

GEORGE ENESCU – IN THE LIGHT OF RECENT DOCUMENTS

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Abstract: *Many things have been written throughout history about our great composer and also one of the most important universal composers of the 20th century. I will refer in the following to five books edited from 1990 until 2004, besides George Manoliu's bilingual book: Alex. Cosmovici – George Enescu în lumea muzicii și în familie, Editura Muzicală – Bucureşti, 1990; Ilie Kogălniceanu – Destăinuiri despre George Enescu, Editura Minerva & Editura R.A.I. – Bucureşti, 1996; Valeriu Răpeanu – Enescu – Contribuții documentare, reconstituiri, interpretări, Casa de editură PRO, 1998; Viorel Cosma – Eseuri, exegeze și documente enesciene, Editura Libra – Bucureşti, 2001 and Titu-Marius I. Băjenescu – O viață închinată muzicii: George Enescu, Editura Pontfix/România; Pont, Hungary, 2004.*

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1. Introduction and objectifs

“Music is a satisfaction of the spirit, it's inner peace, if it is possible. The only things it craves for are evocations of affective states...” G. Enescu

Alex. Cosmovici and his book *George Enescu în lumea muzicii și în familie* (Editura Muzicală, Bucureşti, 1990). As it is written in the foreword: „This book is the result of familiar bonds between the author and George Enescu, his memories developing throughout 40 years of existence, from childhood until maturity (1906-1946), until the date on which George Enescu left the country, in september 1946” [1]. As a composer, the

author reveals the core of Enescu's musical and esthetic thinking. This book also reveals Enescu's interest in setting the foundation for a Romanian composer's school which would be appreciated world-wide... The biographic reports merge with long-lost events regarding „his bond with the musical world everywhere and also the one with his private, more intimate, family life, as evoked in the book's title”. The novelty and originality of these *confessions* are represented by the biographical events in which the author partook as related to the composer and also *the musical considerations*. As a cousin from the mother's side, Alex. Cosmovici begins his *memories* in 1985, thirty years after the composer's death, in Paris, his second

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mother-land... The book is written as a continuous remembering, taking account of the chronology of events, starting with the *foreword*. It is obvious that George Enescu spent his time exclusively relating to his musica and artistic work because of his lack of biographical writings.

In the *Foreword*, the author describes the event caused by a new version of the romanian book *Amintirile lui George Enescu*, edited by Romeo Drăghici (a close friend of the composer), which related to Bernard Gavorty's version (ed. Flammarion – Paris, 1955), belonging to Prof. Dr. Constantin Drăgan and edited under the new title *Contrepoint dans le miroir*, as oposed to *Les souvenirs de Georges Enesco*, the original title of Bernard Gavoty's interview with George Enescu. The book was launched by Constantin Drăgan's editure, Nagard, in Rome.

We are told by the author that this fact doesn't fit into Enescu's discreet life, especially regarding personal things.

The author asks himself if, after 30 years from the composer's death, *the knowledge of new data about the great composer's life, family and activity* would be of interest. "Surely", as told by Alex Cosmovici himself, "this new representation of George Enescu in which I try to evoke our great composer's figure from a more intimate, familliar point of view, has the charactetistics of a biographical writing. In it's development I have used, among personal memories, parents' stories, the stories of my brothers and George Enescu's relatives', straight out his own rememberings. Of real help became the daily journal kept in the 1st World War, between 1916 and 1919, when Enescu was living in Iaşi, as a main source of his daily activities in that period. Also, his numerous writings throughout his lifetime, between 1920 and 1946, in Paris as well as in the countryside". The writing reveal *bădia Jorj's* – as the author refered

to Enescu – tight bonds with his family members.

A special event happened when the author's father, Dr. Leon Cosmovici (1857-1921), professor at the Faculty of Science at the Iaşi University, invited George Enescu to partake with a musical programe at the 50th celebration of the University – in 1911! The concert took place in the big Auditorium of the University, with and elevated public. Spicy details are being told about small quarells between George Enescu and the composer George Cosmovici, during an audition in Sinaia in "the musical chamber of poet Carmen Sylva, queen Elizabeth". We are also beeing told how George Enescu will give the author's father, during the war (1914-1919), one of his crates from Paris, "although it's content would have been more aproprate to be given straight to my uncle George, not my father".

The second part of the book is entitled *George Enescu in Iaşi* and relates to the 1916-1919 period, when Enescu lived in the city of Iaşi. With an exquisite sence of story-telling, Alex. Cosmovici remembers the old city of Iaşi in the time of war, and also the strong bond between his family and Enescu.

The book itself is a live document of the events that took place in those years, events described very attractively by the author.

The on-going speech is hard to follow, but only because of the huge number of historical, cultural, scientific and also family-related events. Even in those years George Enescu was very keen on his relationship with Maria Cantacuzino, "they met in 1907 in Sinaia". In 1917, it was established that after the War, Enescu would legalize their relationship, preparing the wedding between him and the princess. During the Iaşi stay, prof Leon Cosmovici himself attended to the Cantacuzino familly's needs.

Also in this period, young Enescu had met the young violin teacher Constantin Nottara (the son of the renowned actor from the National Theater in Bucharest). The stories of events in the family and the objective historical events compile with concerts underwent by Enescu in that period for sustaining hospitals and the soldiers' morals. There isn't a lack of Enescu's... disappointments about uncertainties regarding the place of his recitals dedicated exclusively to the wounded soldiers... The book has many photographs portraying Enescu's family, himself alongside Maria Cantacuzino, important figures of Romanian culture and of his parents' house.

The 3rd part, *On foreign lands*, talks about the beginning of school in Paris for the author. "Among those urged by George Enescu to study music in Paris was I, the youngest of Moldavia's Iași". Then, it paints a portrait of the familiar relationship between the author and Enescu, during his studies abroad.

An entire development presents Enescu in his foremost responsibility regarding his family (especially after his father's death). Once again, the biographical data compiles marvelously with stories of Enescu's concerts in Paris. Putting together Romanian musical soirees, also put in the spotlight composer Stan Golestan ("which was one of the Parisian journalists").

Part 4 is entitled *Glory and turmoil*. The author finished his stay in Paris, alongside with his studies. This is the moment when Alex. Cosmovici finds George Enescu working to orchestrate Oedip. "It was 1927 and he was getting ready to go back to the USA for his winter stage concerts, which he interrupted only for an year". We find out about the sense of responsibility George Enescu had as a *family leader*. The same gathering of musical events, considerations by Enescu himself on his condition as a musician roaming the entire

world amongst other successes of close relatives take place in a precise and familiar fashion.

At the end of the book – *Reconsideration* – the spotlight belongs to Enescu's *ultrasensitive* side. "When leaving the country, George Enescu asked me, Mihail Jora and others so be informed, amongst others, of the musical activity. About Enescu's real health problems, those back home found out too late, although he tried, as it was later mentioned, to write back to the letters from back home, but his health didn't make his intentions possible..."

"You came from nowhere and just in time, as The Other One, as Mihai Eminescu, who came from nowhere, just like a spring of live water in a dry desert.

He made the Romanian language sing, You made the song talk! May you be welcome in our home!" This is how writer Păstorel Teodoreanu ended his speech on Enescu's 1931 anniversary, unveiling the composer's bust at the Music Conservatory in Iași.

Alex. Cosmovici's book contains *Annexes* with different documents: Memories of Romeo Drăghici, Donation act, The Personality of Musical Creators ("after Enescu's dictation at Tețcani, in the summer of 1929"), George Enescu's Instruments kept in the country, The Academical and honorific titles of George Enescu, George Enescu's tour in the country and abroad, George Enescu in the world of music and family, The texts of the illustrations, photos and table of contents.

2. References and discussions

The second book, written by *Ilie Kogălniceanu – Unveilings about George Enescu* contains the following titles:

- Instead of introduction
- Description of George Enescu's personality

- “La belle époque” 1900. A start to a fabulous career
- Letters from George Enescu to Nineta Duca Maruca Cantacuzino – Enescu
- The house on Lahovary street no. 9 and The small house in the court og Cantacuzino Palace
- Sinaia – “Luminiş” villa
- “Les Clichy” villa in Bellevue (Paris)
- 26, Rue de Clichy – Paris, Hotel Atala (Paris)
- Enlightments and unanswered questions about George Enescu`s last wishes
- After leaving the country
- Instead of ending
- Letters, 1-67
- Facsimiles
- Addenda: George Enescu`s horoscope by Katia Mestchersky
- Bibliography

Unveilings by **Ilie Kogălniceanu** (Editura Minerva & Editura R.A.I.-Bucureşti, 1996) takes place from the moment of *Instead of introduction*, in which the author speaks about his own memories linking to George Enescu, because of *the privilege of being around the great maestro for many years*, memories dating from the author`s childhood. Ilie Kogălniceanu confesses the fact that he doesn`t consider himself as George Enescu`s *biographer*, considering that this book goes out to music lovers everywhere without any special musical studies (besides the familiarisation with the musical world and an instrument), gathering to the numerous other writings of the kind, many of them from after Maruca Enescu, the composer`s wife`s death...

The author starts with his own first musical experience, at the age of 6, studying violin with his mother as teacher – *she was a student of Karl Flesch and George Enescu* -. “I read a lot of papers

written by George Enescu: interviews, musical chronics, pages that evoke his life, opera and outstanding career. A career with no equal: composer, conductor, pianist, violinist, professor. I look upon with admiration at my library`s shelves at the books aknowledged to him. Face to face with the thousands of pages I feel unhinged and shy. But I try to persevere in this decision” (pg.7). Moreover, his decision became more than enough, taking account that the author tried to maintain a slight objective detachment on facts and events, by somewhat of an autobiographical intent.

All the parts of this *Confession* were written rigurously, emphasizing his natural born artistic sense. It is also very interesting how the author develops an *unromanced* presentation of each section of the book. Of great realism is the part that represents Maruca Cantacuzino-Enescu`s figure and the whole inner battle that Enescu underwent, accepting a quality which diminished the artistic and human dignity...All of Ilie Kogălniceanu`s book`s sections have a wide and rigurous documentation, but it dosen`t make the reading less interesting .

O special section is dedicated to the “Luminiş” villa in Sinaia and to the events related to Enescu`s stay here. All the data regarding the choice of location and the project of this genuine *home* for the soul as imagined by the composer are being lucidly followed by the author. We find out now details of personal events (Maruca`s illness between 1937 and 1938 and the use of non-use of the villa`s rooms by Enescu...).

Two events tie up to the comeback of Enescu at the “Luminiş” villa: the translaction of Ed. Fleg`s libretto for Oedip from french into romanian and the composer`s own interpretation of his piano score. Even though Enescu had a few attempts in Bucharest or Paris, he performs

his whole opera in front of an intimate crowd, for two nights in a row at the “Luminiș” villa. “I do not claim to have had understood this impressive musical moment, but I got the memory of a feeling, of a sensation which stood with me over the years: I have witnessed something unique, something fabulous. Enescu was singing, whistling, moaning, the piano quivered under his touch...”

About Enescu’s parisian locations and the testimonial documents (which underline the strong bond between the author’s mother, Nineta Duca-Kogălniceanu and George and Maruca Enescu and ends with numerous letters, most of them directed to her.

The facsimils are very precious and are located at the end of the book, before the original Addenda made from the composer’s Horoscope, by Katia Mestchersky, in Paris, in 1996. Alongside a long bibliography, Ilie Kogălniceanu’s book contains a wide collection of photos portraying Enescu and his family.

3. Different aspects of the biography of the composer

Valeriu Râpeanu’s *Enescu - Contribuții documentare, reconstituiri, interpretări...* (Casa de Editură Pro, 1998) contains the writer’s point of view and the history of romanian culture. The book’s summary contains interesting titles, following the foreword:

- Enescu and the perpetual aspiration towards absolute
- When Marcel Proust heard George Enescu, the violinist
- George Enescu in Iași during the First World War
- An anonymous memory
- George Enescu’s concerts presented in the pages of “Neamul Românesc” newspaper

- George Enescu the way they saw him then
- G. Duca and Queen Maria
- A russian diplomat remembers
- No. 91 create by George Enescu’s Moskow manuscripts
- Bruno Walter’s letter.

A number from “Universul Literar” – directed by Camil Petrescu – dedicated to George Enescu

- “The Genius” by Petru Comarnescu
- Enescu... by Al. Lascarov-Moldoveanu
- George Enescu by Her Highness Queen Maria
- Celebrating George Enescu by N. Iorga
- Enescu’s chord by N. Iorga
- George Enescu decorated by His Majesty The King

1932 George Enescu’s election a titular member of the Romanian Academy – strong opposition, long debates, votes against and restraints

1936 The success of Oedip in Paris celebrated in Bucharest

- Playwriter I. Valjan’s speech
- 1937 - “Bilete de papgal” and George Enescu’s decoration
- Enescu by Ștefana Velisar-Teodoreanu
- The King and the violin by Tudor Arghezi Maria Cantacuzino-Enescu – “the adored princess – Romania’s Alma Mahler”
- Nae Ionescu “the house philosopher of a metaphysical liaison” between the Professor and the Lady
- Mihail Cantacuzino and the mystic journey
- “It was one true love”
- “He suffered, she dominated”

1941 When George Enescu was 60 years old

- Marshal Ion Antonescu’s letter

- George Enescu's decoration by King Mihai I
- An article by Nechifor Crainic

The last years of George Enescu's life – an interview with composer Marcel Mihailovici and his wife, pianist Monique Haas

As it can be easily seen, this book enrolls a series of documents in chronological order, on which it builds by adding personal testimonials of personalities belonging to both universal and Romanian culture. We go by the writer's own *confession* of this step: "I proceeded as I did in my book: N. Iorga. *Mircea Eliade*. Nae Ionescu (Editura Arta Grafică, 1993), by giving the document – newspaper articles, confessions from books – the central role, exhaustively reproducing the texts, some of them remaining until now only in the publications' collections. Because of that not once the commentary is down to a minimum, having the sole role of structuring, relating, establishing connections between the texts and including them in the time flow. As for Enescu's personality's interpretations and those of moments of his life, these are evidently open for discussion" (*Foreword*)

Presenting George Enescu's figure from the perspective of historical truth from within Romanian culture, Valeriu Râpeanu paints a portrait from the *mythical dimension* point of view that the composer's personality overtook even during his lifetime, and this because of his *kind and pure* aura (aura also attributed to the painter Nicolae Grigorescu). "*Romanian* culture has a number of sad cases of true creators whose day-by-day behaviour diminished the value of their opera and stood against their well-deserved place in people's minds, such as Alexandru Macedonski. Many times the creation of these artists is foreseen through their mistakes, their *stray from the normal*, other times

their acts and their dimensions overgrew the undisputable quality of their creation (such as Nicolae Iorga). George Enescu was against any vanity so widely spread throughout the musical world, arts; he belonged, in his own words, to *the abstract world of sounds*". Then, during his lifetime, George Enescu "only used his name for higher purposes" (pg 11, Enescu and the perpetual aspiration towards absolute). The artistic figure of George Enescu is represented by Valeriu Râpeanu as a personality drawn to Music. "The spiritual value being supreme in his affective and moral system, he was literally frightened by everything that represented the cult of physical force, abolition of harmony as a musical principle, and also as a way of life. (pg. 15). It's good to explain Enescu's opera from the perspective of his life's ideals and not from a perspective regarding biographical *circumstances*. For that we have his own confession: "I used to love life, I used to love people and their manifestations" (pg 17). Once the war struck, condemned to *growing* physical force, in his world "he lost the human sense and kindness, the respect for the spirit" – painful contemporary words of the great composer in the second decade of the 20th century – confessing to a need to shut down in his *world of dream and fantasy*, in other words, the world of music. "Starting from this nucleus" states the author, Valeriu Râpeanu, "we shall see two attitudes that don't deny themselves". It is well-known that the man Enescu had an exemplary moral state, but this quality doesn't have to determine us to look at his work unilaterally, but in the way of the composer's own fight to obtain *the absolute state*. [2]

The next part is interesting by portraying the presence of Enescu's name in a literary creation from Marcel Proust, one of the composer's interpretations influencing the definitivation of a page from the famous

novel *In search of the lost time, Du côté de chez Swann*. Each section from these *Documentary contributions* partake in precision and detailing, uncovering new information of the presence of George Enescu in the minds of great personalities of the time – from Romania and all around. There are pages that look upon a strange coincidence with well known attitudes towards our artistic and cultural values... The book is a must for its wide spectrum of culture and documentation in which the personality of George Enescu relates from exceptional perspectives. Of a major importance is the authors interview with Marcel Mihailovici and his wife, Monique Haas.

4. Conclusions of the last referent

The last book on which I gazed upon in our editorial and documentary journey is *Titu-Marius I. Băjenescu's O viață închinată muzicii: George Enescu* (Editura Pontfix, România/ Editura Pont, Ungaria, 2004).

The preface is written by pianist and composer Alexandru Hrisanide, professor at the departments of music of Universities of Tilburg and of Amsterdam in Holland. The book, having a vast Chronology (pg 97-132), has also a Chronological Catalogue of Enescu's operas (both chronologies have as starters important documents published in Romania and also abroad), creations, transcripts, an ansamble look upon the composer's evolution, operas dedicated to Enescu, pieces in first audition by George Enescu and first world auditions of romanian scores, presented by Enescu. It also contains a discography: a) of the composer; b) of the interpreter and c) of the conductor. The books table of contents has some important titles:

- Enescu and the Romanian mid 19th century culture; Enescu's childhood
- Years of studies in Vienna

- Years of studies in Paris
- Enescu, the interpreter
- Enescu, the teacher
- Confessions and impressions
- The sound of Enescu's art in USA
- Enescu – undiscovered

After the Chronologies previously presented, the book's ending contains a consistent selective bibliography, a short abstract in french and the conclusion: Three engineers and a book about Enescu. We can find a series of the composer's photos, during the pass of time. In the actual presentation of the three engineers we find the equation that establishes each and everyone's role in this book, based on undisclosed events. The years of the great musician's musical formation are sustained continuously, chronologically, adding well known data to a series of quotes that empower the musician's great figure. The same is with George Enescu's multiple musical activity, of whom's exceptional availibilities are sustained by the confessions of great personalities representing universal music.

5.1. Final aspects

A more special chapter seemed to be the one that speaks about the *confessions and impressions* (transcripts in alphabetical order of the musicians) of some famous composers, conductors, and also writers, musichologists and interprets (romanian and world-wide). Some stand out: Georges Auric, Béla Bartók, Sir John Barbirolli, Pablo Casals, George Călinescu, Cella Delavrancea, Gustave Doré, Paul Dukas, Bernard Gavoty, George Georgescu, Ivry Gitlis, Arthur Honneger, Jaques Ibert, Nicolae Iorga, Mihail Jora, Zoltan Kodály, Wanda Landowska, Margueritte Long, George Manoliu, Jules Massenet, Yehudi Menuhin (which talks the most of the composer's overwhelming personality), Darius Milhaud, Florica Musicescu, David

Oistrach (fabulous and emotional confessions), Ionel Perlea, Camil Petrescu, Marcel Proust, Liviu Rebreanu, Camille Saint-Saëns, Dmitri Şostakovici, Alexandru Vlahuţă, Pancio Vladigherov, Iosif Vulcan, Antoine Ysaye and many more... We often find in these confessions the comeback of appreciations regarding the sincerity of his art and musical expression, the noblesse of his character, about him being drawn to humor and laughter (Enescu loved greatly anecdotes and word games...), about him not knowing sordid feelings like envy, jealousy or professional vanity... I found rather ingenious the placement of those *catalogues* referring to his creation. Also, the *Ensemble look upon the composer's evolution* is useful, based on arguments of composers and musicologists/musical critics, such as: Pascal Bentoiu, Emanoil Ciomac, Petre Brâncuşi... And so it was possible that three engineers - Titu-Marius Băjenescu, Dan Roman, appreciated violonist in his young years, and Marius Băzu, who studied music and piano as a child – to collaborate beautifully in completing one more confession about George Enescu. [3]

5.2. Conclusion

Furthermore, it is a well structured book with an interesting point of view and perspective on the complex personality of George Enescu and his creation. I would to end in the words of Yehudi Menuhin, which are live even today: „(...) As a composer, Enescu never had the audience and celebrity that he deserved, and this – especially – because his pride allways stoped him from accepting loud publicity (...).” His personal pride and soul delicacy, I'd might add, that encouraged him to send all his economies to his father for the sole

purpose of investing for old age (things his father did by buying land), which, in fact, during the comunist natiolisation process was lost, Enescu ending in deep poverty in Paris... „the land and the religion were the only divine things in which Enescu believed all his life (...) (pg.83).

Notes

- [1] Cosmovici George - *the composer's mother's cousin, Alex. Cosmovici, George Enescu în lumea muzicii și în familie*, pag. 16.
- [2] Cosma, Viorel – *Eseuri, exegeze și doucmente enesciene* (Editura Libra, Bucureşti, 2001).
- [3] Băjenescu, Titu-Marius *lives in Switzerland, his other two childhood friend made editing this book possible.*

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