sourdine)*. The fourth staff is for the 1st Viola, marked *pp* and *(avec sourdine)*. The fifth staff is for the 2nd Viola, marked *pp* and *(avec sourdine)*. The sixth staff is for the 2nd Violoncello, marked *pp* and *(avec sourdine)*. The instruction *mettez la sourdine* is written between the fourth and fifth staves. The bottom staff is for the 2nd Violoncello, marked *pp* and *(avec sourdine)*.

The second system of the musical score consists of six staves. The top staff is for the 1st Violin, marked *expressif* and *pp*. The second staff is for the 2nd Violin, marked *pp*. The third staff is for the Violas, marked *pp*. The fourth staff is for the 1st Viola, marked *pp*. The fifth staff is for the 2nd Viola, marked *pp*. The sixth staff is for the 2nd Violoncello, marked *pp* and *(avec sourdine)*. The instruction *2^e Vn., 2^e Va.* is written below the bottom staff.

etc.

From the beginning we have to mention that Schönberg's composition was written during three weeks only, in September 1899⁵ (he was then 25 years old), as a consequence of his affection towards Mathilde von Zemlinsky whom he will later marry (Professor Alexander von Zemlinsky sister). Enescu finished his *Octet* at the end of May 1900 (the age of 19) at Mihăileni (Botoșani), in his grand parents' house, the Cosmovich family⁶. The two of them lived at that time – the first in Vienna, the second in Paris. Neither at that moment, nor another time they did not meet each other. It seems that their creative activity has developed independently, without any of them knew or being influenced by the other⁷.

We therefore have enough reasons to consider that the two compositions have been created independently, during less than a year, by two young musicians, each of them having at least four years of experience⁸. Both works are part of the late Romantic style.

Verklärte Nacht is a programmatic piece, inspired by Richard Dehmel's poem *Zwei Menschen (Two People)*. In spite of the poetry's profoundness and exquisite beauty, Schönberg's music exists and resists by itself. Actually, the author himself confessed: "My work gained such skills that can satisfy the audience, even the program remains unknown; in other words it offers the possibility to be considered as *pure music*..."⁹

For the beginning, here there are some general coordinates:

⁵ Ovidiu Varga, *CEI TREI VIENEZI ȘI NOSTALGIA LUI ORFEU / THE THREE VIENNESE AND THE ORPHEUS NOSTALGIA* (București: Ed. Muzicală, 1983), p.60.

⁶ We took the information from an internet article entitled "Where disappeared George Enescu's fortune?"

<http://rotundu.blogs.jurnalulbtd.ro/2010/06/16/unde-a-disparut-averea-lui-george-enescu-659>

⁷ Concerning young Enescu's biography between 1899–1900, we know that he had an intense performing activity in Paris and in Romania, as well as a great interest towards composition. *GEORGE ENESCU*, editing by Academia R.P.R (București: Ed. Muzicală, 1964), pp. 140-143 and 272.

⁸ According to Ovidiu Varga's chronology, the first *opus* signed Schönberg dates 1896 (op. cit. p. 434). In his turn, George Enescu has begun his activity as a composer at the Conservatory of Paris, in 1896-97 (*GEORGE ENESCU*, op. cit., pp. 140-143).

⁹ O. Varga, op. cit. p. 60.

Schönberg <i>Sextet op. 4 „Verklärte Nacht”</i>	Enescu <i>Octet op. 7</i>
<p>The piece includes several movements chained continuously, having the character of a poem:</p> <p><i>Sehr langsam (Very slow, Introduction)</i> <i>Etwas bewegter (Agitated)</i> <i>Lebhaft bewegt (Lively in action)</i> <i>Schwer betont (Focal points)</i> <i>Sehr breit und langsam (Very wide and slow)</i> <i>Sehr ruhig (Very quiet)</i></p>	<p>The piece includes the following movements:</p> <p>I. <i>Très modéré</i> II. <i>Très fougueux</i> III. <i>Lentement</i> IV. <i>Mouvement de valse bien rythmée</i></p>
<p>Even it could be listened as pure music, the musical fluid is closely related to Dehmel’s poem; it also reveals a special dramaturgy justified by <i>the dialog</i> of two characters¹⁰.</p> <p>The dialog subsists by a special distribution of the six instruments: constantly, the 1st Violin with/without the 2nd Violin – dialogues with the 1st Cello or/and the 1st Viola.</p> <p>It is a poem, which means <i>one movement</i>, changing the <i>tempo</i> and the musical sense, depending to the poetry’s episodes.</p>	<p>Quote from the <i>Foreword</i> at the first edition:</p> <p>”This <i>Octet</i>, a cyclic work, has the following feature: the four distinct classical movements chain in fact in a unique symphonic structure. In a very large plan, they form a symphony first movement.</p> <p>Regarding the performing manner, it is not necessary to insist upon certain artifices of counterpoint in order to permit emphasizing the thematic elements and the main melodies.”¹¹</p>
Duration 30’	Duration 40’

As following we shortly compare the *Introduction* of the *Sextet* and the *3rd Movement* of the *Octet*.

¹⁰ This is the reason we enclosed Dehmel’ poem both in German and in English.

¹¹ „Cet Octuor, œuvre cyclique, présente de plus la particularité suivante : étant divisé en quatre mouvements distincts, à la manière classique, ces mouvements s’enchaînant entre eux, forment un seul mouvement de symphonie, où les périodes, sur un plan très élargi, se succèdent selon les règles de la construction d’une première partie de symphonie. Il est à noter, pour son exécution, que l’on ne doit pas trop insister sur certains artifices contrapunctiques, afin de permettre la mise en valeur des éléments thématiques et mélodiques essentiels.” George Enescu (from the foreword of the *Octet* score, published by Enoch&Cie, in 1950)

Schönberg
Sehr langsam (Introduction)

Enescu
Lentement (3rd movement)

Augmented Tonality
intense chromatics

Augmented Tonality

Expressionist trend:

- Melodic and harmonic density
- Lots of harmonic dissonances
- Dynamics diversity and contrast
 - Tense expression

Impressionist tint:

- Transparency
- Main melody, like a lullaby
- The polyphonic character does not crowd the music, on the contrary it emphasizes the clarity and the meditative feature
- Missing of the tense expression
- Dynamics richness



Accompaniment, viola 2 – cello 2, bars 1-2



Accompaniment, violins 2-3-4, bars 1-4



Theme – viola 1 – cello 1, bars 3-6



Theme – violin 2, bars 5-10

We did not intend here to make a detailed analysis of the two masterpieces. As a conclusion at the above analogy, we quote the composer Pascal Bentoiu – an authority in judging the Enescu's music. In his book *Enescu's Masterpieces*, at the end of the chapter concerning the *Octet*, he mentions:

'I would join the piece we are talking about here to a masterpiece of the same period: *Verklärte Nacht* for string sextet by Schönberg (1899). Listening successively the two of them, written for similar ensembles, seems to be a very instructive experience. Thus reveals the Olympian balance and exuberant vitality of the Romanian composer, as well as the very unusual smoothness the same with restlessness and anxiety at Arnold Schönberg.'¹²

¹² Pascal Bentoiu, *CAPODOPERE ENESCIENE / ENESCU'S MASTERPIECES* (București: Ed. Muzicală, 1984), p. 37.

We find here the main difference between the two compositions, which comes mostly from *the spirit* of the authors (including their origin and cultural tradition) rather than their musical training. This explains the Impressionist colour in Enescu's music as well as Schönberg's Expressionist atmosphere.

What we intended to emphasize are the *instruments* used by the two of them – in no way superior to one another – having as a result a similarity in melody, dynamics, timbre.

We cannot consider this similarity – and those in the table above – as „loans” – far from this! What we have here are two *distinct creative processes*, profound, consistent and extremely valuable. It is, we think, the similar situation with the existence of the same folk tales in the completely independent spaces and cultures.

Modern Romanian music integrated immediately in Western European culture of the same period, though the two of them have had very different developments. So, the Western unitary tradition has received the refreshing Eastern diversity. We notice by this (in spite of all obstacles during the time) the excellent operation on the lines of communication *from outside* to the Romanian culture. In other words, Romanian musicians have been permanently well informed, mostly interested in the foreign culture, practically and theoretically. Our musical education aims the international global phenomenon. We learned all the time the newest in musical composition, performing arts and research. This uninterrupted informing process was active even during the isolation period. As a result, we find an original and refreshing music, without anachronism and disuse.

According to all these, how can we explain the difficult communication *from* the Romanian culture *to outside*? The originality, vigour and value of the Romanian music – traditional, religious and classical – are above any doubt. More than that, the modern period in the Romanian music has covered in about one hundred years (considering as the beginning of modern era the first original compositions of the young George Enescu) a route that in Western Europe lasted approx. a millennium. Everybody agrees and is very pleased of this, but everything remains between *us*! We frequently do not use the opportunities to establish relationships outside, and we do not prove the interest towards this mostly often.

By this exposal we do not pretend to develop here any law or government decision; actually we submit again (we did before too) a more practical and useful proposal for the musical academic society of Iași: a web site about the Romanian classical music, in two languages. For this it should be necessary as follows:

- Authors agreement – composers and musicologists;
- Experienced people in musicology and in one foreign language, who would supervise the uploaded texts.

- A *link* on the University web site

At the possible question *how the payment is for this?* we should answer: *nothing for the moment!* At the beginning, the most important is to have a virtual database in a foreign language, with information, comments and analysis about the Romanian composers and repertoire – helpful to all sort of research. Moreover, an important requirement in the academic evaluation consists in the number of quotations of a certain author. Or, such a project could be a first step to achieve this goal. Money? They will come, no doubt, if the project is going to work. After that we will not be so disturbed that the Romanian music

- Is unknown in the world,
- Is published under different/not Romanian names or titles
- Is commented inconsistently, inaccurately, superficially, unilaterally by unimportant researchers
- And if such situation continues to exist, the web site could reply consistently and efficiently.

Annex

Richard Dehmel¹³ *Zwei Menschen – Two People*

*Zwei Menschen gehn durch kahlen, kalten Hain;
der Mond läuft mit, sie schau'n hinein.
Der Mond läuft über hohe Eichen;
kein Wölkchen trübt das Himmelslicht,
in das die schwarzen Zacken reichen.
Die Stimme eines Weibes spricht:*

*„Ich trag ein Kind, und nit von Dir,
ich geh in Sünde neben Dir.
Ich hab mich schwer an mir vergangen.
Ich glaubte nicht mehr an ein Glück
und hatte doch ein schwer Verlangen
nach Lebensinhalt, nach Mutterglück
und Pflicht; da hab ich mich erfrecht,
da ließ ich schaudernd mein Geschlecht
von einem fremden Mann umfassen,
und hab mich noch dafür gesegnet.
Nun hat das Leben sich gerächt:
nun bin ich Dir, o Dir, begegnet.“*

*Sie geht mit ungelenktem Schritt.
Sie schaut empor; der Mond läuft mit.
Ihr dunkler Blick ertrinkt in Licht.
Die Stimme eines Mannes spricht:*

*„Das Kind, das Du empfangen hast,
sei Deiner Seele keine Last,
o sieh, wie klar das Weltall schimmert!
Es ist ein Glanz um alles her;
Du treibst mit mir auf kaltem Meer,
doch eine eigne Wärme flimmert
von Dir in mich, von mir in Dich.*

*Die wird das fremde Kind verklären,
Du wirst es mir, von mir gebären;
Du hast den Glanz in mich gebracht,
Du hast mich selbst zum Kind gemacht.“
Er faßt sie um die starken Hüften.
Ihr Atem küßt sich in den Lüften.
Zwei Menschen gehn durch hohe, helle Nacht.*

Two people are walking through a bare, cold
wood;
the moon keeps pace with them and draws their
gaze.

The moon moves along above tall oak trees,
there is no wisp of cloud to obscure the radiance
to which the black, jagged tips reach up.

A woman's voice speaks:

“I am carrying a child, and not by you.
I am walking here with you in a state of sin.
I have offended grievously against myself.

I despaired of happiness,
and yet I still felt a grievous longing
for life's fullness, for a mother's joys

and duties; and so I sinned,
and so I yielded, shuddering, my sex
to the embrace of a stranger,
and even thought myself blessed.

Now life has taken its revenge,
and I have met you, met you.”

She walks on, stumbling.

She looks up; the moon keeps pace.

Her dark gaze drowns in light.

A man's voice speaks:

“Do not let the child you have conceived
be a burden on your soul.

Look, how brightly the universe shines!
Splendour falls on everything around,
you are voyaging with me on a cold sea,
but there is the glow of an inner warmth
from you in me, from me in you.

That warmth will transfigure the stranger's child,
and you bear it me, begot by me.

You have transfused me with splendour,
you have made a child of me.”

He puts an arm about her strong hips.

Their breath embraces in the air.

Two people walk on through the high, bright
night.

¹³ English translation by Mary Whittall

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Verkl%C3%A4rte_Nacht 18.04.2012

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* * * GEORGE ENESCU, volum editat de Academia R.P.R. București: Ed. Muzicală, 1964.