

Documentary contributions from the newspapers around 1967-1970 concerning the musical life of Braşov

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Abstract: *The literary press in the city situated the foot of the Tampa hill played an important part in the development of the local literature and culture; the dictionaries of Romanian literary press mention approximately 50 literary magazines from the beginning of the nineteenth century until today.*

This article makes a chronologic review of the cultural manifestations, as they are presented by the local press, represented by the publications “Astra” and “Drum Nou” [New Way], in order to bring into attention some of the most important events of the musical life between 1967 – 1972. We wish to rediscover the mentioned cultural events and to highlight their effect on the public life of the period, without any unnecessary stress on the content or expression. Knowing the past is necessary, by remembering the prestigious personalities of the cultural life and including them into the present, in order to show that “the highly responsible humanistic attitude of the cultural creators” was present here even in the past.

Keywords: *music, education, cultural life, newspaper, Braşov*

1. Introduction

A synthesis of the musical activity and concerts in the city of Brasov is missing, and the studies or articles about the literary magazines from Brasov or about certain event presented by the press are scarce. We have the duty to know our musical past and to harmoniously include it into the present, not only on the trajectory of the musical performance, but also in the domain of humanistic arts, which is proper to the creators of culture. For this purpose, we researched the archives of the magazines *Drum Nou* and *Astra* during the sixth and seventh decade of the twentieth century. The selected material is vast and will be presented and

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structured in a didactic, traditional, chronological manner, revealing the qualitative evolution of many of the articles on the subject.

2. Braşov, city of culture, literature and politics in the XXth century

The city of Brasov has been, even from the past, a strong economic, social and cultural centre. Here was set the first Romanian school, the first Romanian printing press, the newspaper *Gazeta de Transilvania* [*The Transylvania Gazette*] and it was the place where the national anthem was composed. Under the communist regime, Brasov becomes a centre of the imposed industrialization; big plants and factories were built here and peasants to work there were brought from all around the country, but especially from Moldavia and Oltenia. As a consequence, we witness, at the beginning of the 1980s, some loss of cultural identity in a place where Romanians, Germans and Hungarians harmoniously coexisted over the centuries. At the end of the ninth decade, Brasov becomes the second city in the country, from the perspective of industry and population.

The musical culture of Brasov was strongly supported over time by an intense and fervent musical practice, and by a musical instruction organized on different levels of artistic elevation. As a centre of ethnic interference between the western and southern culture, the city of Brasov benefitted from a rich intercultural environment, where conductors, soloists, composers and exceptional personalities have performed and professed an intense pedagogical activity.

The practice of music is documented here even from the XVIth century, including both autochthonous and foreign personalities, and the music schools, organized, at the beginnings, around the School from the Schei district of Brasov, or *Schola Coronensis*, allowed for the beginning of a musical education. In 1852, Iacob Muresianu, the redactor from the "Gazeta Transilvaniei" newspaper, starts a "Music School" in Brasov, where the most prominent teachers of the Transylvanian music school, and, in the same time, of Brasov, are formed: Gheorghe Dima and Iacob Muresianu – the son.

The birth date of the *Filarmonica Brasov* [*Brasov Philharmonic Orchestra*] is the 6th of May, 1978, when, under the baton of Anton Brandner, conductor, composer and pedagogue, took place an artistic event carried on by *The Philharmonic Society of Brasov* (*Kronstadter Philharmonische Gesellschaft*). Due to the collaboration with great conductors, such as George Georgescu and Constantin Silvestri, the orchestra soon gained wide recognition and was, therefore, transformed into *The "G. Dima" State Philharmonic Orchestra of Brasov* in 1949.

Under the guidance of the musician Tiberiu Brediceanu, *Adunarea generală a Despărțământului județean Brașov al Astrei* [*The General Assembly of the County of Astra Brasov*] adopted, at the 30th of September, 1928 the definitive sentence to establish *Conservatorul de muzică Astra* [*The Astra Conservatory of Music*], having the following specializations: a section for piano, violin and cello, a section for canto, and a section for theory and composition and auxiliary courses (Catrina 1995, 35). In September 1949, the name of the Conservatory is changed into *Scoala populara de arta* [*The Popular School of Art*]. In 1953 the opera of Brasov is established, with the name of *Teatrul Muzical Brașov* [*Musical Theatre of Brasov*], an institution with an impressive repertoire, which has gained national and international renown.

Between 1949 and 1954 *Școala Medie Tehnica de Muzică* [*The Technical Gymnasium of Music*] started its courses, and was later known as *Liceul de Muzică și Arte Plastice* [*Music and Plastic Arts Highschool*]; between 1961 and 1978. it functioned as a general school, including classes from the Ist to the VIIth grade, between 1978 and 1990, and from 1990 the highschool was re-established, with the two sections, music and plastic arts.

Due to an acute lack of music teachers for the general and speciality education, between the years 1965 and 1970, important personalities of the time militated for the establishment of a superior education institution for musical instruction. Among them were: the composer and folklorist Cornel Arion, the conductor Nicolae Țurcanu, the curator Mircea Gherman, and the professor Eugen Chis. As the newspaper *Drum nou*, from 21st of June 1969, wrote, *Facultatea de Muzică și dirijat coral* [*The Faculty of Music and Choir Conducting*] is established, "through a decision of the Council of Ministers, around the Pedagogic Institute", as the fourth Faculty of the Institute, "with the length of studies of 3 years".

The specialisation of the Faculty is Music Pedagogy and the number of places for admission is thirty. Among the professors who taught there in the first years can be mentioned: professor Victor Iusceanu, Klepper Mihai Walter, Iosif Herțea, Octavian Nemescu – from *The Conservatory of București*; from *The Music Academy of Cluj* - Aurelia (Lya) Hubic; the conductor Ilarion Ionescu Galați from Brasov, the pianists Ligia Maior and Horia Cristian, the musicologists Gemma Zinveliu, Rodica Borbil, Mihai Nadin, Nicolae Țurcanu, Lucian Nireșteanu, Dorel Munteanu, Mircea Oros, Irinel Felea. The recitals of the students and professors are presented in the Music Studio, newly established as well.



Fig. 1. Professors and students of the 1st year, 1969-1970.
Faculty of Music of Braşov

In 1973, the early music ensemble “Cantus Serenus” was put together by Horia Cristian and Gabriela Popescu (clavecine), Kurt Phillippi (viola da gamba), Wolfgang Meschendorfer (flute, blockflute). In 1976, the ensemble recorded, for the Romanian Television, *Pagini din preclasicismul muzical francez* [*Pages from the French Pre-Classicism*], and in 1979 they recorded a vinyl with the Electrecord disk records. The Association of the Music Critics of Romania grants them, in the year 1980, the prize for an outstanding concerts activity and for the promotion of the Romanian musical values.

The cuts in the system of education, as a result of the critical reduction of music classes, lead to the disestablishment of the Faculty of Music in 1978. Between 1969 and 1978, the Faculty had a number of 190 graduates. The only remaining formations, after this measure was taken, were the music quartet *Cantus Serenus* and the student choir *Diason*, who maintained a tight collaboration with the former professors of the Faculty of Music.

The events from December, 1989, and the social and political changes that followed, allowed for the procedures to reestablish the Faculty of Music to be restarted, having two departments: Instrumental interpretation and Music

Pedagogy, with the duration of study of five years. The professors Stela Drăgulin and Nicolae Țurcanu, exponents of an initiative group, with the support from the *Transylvania* University of Brasov, advocated the need for specialized teachers of music and instrument players for the professional institutions from Brasov and the nearby areas. As a result, by order no 7751 / 1990 from the Ministry of Education, the Faculty of Music was established as a part of the *Transylvania* University of Brasov.

A part of the professorial corpus was composed of personalities of the old faculty (Horia Cristian, Nicolae Țurcanu, Lucian Niresteanu, Ilarion Ionescu-Galați), joined by new professors, of genuine scientific and pedagogical prestige (Stela Drăgulin, Constantin Catrina, Radu Hamzea, Cristina Soreanu, Vlad Dimulescu, Constanța Staicovici, Cornelia Orban, Nicolae Teodoreanu). In order to cover all the specialties with competent staff, professors from the Bucharest Conservatory (prof. Aurel Niculescu, conf. Teodor Țuțuianu) and Iasi (prof. Nicolae Sâpcu) were called to, together with associated professors from *G. Enescu* Philharmonic (Neculai Maxim) and National Radio Orchestra (Victor Simonov). A new specialization, Canto, was added to the Faculty in 1993.

3. Publications and articles between 1968 and 1969

The literary press in the city situated the foot of the Tampa hill played an important part in the development of the local literature and culture; the dictionaries of Romanian literary press mention approximately 50 literary magazines from the beginning of the nineteenth century until today (Buzăși 2016.)

The most important of the literary magazines in Brasov is *Astra*, a monthly political, social and literary publication of The Brasov Regional Committee for Art and Culture; the first issue was published on the 20th of June, 1966. Below follows a review of the most important of the articles written by the exceptional musicologist Gemma Zinveliu for the publication between 1967 and 1970.

In the article titled *The Romanian Symphonic Music is Optimally Promoted*, from March, 1967 and in *A Prelude to the New Music Stage* from October, 1967, the author observes that the public vibrates especially to the sound language of the past. That is why she proposes the education of the auditorium in order to become an active participant to the musical creation. Citing the French singer Edith Piaf, according to whom one must not give up a song under the pretext that it did not become popular from the start, the author recommends to the conductors of the musical institutions not only to include in their repertoire as much Romanian music as possible, but also to perfect the technique of interpretation.

Continuing to support the promotion of the musical creations of the twentieth century, the same prestigious author brings homage to the creation of Igor Stravinsky in an article titled *Stravinsky and the Twentieth Century*, with the occasion of the 85th anniversary of the musician. The exceptional power of creation that gave birth to outstanding works, presented here through their stylistic particularities and the diversity of styles approached in the neo classical period is admired. The composer's aversion towards emotion is clearly expressed in the cited writing, *Cronica vietii mele [My Life's Chronicle]* "I consider music, in its essence, incapable to express something, a feeling, an attitude, a psychological state, a natural phenomenon...what it expresses is an illusion, and certainly not a reality".

In the number from November 1968, G. Zinveliu presents a concert chronicle – *Miroslav Bervid și Ion Voicu la Brașov [Miroslav Bervis and Ion Voicu at Brasov]* – where the praise for the interpreter go together with the criticism of the interpretation of the *Pathétique* symphony by Tchaikovsky, due to the lack of sound differentiation, especially in the slow parts, where a meticulous defining of the detail was faulty.

The month of February 1968 features an interview with the bass Helge Bomches concerning his interpretative career, while the article from December portrays the young and prestigious conductor Ilarion Ionescu Galati together with an interview with the pianist Radu Lupu about the international music competitions. The pianist from Brasov considers that, in those times, the only modality to reveal talents and to bring them into the public eye was to take part into competitions, which allows the young musicians to know themselves, to make comparisons and to make contact with great artistic and intellectual events, an indispensable trajectory towards the artistic maturity of the musician.

The year 1969 marked the 20th anniversary of the Brasov Philharmonic, an event reflected by the press through a series of reverential articles. In March, under the title of *Retrospectivă si anticipari [Retrospectives and Anticipations]*, Astra publishes an article where the author makes an incursion into the history of the Philharmonic's activity, noticing an increase of the public interest due to the diversification of the interpretation styles and to the personal mark of some of the great virtuosos. In the newspaper *România liberă [Free Romania]*, no.7610 from the 8th of June 1969, Alfred Hoffman analyses the parcourse of the Philharmonic from Brasov, owed to the employment of the conductor Ilarion Ionescu Galati, "a young artist with a musical gift doubled by a serious education". The interpretation of the musical program is especially appreciated. In Astra from May, 1969, the journalist Constantin Rasvan presents the concerts sustained by the Brasov

Philharmonic Orchestra on the stage of the Romanian Athenaeum, under the baton of the conductors Ilarion Ionescu Galați and Mircea Lucescu. In the two the concertos, both the conductors and the soloists proved themselves to be distinct interpretative individualities.

The same number of the *Astra* magazine includes the article written by Gemma Zinveliu, *Virginia Zeani and Nicols Rossi Lemeni at Brasov*. The Romanian soprano Virginia Zeani proved in the part of Violeta “a perfection that is hard to surpass”, enchanting the public by “a great extension of the vocal range, an exquisite pitch of voice and a fine musicality”. Nicola Rossi Lemeni, a complex artistic personality, musician and actor of high class, expressed all “the emotions of the human soul” in her role in *Faust*. There are two performances to remember.

In June, *Astra* included a chronicle of the first concert of the Choir Reunion G. Dima under the title *A Dream Come True*. At the celebration of the centenary of the Choir Reunion G. Dima, established in 1868 under the baton of the musicians Ciprian Porumbescu, Iacob Muresianu and Gheorghe Dima, a group of enthusiastic amateurs, coordinated by professor Cornel Arion, held their first concert, with a varied repertoire, including *a capella* works and the accompaniment of orchestra pieces.

For five months, from November 1969 until March 1970, many articles were published: *Five Centuries of the Art of Organ*, *Five Centuries of Instrumental Music*, *Five Centuries of Vocal Music*, *Five Centuries of Dramatic and Lyrical Theatre*, *Five Centuries of Musical Education*. Each of these articles made a well-documented incursion into the past and activity of the featured domains, supported through relevant information.

In the article *A Month at the Philharmonics* by Maria G, published in May, 1970, the author made a short radiography of the concerts which included Romanian creations (*Cantica umana* [The Human Canticle] by Fr. Xaver Dressler, *Poemul bizantin* [The Byzantine Poem], by Doru Popovici and *Canzonetts și Rondo* from *Divertimentul pentru orchestră de coarde* [Divertiment for Cord Orchestra] by Sigismund Toduță) together with classical pieces. Pop Liviu presented the representatives of the choirs, the chamber choirs, the pop music and the musicologists who were active in Brasov, remarking the great number of pieces based on the folklore or on the popular mobilizing songs and their value for the development of the Romanian music.

At the 45th celebration of the death of the composer G. Dima, Gemma Zinveliu Donea revealed inedited information, taken from the correspondence of the composers with many of the personalities of the century, which accounted for the success and the wide circulation of the composer’s creations as well as for the

state of the Romanian musical life at the beginning of the XXth century. The accomplishments of the newly established Faculty of Music were evoked in the article by Maria G. in the same month, in an interview with the dean of the Faculty, Professor Nicolae Țurcanu. The second place taken by the Chamber choir at the Student Art Competition and the artistic activity of the students were seen as great results, proving the fact that the future pedagogues and artists were capable to leave a mark on the national artistic scene.

In Astra from June, 1970 were included short interviews with personalities of the Romanian musical life Marin Constantin, Hilda Jerea, Ludovic Baci, Ilarion Ionescu Galați, Emilia Petrescu, Ion Voicu, taking part in the Festival of the Chamber Music, at the first edition in that year in Brasov.

About the Festival, one can also find articles in the newspaper *Drum nou*, the editions from 20, 24, 25, 26, 27, 30th of June, 1970, which included detailed information about the participants, the repertoire and impressions following the concerts.

In the number from the 30th of June was included a eulogy of the performance of the Madrigal Choir, conducted by the musician Marin Constantin. Composed of instrumentalists of high professional training, *The Concertino Quintet* and the formation *Musica Nova* proved the noblesse and homogeneity of sound, refinement, spontaneity and musicality. A presentation of the Madrigal Choir, as a preview of their concert in the Festival was included in the newspaper "Drum nou" from the 19th of June, 1990, under the pen of the same Gemma Zinveliu.

In the number from November, at the rubric *Young Talents from Brasov*, are published the articles *Cu Gabriela Ijak despre concursul de la Geneva* [With Gabriela Ijak about the Competition from Geneva], *Cu Radu Toescu despre concursul G. Enescu* [With Radu Toescu about the G. Enescu Competition] and, in December, the review of the lexicon *Mari muzicieni români* [Great Romanian Musicians] by Viorel Cosma and a chronicle from a concert titled *Dublu recital: Virgil Gheorghiu* [Virgil Gheorghiu; Double Recital].

Another important publication of the period between 1965 and 1975 was the daily newspaper *Drum nou* [New Way], which included a series of varied articles promoting the cultural events that took place in Brasov. Among them must be mentioned Mircea Gherman's article from the 4th of June 1969, which presented the concert performed by the Choir of the Music and Plastic Arts High school, conducted by the professor Vlad Sava, which impressed the public from Brasov by the atmosphere of remarkable stylistic purity, by a clean emission, technical maturity, flexibility but also by the choice of the repertoire.

In the number from the 21st of June, 1969, Mircea Gherman spoke about the establishment of the Faculty of Music of Brasov, an institution with a marking position in the city's cultural life, with the mission to polarize the artistic values and to foster future educators.

From the interviews published in 1970 we mention the conversation with the composer Myriam Marbé from the 5th of July, where appreciations referring to the interprets present to the Festival of the Chamber Music and the choice of the repertoire, which should include modern, contemporary pieces together with the local compositions were made. The interview with Ludovic Spiess from the 2nd of August presented the parts he approached during his career and his musical accomplishments.

More article presented the fifth edition of *The International Festival G. Enescu*, published in 16 August, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18, 19, 23 September 1970.

The end of the 1970 is marked by the publication of several articles, as follows: in 30th of September, *Bela Bartok și folclorul românesc* [*Bela Bartok and the Romanian Folklore*], in 7th of November *Să știi să citești partitura* [*To Know How to Read a Musical Score*], in 15th of November *Radu Lupu la festival Hall* [*Radu Lupu at Festival Hall*], written by G. Zinveliu, in the 9th of December, *În memoria lui Dinu Lipatti* [*In memoriam Dinu Lipatti*], by I. Chirila, 22nd of December *O strălucită prezentare a Simfoniei a IX-a* [*A Brilliant Rendition of the IXth Symphony*], 23rd of December [*Beethoven 200*] by G. Zinveliu, the 30th of December *De la arcuș la baghetă* [*From Fiddle to Baton*] by Ion Chirilă.

4. Conclusions

Over time, the press functioned as a mirror to the society, reflecting the political, social and cultural events that took place. As we could notice, the cultural life was reflected by the local daily news, and the concerts and shows brought important names of the Romanian culture on the scene. The promoting of the events was slower than today, when the media has at their hand the internet, television and radio more than in the past. It is required that we return in the past and take the time to know the artists who made the cultural life of Brasov in the 70s and the cultural events they are connected with.

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