

# GHEORGHE DIMA AND TITU MAIORESCU, SPIRITUAL INTERFERENCE

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**Abstract:** *The following lines focus on two personalities: Gheorghe Dima, symbol of Romanian music, representative of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20th century, and Titu Maiorescu, politician, critic, and literary theoretician, an important personality of Romanian spiritual life. The research mainly relies on correspondence, as a means to become acquainted with the mentality of the time, the exchange of ideas, beliefs and interests. Thus, less discussed moments of their spiritual interferences during a period of historical turmoil are retraced, based on the new documents discovered in the archives. The article focuses on the cultural and musical life in Transylvania. Gheorghe Dima's and Titu Maiorescu's efforts to promote Romanian music and the activity of the Romanian Music Reunion in Sibiu and Braşov are stressed.*

**Key words:** *correspondence, Dima, Maiorescu, culture, Lied, choirs.*

## 1. Introduction

The new documents and letters present in the archives cast light on pieces of the personalities' lives, concerns, and ideals. They do not only reveal day-to-day facts and reflections, but an entire line of thought, closely related to the Romanian culture, folklore creation, and literary activity.

In 1881, Gheorghe Dima settles in Sibiu, opening the path for a new stage in the artistic, cultural, social, and national life of this important Romanian city in southern Transylvania. The news of the Romanian Music Reunion in Sibiu is spread in all corners inhabited by Romanians, and

Gheorghe Dima's name becomes well-known.

This was the year when Maiorescu, profoundly impressed by his concert at the Atheneum with the Romanian Music Reunion in Sibiu, sent a letter to Gheorghe Dima: “... please do me the honour of coming here to perform your own *Lieder* once again: *Te ador (I Adore You)*, *Fericirea pierdută (Lost Happiness)*, *Când te voi uita (When I Will Forget You)*, so strongly applauded at the Atheneum” [1]

This document marks the beginning of the collaboration between the two personalities in the attempt to create a musical culture responding to the expectations of the time.

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## 2. Content

In the context of the social and political disquietude, it was almost impossible for the national culture to flourish. However, despite the cruel oppression they had to endure, there was a handful of forward-thinking and bold intellectuals who struggled for the maintenance and promotion of the Romanian cultural life in Transylvania, at the dusk of the 19th century, and the dawn of the 20th century. The first "*Romanian Reunion for Gymnastics and Music*" was set up in Transylvania (Sibiu) in 1874, which boomed under the leadership of the eminent musician Gheorghe Dima. The number of musical associations and choirs set up in other Romanian cities, towns, and villages was growing.

The Leipzig Conservatory, renowned for its professionalism, acknowledged Gheorghe Dima as a complex musician, with full mastership of the art of sounds.

This forever marks his artistic destiny, allowing him, in addition to the in-depth specialized studies, to gain a solid and great erudition of musical culture.

Upon his first contact with the Romanian Reunion for Gymnastics and Music in Braşov, in the autumn of 1873, he manages, through assiduous work, to develop an artistic performance programme for the "*reunion of professionals*" of October 28, 1873, hosting composers such as: Franz Schubert, Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Gaetano Donizetti. Due to the success of the event, in the following year, Gheorghe Dima was in charge with the musical part of all reunion concerts, so that in the programme of April 14/26, 1874 he also presents his own work, "*Între piatra Detunata*" (*Between the Detunata Rocks*), lyrics by Grigore Asachi, and on January 3/15, 1875 he performs his own round

dance for choir, "*Ploaia*" (*The Rain*) or "*Garofiţa*" (*Small Carnation*) [3].

The article published in the Braşov newspaper "*Gazeta Transilvaniei*" in February 1875 speaks of the success of the concert: "... *first of all, let us congratulate composer Gheorghe Dima. Our reunion, as well as the gymnasium can take pride in such a leader who is the first and only Romanian so far to bring vocal and instrumental art towards commendable progress, due to his mastership in the art of music.*"

A letter that Titu Maiorescu sent to his friend Gheorghe Dima reflects the good impression the musician made amongst the Bucharest public following the numerous successful concerts held at the Atheneum. "*My dearest Dima, please do me the honour of visiting me. According to the information I have from the Baroness of Witzleben, they are all thrilled about your concerts. Please do perform, once again, your own Lieder, which were so frantically applauded at the Atheneum. Your devoted Titu Maiorescu, November 24, 1880*" [2].

After this meeting, Titu Maiorescu wrote a few lines in the "*Revista Fundaţiilor Regale*" (The Royal Foundation Magazine) of May 27, 1885: "... *The spreading of the taste for vocal music is one of the strong levers for the regeneration of a nation; this taste will maintain religious feelings alive, awaken patriotic feelings, facilitate the discovery of talents, and open new horizons for life...*"

In his concerts, Gheorghe Dima combined the national repertoire with the classical one. The Ministry of Culture and Public Education awarded him, through a Royal Decree, the golden medal Bene Morenti class I, an event stressed by Titu Maiorescu in a letter sent to the musician: "*along with our congratulations for this great success, I also have a request. Please find attached the latest edition of Eminescu's poems, for which I would like*

to kindly ask you to write an adequate musical composition ..."[6]

These nice lines sent by Titu Maiorescu to his esteemed friend show, once again, how deeply appreciated Gheorghe Dima was amongst the intellectuals.

His ability to work in the realm of creation and his dedication towards the development of a Romanian musical culture according to the requirements of the time are greatly appreciated.

Titu Maiorescu's request does not go unanswered. The Lieder with lyrics by

Mihai Eminescu are present in Gheorghe Dima's concerts.

"Și dacă ramuri bat în geam" (And If My Window Feels the Branch) (fig.1), "Somnoroase păsărele" (Sleepy Birds) [fig.2] are but a small example of his talent to integrate Romanian music in the universal music patterns. The technical means used to bring musical works to life derive from the knowledge and deep understanding of the ideas enriching spiritual life and from his strong sensitivity and closeness to nature.

Moderato.

Voce.

Piano.

*mf* *p simile*

Și da - că  
An's Fen - ster

Fig. 1. Beats 1-5

Non troppo lento, con delicatezza.

Voce.

Piano.

*sempre p legato* *con. Ved.*

Som-no-roa-se pă-să-re-le pe lă  
Mă-de Vîg-lein flie-gea-lei-se ih-ren

Fig. 2. beats 1-7

Because means are there to serve an idea, the text is closely linked to music, and musical images are vivid because they derive from knowledge, from the knowledge to properly apply the technical means to the ideas deriving from the aesthetic design of expressive music,

where the sense of proportion and the structure of forms are of utmost importance.

The lied "De ce nu-mi vii" (Why won't you come) (fig.3) is an example from this point of view, and it still is a very often performed part of musical literature.

Animato. (quasi ♩ = 100.)

Voce. *f*

Vezi, rân-du-ne - le - le se  
Steh' al - le Schwal - ben zie - hen

Piano. *f* *mf*

Fig. 3. beats 1-6

In times of turmoil, Gheorghe Dima is the illustration of the ideas of democracy, feelings of patriotism, and duty of the artist to promptly respond to the requests of the personalities of his time. The lengthy correspondence he had with Titu Maiorescu stresses this aspect. Titu Maiorescu thanks the musician in simple, but very warm words, for the work undertaken upon his request:

*"Eminescu's words are now accompanied by your musical creation, please be so kind as to accept my appreciation. Your devoted friend, Titu Maiorescu"* [5].

Gheorghe Dima had special authority and delicacy in the relation with the members of his choir, and the rehearsals he led were characterised by exemplary discipline.

He never interrupted his relations with the personalities of the time, with the choir associations, the musical institutions, the music lovers asking for advice to develop a repertoire. He was also involved in the development of a further training programme for choir masters. He led these courses using his own work as reference. The archives of the "Romanian Culture Museum" in Şcheii Braşovului host documents attesting the musician's work.

It is these relevant traits of Gheorghe Dima's personality that Titu Maiorescu appreciates. The fact that they share the same ideals brings them closer and nurtures their friendship.

The choral movement is a phenomenon specific to all Europe at the beginning of the 19th century. Music also knows the same progress through the intensification of the means in musical life, through the conceptions that generated it as an expression of the profound social changes. Gheorghe Dima and Titu Maiorescu felt these changes, this new breath coming towards our country. They joined their ideas and intellectual forces towards this noble cause, i.e. the affirmation of Romanian culture.

Here, we can also mention names such as: Timotei Cipariu, George Bariţiu, Ioan Slavici. They set up and led renowned cultural societies, printed newspapers and magazines, the pages whereof disclose special historical and cultural events.

In the general atmosphere for the cultivation of music in Transylvania, Braşov gained a good and well-deserved renown. The town orchestra, the Philharmonic Society, the musical reunions, the school choirs, the choir of "Saint Nicholas" Church, the "Astra" Music Conservatory, and other Romanian, Hungarian, and German cultural societies made their presence felt through various musical events, concerts, on which evidence was kept in musical collections and libraries.

The Romanian Reunion for Gymnastics and Music needed to enrich its repertoire. Consequently, it initiated a vast artistic activity, materialized through rehearsals

and concerts. Here, the collaboration between Gheorghe Dima and Titu Maiorescu becomes very close, as they both focused on the development of new compositions that were to be performed in public for the first time on various festive occasions.

The lyrics of Romanian poets thus became more widely known, and were subsequently translated into other languages.

After 1900, the donations and purchases of original Romanian composers' work replenish an extremely valuable fund. The inventory of the fund of such a musical library is hosted by the First Romanian School Museum.

The research of this library discloses, on the one hand, the role composers have played in promoting Romanian music and, on the other hand, the circulation of their works in current musical practice.

In his letters to Gheorghe Dima, Titu Maiorescu insists on the idea of the multiplication of Romanian composer partitions and on their distribution to all music enthusiasts. A letter dated "October 1904" sent by Titu Maiorescu to Gheorghe Dima and currently kept at "Casa Mureșenilor" Museum in Brașov, reinforces this statement: "... *musical partitions should be kept in museums as well as by all music lovers performing them. This is the only way in which they can survive in time ...*".

Titu Maiorescu also speaks in his letters to Gheorghe Dima about how important it is for musicians to permanently help each other. This ensures a proper flow of musical life, and permanently rejuvenates it through new works, thus attracting the public's attention and interest. The letters remain the living proof of this tacit understanding between the promoters of Romanian and universal musical art.

In the letter addressed by Titu Maiorescu to Gheorghe Dima, of May 14, 1905, he

suggests the performance of the ballad "Ștefan Vodă" and "Codrul" with the reunited choirs of the "Musical Reunion" in Sibiu and "Carmen" Society in Bucharest. "... *thank you for having accepted to conduct your own ballad with the reunited choirs. It will be a great event, and then we will go on a tour around the country...*" [Dima – Chivulescu Archives, Brașov]. The idea proved to be a success, and the collaboration between the two choirs lasted for many years. Gheorghe Dima and Titu Maiorescu developed a regulation for the operation of choir formations. In time, this became a historical document, which should still be taken into account in the organization of choirs.

Such an amount of hard work and sense of justice, all adapted to the historical framework where these rules should operate, grants this memorable document validity in time. After the in-depth research of the document, we maintain the certainty that all elements for the evolution of a flawless choral formation are present.

We stress a few very important ideas of this regulation: the organization of the number of choristers, of the rights and obligations of conductors, frequency of repetitions, structure of the repertoire, importance of permanent choristers, performance of concerts on the set deadlines, and publication in local newspapers.

As a result of the permanent communication with Titu Maiorescu, Gheorghe Dima launches the idea of the stylistic unity of Romanian music, failing to note essential distinctions between the Romanian folklore music in Transylvania and in other provinces. He believes that all composers have the Romanian music-specific features in their blood and they also transfer them in the partitions that do not aim at displaying ethnicity. This idea was lodged by George Enescu, when he

stated that some French critics felt a Romanian atmosphere in his music, even in the one that did not encompass the data of the folkloric songs.

The anchoring in the traditions of Romanticism of the activity of developer of the new Romanian musical life, as well as the 19<sup>th</sup> century revolutionary momentum, which was the basis for the materialization of noble and human ideals grant Gheorghe Dima the flagpoles of his creation and of Romanian musical arts, in the artist's struggle for self discovery and resetting the relation between the artist and the people, by virtue of the community of ideas, historical facts, ideals, and perspectives.

### 3. Conclusions

Writing these pages allowed me to enter, for a brief moment, in the wonderful and fascinating atmosphere of documents and novelty. The correspondence between Gheorghe Dima and Titu Maiorescu is more complex; this article including only a few more important letters, which contain more information. The work stresses fragments of the musician's activity and the exchange of ideas with Titu Maiorescu, which gave birth to the beautiful Lieder with lyrics by Mihai Eminescu.

Symbol of the Romanian intellectuality elite, Titu Maiorescu fought for the priority of the value criterion in all fields of social life and intellectual creation, including arts and literature [4].

The letters exchanged between the two personalities represent a vivid fresco of Romanian music, characterized through the defence of national musical school and of the important Romanian people creative

and performing values. They gather thoughts, feelings, and ideals.

From amongst the biographic testimonies concerning Gheorghe Dima's activity, we included below a part of a letter Titu Maiorescu sent to the musician on December 30, 1881: "... *there was a time when Reunion actually meant Dima. He was the soul of the Reunion, its conductor, chairman, and esteemed representative. I will always be a great admirer of his talent...*" [7].

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