

# Trends and Tendencies in the European Music of the First Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

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## Abstract

The present paper panoramically describes European music of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In order to easily understand the musical tableau of the respective period of time in its entire complexity it was necessary to consider the evolution premises existent at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the following one. The content of this paper is the result of a documentary research activity on the evolution of music during **Post-Romanticism** and **Modernism**. From the bibliography, musical scores and audio materials we extracted data that enabled us to shape/recompose the multifaceted image of the musical phenomenon of a period of time of more than a half of a century which was extremely fertile from the point of view of both diversity of accomplishing means and variety of stylistic expression. The multitude ways of composing and the limited space of the present paper did not allow us to exhaustively cover all procedures composers employed in creating music during the above-mentioned period of time, nevertheless we succeeded in presenting an exact overview of those trends and tendencies which - simultaneously or consequently - not only deeply hallmarked the music of the first half of the 20th century, but also opened interesting and multiple perspectives for the subsequent evolution in music.

**Key words:** *Post-Romanticism, Modernism, 20<sup>th</sup> century, chromatics, expansion of tonality, Impressionism, Debussy, Skriabin, atonality, Schönberg, dodecaphonism. Bartók, Futurism, Neoclassicism, Satie, Stravinski, Enescu.*

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the movement called Post-Romanticism overlaps a period of great changes in all the European cultural and artistic fields. The great works of Wagner, starting with *Tristan and Isolde* (1865), open the path to new expressive possibilities by the use of chromatics and the expansion of tonality. The label of post-romantics refers mainly to the composers strongly influenced by Wagner's music, who create works under the canons of romanticism in an age when several cultural and artistic movements with innovative character such as Impressionism, Futurism, Expressionism etc, manifest themselves together. The freedom of writing is displayed in the new treatment of melody and harmony in Debussy's work, in the sensuality of the orchestral coloring in Stravinsky's ballet music and in the disintegration process, first of tonality and then of melody, harmony and texture, initiated by Schoenberg starting with the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Still, the more conservative music, preferred by ample sectors of the aristocracy and bourgeoisie, continues to gather its admirers around such composers as the Strauss family. Alongside Brahms, Mahler and Schoenberg, they maintain Vienna one of the main musical centers, while Paris registers a large concentration of musicians, among which Debussy, Massenet and Stravinsky.

In order to understand the music of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is necessary to first appreciate the music of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and especially the impressionist trend. Impressionism is born as an authentic rebellion against the mannerisms and customs of the moment, as a necessity of the artist to express the world as he sees it and not constricted by canons. His esthetics implies an authentic liberation; the tendency is towards a more individual music, more personal, which involves an escape from the preordained norms.

The impressionist music claims to highlight the impact of the work on the listener. For this purpose, the melody will convert into something fragmentary and hazy, it will evoke the essential, creating an imprecise sounding atmosphere, somewhat confused. There is a break from traditional harmonies; new tunes and colors, thus sonorities, are used. For this purpose, the starting point is unconventional scales, such as the whole tones one, the acoustic scale, the pentatonic scales etc. The soul of this music will be the sound, independent and without personality, which imposes itself creating various effects and colors.

The most important musician of this movement was **Claude Debussy** (1826-1918), one of the most efficient and relevant innovators of the history of western music. His talent allowed him to generate completely new ideas in terms of form and orchestration, beyond the aerated use of sounds and timbre. His work, original and diverse, resorts to an innovating harmony for that age. The piano “discovers” a completely new role for itself, where the truly innovating timbre and sounding resonating effects are essential and most often obtained by unique pedal plays.

Debussy’s innovations in the use of the piano have never been forgotten, as they were an example and a guide for the composers of the following ages. In his piano creation, the forms are diverse: ballads, arabesques, suits, preludes, images...

Debussy did not concern himself less with the orchestra. In *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*, he distanced himself from the classical schemes with expositions and developments, in order to offer us a species of improvised form, generated from a unique theme. The melody, which appears in the traverse flute several times, is intensely chromatic and has a veritable oriental air, creating a dreamy atmosphere, in a unique harmonic ambiance.

The beginning of the prelude for piano *The Sunken Cathedral* (1910) is a good example of impressionist piano music. Considering that it is a real melody, it does not begin until the seventh bar, where it appears in an almost imperceptible form, beyond the reminiscences of the harmonic complexes of the beginning, after they have been reduced to an E and its octave. This fragment too illustrates one of the characteristics of the new harmonic tonal language. There is no alteration in the first introductory bars; seven long notes combine to form a static harmonic field inside which totally free combinations sound. The augmented fifth from the first part of the first bar combines with a number of parallel tunes (which are also fifths and augmented fifths) that move along a

pentatonic scale. The notes kept with the pedal (indicated by a semi-legato) form a complex harmonic mass which, though dissonant according to the traditional canons, is treated as a consonance.

**Alexander Nikolayevich Scriabin** (1872-1915), essentially impressionist Russian composer and pianist, studied at the Moscow Conservatory and then began an outstanding pianist career. He went on tours in Russia, Switzerland, France and the Netherlands. He was a professor at the Moscow Conservatory (1898-1903) and then moved abroad – first to Switzerland and then to Belgium – where he dedicated himself mostly to composition, though he never stopped performing concerts. After a tour in the United States, Scriabin returned to Moscow in 1910 and dedicated his last years to the elaboration of a work that reunited – in his vision – music, poetry, dance, light projections and perfumes.

His beginnings as composer were influenced by Chopin, a period known for his piano pieces up to op. 29, the first two symphonies and the piano concerto. Meanwhile, the search for an ecstatic and contemplative expression which corresponds to his religious and mystic conception about art distanced him from his contemporaries. That was when he composed the fourth sonata and third symphony. Starting with 1906, the messianic idea of the music's delivering role is most obvious and that is how the following works are born: *The Poem of Ecstasy* – with an imposing orchestration, the last six sonatas and *Prometheus*, where he brings an unprecedented sound by the use of his invention: C F-sharp B-flat E A D.

If there is something that characterizes fundamentally the music of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, that is the break with tonality, or atonality. It consists in the creation of a completely different music which ignores the rules that reigned for centuries in terms of tonality. The hearing sensation is completely new, the sounds liberate one from the other. First the break is with harmony, then with melody and rhythm and thus with everything that had been steadily established previously by tonal laws. It was time for other rules, just as strict, but which belonged to a completely different sound world.

The Austrian **Arnold Schoenberg** (1874-1951) will be one of the precursors of this trend, with works such as *Pierrot Lunaire* (1912) or *Three Pieces for Piano*, op. 11. At first, Schoenberg was an autodidact and studied the violin, the cello and the piano. He was influenced by Brahms and Wagner and began by composing completely tonal pieces.

Atonalism will open the way to a new system invented by him – the dodecaphonism and the serial technique. This system consists in the composing of musing starting from the 12 sounds of the chromatic scale and ordered in a series. This series will undergo three modifications called recurrence, inversion and the recurrence of inversion. This gives the created music a melodic character, which is very unusual for the ear. *Opus 23 for Piano* (1923) is the first piece Schoenberg composes on this line.

The beginning of the war has a detrimental effect on Schoenberg who enters a period of uncertainty in his composition also due to his skepticism about the “intuitive” music he had composed up to that point, about the free, atonal, non-systematic methods, hence, his need to reconnect with the past. In a way, he was trying to put an order in the dissonant melodies and the avant-garde harmony of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This way, a new system was born after seven years of work (1916-1923): the dodecaphonism. It is a manner of controlling the freedom that his music had. The basic principles of this method were:

- Each composer extracts his melodic material from a unique sequence chosen from among the 12 notes of the chromatic scale, what he calls “series”;
- This first series (the original form) is complemented by three others: retrograde, inversion, retrograde inversion;
- Each of these four series can be transposed to begin another sound. The transposition is indicated conventionally by Arabian numbers which follow the design of the series, indicating the number of ascending semitones that occur starting from the original form. Thus, the indicator P-0 designates the original series, P-5 shows that the series is transposed to the perfect ascending fourth (namely at five semitones), R1 signifies that the original series moves to ascending small second;
- The four forms of the series, multiplied by the 12 possible transpositions give a total of 48 possible versions of the original series. Normally, not all the versions are used in a single piece, but depending on the type of the desired work, some or other of the versions are chosen. Even though the series determines the succession of the notes used in the work, it does not indicate the registers or the durations. It even less indicates the disposition of the texture or the musical form.

This system divided the composers into two groups: some who, following Stravinsky, favored the preservation of a certain type of tonality and others who, like Schoenberg, adopted the dodecaphonic system. The new method had a strong impact on the musical thinking of the age, though few composers accepted it as a work form. During his exile in America (from 1934), Schoenberg continued to evolve as a composer, manifesting again interest for tonality and even composing some tonal pieces.

Schoenberg will also create, in expressionistic manner, a music in which the European man shouts to the society that heads for the chaos of the First World War. The expressionist trend is based on a desperate language which allows the composer to distort reality in order to express the profound agony and desperate fear. Charles Munch’s “The Scream” is the painting that expresses perfectly the essence of expressionism.

The Second Viennese School, established by Schoenberg and his disciples **Alban Berg** (1885-1935) and **Anton Webern** (1883-1945), will follow

the system of dodecaphony and will keep a close connection with the painters and architects of the time, acting for their shared ideas.

One of the musicians that will have the greatest influence on the music of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the Hungarian **Béla Bartók** (1881-1945). Together with Zoltan Kodaly, he travelled to various countries and collected folklore. As a consequence, he discovered completely new pentatonic scales and rhythms. His work, *Mikrokosmos*, is a collection of 156 pieces for piano, vital for the music of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, while his *Concerto for Strings and Celesta* represents the ideal model of sublimation of the folkloric elements. In fact, Bartók combines the modern language with the traditional one, creating a new language.

Simultaneously with the changes promoted by the Viennese School, a number of Italian composers incorporate in their music new sound “objects” such as the noise. This trend known as Futurism comprised both music and literature, and visual arts. The futuristic movement is not so important through the works that represent it but through what they involve, the starting point being the noise and not the sound. **Russolo** and **Pratella** create this kind of music and attempt to orchestrate crowds that trample, factories, railway stations, war noises etc. In 1913 they perform their first concert with the pieces *Reunion de automoviles* and *El despertar de la ciudad*.

Noise as an unprecedented manner of creation is speculated by such musicians as **Edgar Varese** (1885-1965), who, starting from noise, composes works of great artistic value such as *Ionisation* – 13 percussionists and *Desert*, heading towards the concept of “concrete music”, effectively born out of **Pierre Schaeffer**’s hands on October 5, 1949. The term “bruitism” occurs in France and it is connected to the new sound phenomenon.

Among the great names related to this trend, the most prominent ones are the Mexican **Carillo** and the Czech **Alois Haba**, which also excelled in the use of quarter tone.

At the end of 1918, Europe is destroyed by war, the Austro-Hungarian empire crumbles. Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Yugoslavia declare their independence while Germany is forced to cede Alsace and Lorraine to France, and to pay war damages to other countries. Russia declares itself the first communist state in the world. In this framework, the culture reorients itself. In the first moments of the war, some intellectuals, artists and musicians believed that the creation of a new social order would have a positive effect and adopted a militant attitude, but were soon disappointed.

The first anti-war artistic reaction was Dadaism; it appeared in Switzerland and in 1916 it had already been known. The Dadaists manifested repulsion towards the war and believed that the only possible art was the anti-art which promoted disorder, irrationality and the anti-aesthetic.

During the last years of the war, a new attitude manifests itself and it will dominate the artistic world for the next two decades. Its characteristics are

clarity, objectivity and order as need for consolidation. This new attitude was manifested in various groups.

The first group was **De Stijl** in the Netherlands. Mondrian was among its members.

The next one was **Bauhaus**, an art school established by Walter Gropius in 1919. It includes artists such as Klee and Kandinsky and proposes plastic works by the use of modern industrial materials and by trying to respond to the individual's needs of both beauty and practicality.

A third group is formed by the purists who militate in France and are led by the architect Le Corbusier. They were searching for simplicity accomplished by the use of industrial materials. The importance and significance of these materials further influenced the decisions about design.

These three movements manifested in the visual arts but they also influenced music whose new characteristics had to be efficiency, the clarity of composition and economy of means, after a period of many and marked experimentations. There is a desire to avoid the excesses of the late Romanticism or Post-Romanticism.

Towards 1920, Neoclassicism appears as a reaction to Romanticism, Impressionism and Expressionism. The anti-romantic attitude breaks with the past immediately and feels familiar with the concepts previous to Romanticism, especially with those of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. New interpretation manners, forms and genres of the Baroque and Pre-Classicism are adopted, such as the suite, concerto, symphony and sonata. The composers of this movement use for their compositions information from the entire history of music with its various styles (including the entire 19<sup>th</sup> century, understanding here the criterion of distance as in the other cases), as well as the non-European culture and jazz. Similarly to literature, the purpose is the destruction of routine both in creation and in hearing by effects of differentiation and parody. Neo-Classicism is tonal and, beginning with the 1930s, it accentuates the tendency towards a rational ordering of the forms and genres. The movement ends between 1950 and 1960.

The first example for this kind of music is offered by **Erik Satie** (1866-1925) who was considered an unimportant composer but eventually became a model for artists. He studied at the Paris Conservatory with Decombes, Taudou and Mathias. In 1891 he composed three important works: *Sarabandes*, *Gymnopédies* and *Gnossiennes*. At this time he met Debussy, with whom he shared a strong friendship. Between 1891 and 1895 he composed mystic music on texts by Peladan, Mazel, Bois and Contamine de la Tour. Between 1895 and 1905 he composed for the cabaret. During those years, his production reduced to *Trois morceaux en forme de poire* (1903), a small anthology of cabaret music where he included some fragments of the *Gnossiennes* and *Pieces froides* (1897). Between 1905 and 1915, he studied with d'Indy, Roussel and Serieux at Schola Canorum. He wrote little during these years. In only three years Satie composed most of his works, including all the "humoristic" piano pieces, among

others. Between 1915 and 1925 he became popular and a symbol of the avant-garde. He was also the most important representative of the *Groupe des six* and of the Arcueil School. During these years, among other works, he composed *Parade* (1917) and *Socrates* (1919). In 1920 he began to study the fugue. Many contemporary authors accused him of lack of technique. His works have a repetitive character and use few sounds, creating a completely new ambiance.

Starting from the break Impressionism implied, the European artistic panorama – the same in visual arts and in music – will change enormously. The difference can be summarized in a term that historians use – the disaggregation of the artistic phenomenon. In other words, if great periods like Baroque or Romanticism had existed up until then, in which all artists of all arts had integrated, from now on no one movement will include everybody, as long as there are many who live at the same time and succeed fast. Each musician tends to create his independent art, the styles are many, diverse and do not last much in the musical economy of the time, which makes it very difficult to study the age. On the other hand, the parallelism between music and visual arts is already impossible to establish.

Satie's music is characterized as full of life, informal and cheerful, with repetitive melodic figures, and humoristic when it imitates the sound of a wheel, of a typewriter or of a revolver.

The most extreme example that demonstrates Satie's rejection reaction against the "classical" composition is *Musica de mobiliario*, which he composed together with Milhaud in 1920. It was designed to be interpreted during an opera intermission and it represents the intention of negation of any kind of artistic ambition.

During the war years, Satie converted to a kind of musical hero for a number of French writers, among which six were very good friends (**Groupe des six**): Francis Poulenc, Darius Milhaud, Arthur Honegger, Georges Auric, Germaine Tailleferre and Louis Durey. In 1917 they began to perform concerts together, but the differences between their musical visions soon led to the dismembering of the group.

The changes in French music also affected **Igor Stravinsky** (1882-1917), one of the most important figures of the 20<sup>th</sup> century who, before it even occurred, was already heading for a simpler compositional language, without ornaments and ample orchestrations.

In his work, Stravinsky approached the most diverse styles and made evolve the rhythm, sound, instrumentation etc. The profound knowledge of his country's folklore made possible the creation of his brilliant work *Le Sacre du printemps*, presented in premiere in Paris on May 29, 1913. This premiere caused a great scandal due to its agitated rhythm and aggressive sound.

In 1920 Stravinsky moved to Paris where he remained for 20 years. Here he begins one of the three great periods of his creation called the "Russian" or "Neo-Classical" period. This period is characterized by the simplicity of texture

with a certain Russian savour, but also by Stravinsky's orientation towards the fundamental principles of late Baroque which, reformulated, offered him a base for his works (*Pulcinella*, *Octet*). The idea was not a return to the past, but a revitalization of the compositional conceptions of the past with a contemporary harmony and rhythm.

At the end of his life, he adopted dodecaphonism (in *Canticum sacrum*).

At the end of the First World War, Germany knew a period of great changes, beginning with the fall of the monarchy and instauration of the republic which rejuvenated the souls of the moment bringing new artistic and intellectual impulses. There was a strong rejection of the past, of Romanticism. The search was for a simpler and more objective art. Berlin was the cultural center of Germany, but art was not restricted to this city and enveloped other nuclei like Frankfurt or Baden-Baden where there was an intense cultural life. With Hitler's ascension to power, this image changed, German art was crushed and the culmination point was the breaking of this great cultural moment felt in Germany. Many of the artistic figures of the moment left and the cultural activity diminished considerably, which is why Germany was left far away from the new creation trends.

**Paul Hindemith** (1895-1963) was the first important German composer after the war. He began his studies in Frankfurt at age 13, his most famous side being that of violinist. In 1915 he was named concertmaster at the Frankfurt Opera. In 1927 he was professor of composition at the Music Academy in Berlin. His preference for instruments such as the clarinet, piano, violin and viola facilitated his approach of the composition field. His first pieces have the style of late Romanticism, with multiple chromatics and triadic harmony. Between 1920 and 1930 he broke with tradition and became one of the most radical members of the post-war generation.

Truly important is Hindemith's conception regarding composition: according to this conception, music must serve to be interpreted both by professionals and by amateurs, being considered a social activity to which all citizens must participate. The music that Hindemith set out to write according to this idea is a popular music, without many esthetic concerns. This idea, shared by other composers, is reduced to the term "Gebrauchsmusik" or "music to use". At the end of 1920 and beginning of 1930, Hindemith composed only pieces for nonprofessional musicians and dedicated them to the cultivation of amateurs' taste.

The case of **Kurt Weill** (1900-1950) is in many ways similar to that of Hindemith. In the decade 1930-1940, he began to be concerned with the social situation of Germany and decided to use his music as an "exchange agent" of social nature. In this regard, we can speak about his music as a utilitarian music. But while Hindemith aspired to the renewal of music by composing works for amateur interpreters, Weill considered music a means to wake up the political consciousness. To this purpose, he will resort to the opera.



His most important work in the sense mentioned above was *Mahagonny-Songspiel* because it enjoyed the collaboration of the important poet and playwright Bertold Brecht.

In Russia, the changes brought by the October 1917 revolution had notable consequences on all the aspects of the cultural life, on music as well. Many musicians left the country immediately after the revolution (the cases of Stravinsky and Rachmaninov), the remaining ones having to obey the demands of the new government. Lenin, the main architect of the revolution, claimed that art must be popular, accessible to all and, so that everyone should understand it, art must be educational. This is why, between 1929 and 1930, the government favored the development of music and the contact with contemporary European artists. Still, there was not a common point of view regarding the most appropriate type of art, which is why two distinct composition schools appeared: “The Association for Contemporary Music” – which claimed that the most advanced musical tendencies must be followed – and “The Russian Association of Proletarian Music” – which believed music must be simple and lacking in any artistic pretense. After Lenin’s death in 1924, Stalin came to power and the two associations were replaced by the Union of Soviet Composers, which took the role of decision factor in regards to what was acceptable from the musical point of view. The demand was for music to have political and social content, to praise the virtues of the new society. Thus, the composers’ creative field was restricted to the maximum. Shostakovich’s opera *Lady Macbeth* was censured and the composers of international value such as Prokofiev, Shostakovich or Khachaturian were attacked for not having obeyed the government exigencies.

**Sergei Prokofiev** (1891-1953), an exceptional musical talent, began his studies at age 11 when he also started writing his first pieces. For his developed musical language he was soon catalogued by critics as ultra-Modernist.

From the composition point of view, he adhered to Neoclassicism and many of his works manifest clear references to the style of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and to Haydn. This style appears in all its clarity in the *Classical Symphony* composed in 1917. A year after the Russian revolution, he was already an internationally famous composer and left the country with the intention to return as soon as the political situation had calmed down. First, he settled in the United States where he remained till 1922 and then he moved to Paris. His contact with the West made his music evolve even more.

Prokofiev returned to Russia in 1936 and his problems started soon, as the government of the time qualified his works composed abroad as undesirable. Thus, he had to become more conservative and more popular in his music. From that moment and till his death he composed works that were acceptable officially, trying however to maintain his own revolutionary language.

**Dmitri Shostakovich**’s situation (1900-1975) was similar. He began his musical studies after the Russian revolution, in 1919. He conceived music as a

social phenomenon and was convinced of its duty to attract the most audience possible and of its ideological role.

Without a doubt, in spite of the fact that his relation with the state was good, he had his share of problems with the regime because he did not agree that music should have the most appropriate form in order to be accessible to the common man. This was the reason why he was always censured. The most obvious case of censure was his opera *Lady Macbeth* (1932) which enjoyed unusual success, being performed 97 times. After that, it was censured and banned. Little before *Lady Macbeth*, Shostakovich used a simpler compositional language and thus less “compromising”, as it is easy to notice in *The Fifth Symphony*.

Despite this fact, he was permanently pressured by the dictatorial regime.

As we could see, the influence of the totalitarian regimes in Russia and Germany was strong. A similar situation was in other countries like Italy and Spain where, because of the fascist regimes, music and the cultural life were generally affected by the politics of the time. Never before had politics played such a decisive role in music configuration. The German composers that did not feel obligated to leave their country during the third Reich had two choices: either continue to write according to their taste in complete isolation and with no hope for their music to be known or adopt a conservative style that should not offend the ones in power.

**Carl Orff** (1895-1982) decided for the second option and adopted a sufficiently simple style, which was at the same time original and liked by the authorities.

His most famous work in which his characteristic style appears for the first time is *Carmina Burana* (1937) – a scenic cantata based on the musical arrangement of medieval lyrics composed in Latin and old German.

One of the most important aspects of Orff’s career is his activity as educator. He created his own method, *Orff-Schulwerk*, which allows children with no musical background to educate themselves musically by taking part in improvised instrumental ensembles with simple melodic and harmonic patterns.

Due to the development of this method, Orff was and is known internationally.

Until the end of the First World War, Poland was under Russian political and cultural domination. With a musical heritage monopolized by Chopin, there were few possibilities for new composers to manifest themselves. In spite of this fact, the presence of Karol Szymanowski (1882-1937) in public musical life manifested fully. In his first works, there are influences from Scriabin, Wagner, Strauss and also from exotic musical cultures such as Arabian and Persian. However, his music is often too complicated, demanding excellent virtuosity technique from musicians. In spite of his talent as a composer, Szymanowski was not appreciated in Poland because of his European stylistic orientation.

After Poland's independence, the distance between his works and the public diminishes, as Szymanowski adopts a more nationalistic style he will use till his death.

Among his works, the most noteworthy are: *Concerto for violin no. 1* (1916), *Sonata for piano no. 3* (1917) and *Stabat Mater* (1926).

The English composer **Benjamin Britten** (1913-1976) was one of the most talented of his time. He developed a style characterized by clear eclecticism, with a very sure and expressive technique, each piece seemingly being composed according to the demands of concertos. He had notable success especially with opera, being remarked for titles such as *Peter Grimes* (1945), *La violacion de Lucrecia* (1946), *La vuelta al tornillo* (1954) and *La muerte en Venecia* (1974) among others, even though his most famous piece was the so-called *Orchestra Guide for the Young*.

For Romania, the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century brought to the attention of the European musical world the brilliant personality of **George Enescu**, the one that paved the way that the Romanian creators would have to follow, in a complex and remarkable manner.

With the exception of a few pieces with great attraction to the public, Enescu wrote music that unfortunately was not performed too much, mostly due to the writing and technical difficulties, but also to its emotional and ideational load.

The indubitable difficulty of Enescu's style is mostly due not to a type of esoteric hermeticism, but to an extraordinary inner richness. Enescu, a person of phenomenal erudition, studied and assimilated rapidly the great works of the western repertoire, whose excellent performer he also was. As composer, he had the capacity to enrich this centennial heritage with his own experience as connoisseur of folkloric music. The musicologist Harry Halbreich expressed in a very adequate manner the impression produced by the pieces sprung from this double source, on the occasion of participating in the International Symposium of Musicology "George Enescu" in Bucharest, 9-10 september 2005.

Enescu was impregnated with Romanian music, as well as with true gypsy music from a very early age and he knew better than anyone how to extract all its ancestral profundity which mixes – in his opinion – from the night of times, its Indian and Egyptian origins. Thus, there is in Enescu a profoundly oriental inspiration. However, the composer makes a clear distinction between Romanian folk music and gypsy music, a distinction he acknowledges in one of the interviews he gave during his last years. In terms of the essential characteristic of the Romanian folk music, he believes that: *Le rêve - est, même dans les mouvements rapides, un retour vers la mélancolie*.

The relatively small number of his creations is an expression of his perfectionism which stems from a high respect for the music and for the audience. Enescu never fell pray to the facile, but followed a natural evolution expressed by a complexity that was not always understood. He did not recreate

brilliant and popular Romanian rhapsodies to please the public. On the contrary, he took his art in-depth, reflected on the origins of Romanian folkloric music and its connections to gypsy music. Thus, he reached a synthesis of folkloric music and savant forms, for which *Violin and piano sonata in Romanian Folkloric Style* (1926) is an excellent example. That superior entity which is the alliance between savant and folklore led Enescu to his most emotional and amazing achievement. Enescu never broke with the past, but knew how to transfigure it by adapting it to the modern world.

He proposed to the western world an alternative to traditional polyphony: heterophony, inherited from the Byzantines. By adding these great poles of inspiration to the Romanian roots, Enescu became the universal musician that made the connection between eastern Europe, the Islamic world and the musical center of western Europe – Paris.

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