

Great personalities of Military music. Egizio Massini – conductor and general inspector of Romanian Military Music

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Abstract: *During the interwar years, military music experienced significant growth thanks to the efforts of one of the genre's leading lights, conductor Egizio Massini, a highly regarded individual who also happened to be an accomplished soldier. His conducting skills and European vision, along with his organizational tenacity and musical aptitude, led to an amazing military career that had a direct impact on Romania's military and civilian fanfare band scene. During his tenure as the inspector general of the military bands (1932–1940 and 1944–1947), significant advancements were made for the military music bands and their members' musical education, as well as for the repertoire reform and the execution of lengthy international tours.*

Key-words: *Egizio Massini, fanfare band, conductor, wind instruments, interpretation, military music, performance*

1. Introduction

Since the Romanian Military Bands were founded in 1830, musicians who combined artistic and musical endeavors with military and organizational responsibilities have contributed to their struggle for survival. They were able to modify pieces from various musical genres to fit the unique configuration of the Military Music bands. Among the General Inspectors of Military Music, Egizio Massini (1894–1966) had some of the best professional training. A conductor with a European perspective, he improved the performance of military instrumentalists by focusing on both the creation of a particular type of education and their reorganization and promotion.

Romania had a prosperous time during the interwar years, both culturally and economically. The connections to Western Europe allowed for the naturalization of culturally significant individuals from other countries as well as the flow of artistic

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currents. Ioan Vlăduță (1875–1965), who served as a military band inspector from 1918 to 1929 following World War I, devoted his life to restoring the military music bands that had been severely damaged during the conflict. Egizio Massini, who will bring a superior professional breath, will carry on his work.

2. Statement of the hypothesis

The military fanfare bands' advancement in both music and organization was enabled by the selection of musicians possessing advanced artistic training, a strong sense of patriotism, and a leadership quality. Following World War I, the Military Bands experienced a period of profound change that included the creation of specialized educational institutions or nationally representative bands, spectacular repertoire approaches, and international tours. The work that Egizio Massini did as an inspector general and conductor of military music set a strong foundation for the growth and prosperity of military musicians over the following fifty years. According to Nicolae Gheorghită (2020, 240), he is credited with giving the Military Music bands „visibility and presence” among military leaders and the general public in the country and abroad.

3. Dissertation

3.1. Activity and musical life

On July 26, 1894, in Alexandria, Egypt, Egizio Massini was born into a family of singers who were part of an Italian opera company. His father, Enrico, was a baritone and his mother, Paulina, was a well-known mezzo-soprano. His childhood was characterized by lengthy trips with his parents, which cultivated a passion for music and its study in him. As a result, at the age of 15, he is listed as assistant conductor on the posters for his father's lyric company. His studies of the violin were extensive, and he performed live until he was thirty years old. But orchestral conducting was his true love. He studied theory, harmony and counterpoint at the Pesaro Conservatory under Manlio Bavagnoli (1853–1931) and Pietro Mascagni (1863–1945), (Silea 2006, 233).

At the age of 15, he succeeded his father as band leader in 1909, and over the following four years, he led the group on tours through Hungary, Romania, Turkey, Greece and other countries. Discovering a climate conducive to his development as a conductor, Egizio Massini decided to settle permanently in Romania in 1914, presenting for the first time operas such as *Tosca*, *Aida*, *Faust*, *Paiate* etc.

He was an Italian army soldier in the First World War. In 1919, he went back to Romania and was chosen to lead the Romanian Lyric Society as its artistic director. After this society was disbanded in 1921 and the Romanian state took control of the Romanian opera, Massini chose to carry on with his work abroad, whether it be in Odessa, Cluj, Vienna, or Chisinau, with little chance of advancement in his career. In 1923, he went back to Bucharest and assumed leadership of the Romanian Opera. In addition, he conducted symphonic works at the Bucharest Philharmonic Orchestra and taught opera at the Bucharest Conservatory of Music in 1925.

The start of Massini's military career occurred on April 5, 1932, when he was appointed Inspector General of Military Bands, rising to the rank of lieutenant colonel. This was a first for Romanian military music history (all of the previous performers had progressively advanced through the ranks of the armed forces). It was made possible by his wife Dora's (soprano at the Romanian Opera) connections to the Royal House's entourage, as well as his acquisition of Romanian citizenship.

Soon after taking office, he founded the Music of the Royal Guard, modeled after the French Republican Guard, a band consisting of 110 members with a fanfare band and orchestra. This is the band that actually served as the model for Dumitru Eremia's (1910–1976) later creation of the Representative Music of the Army.

During his tenure as inspector general, Massini's extraordinary personal and professional attributes—he was gregarious, brave, creative, and persistent, possessed a strong sense of organizational skills, and had a vision for European art—led to significant advancements. In 1940, he received the King Carol I Centenary Medal and was elevated to the rank of colonel. He was removed from office during the Second World War for political reasons but was famous after the end of the war with the desire to continue the coordination and restoration of the military bands that had lost numerous human and instrumental personnel (Gheorghiuță 2020, 253).

On October 1, 1947, Egizio Massini ended his prestigious military career, continuing to conduct on the country's opera stages until 1964. Regretfully, he fell gravely ill at the age of 70, and on February 18, 1966, following a two-year struggle with the illness, he passed away. Several medals and orders were bestowed upon him, such as the Cross of Honor, the Order of the Star of Romania, the Order of the Crown of Romania, the Order of Cultural Merit, and the Badge of Pre-Military Training etc. (Sîlea 2006, 240).

3.2. Musical career as a General Inspector of Romanian Military Bands

Throughout the history of the Military Bands, Egizio Massini has been one of their most innovative general inspectors. He served as inspector general of the General Inspectorate of Military Bands from 1932 to 1940 and again from 1944 to 1947.

The German occupation and his wife's connections to King Carol II were the reasons for their brief separation during the war. But Massini's artistic and professional qualities made the Army's new leadership want to take back control of the General Inspectorate of Military Music.

After a successful professional career, he set high standards for himself upon becoming inspector general. These included:

- ♦ restructuring the General Inspectorate of Military Bands and adding new performance functions
- ♦ updating the state of Military Bands, determining the makeup of the 110 Fanfare Military Bands that were then active in Romania based on various pre-established types then active in Romania based on various pre-established types and the size of the military units in which they operated;
- ♦ the establishment of the Musical Technical Office;
- ♦ supporting and promoting the military music bands in the within the region;
- ♦ the obligation to select the cadres, instrumentalists, and music chiefs (the military bands' conductors) through competition;
- ♦ assimilation and classification with all rights and obligations of military non-commissioned officers (a name that will no longer be used from that moment on) in the corps of military non-commissioned officers;
- ♦ to augment the funds derived from the artistic endeavors of military bands throughout the nation and its capital- proposed new norms for the use of the „Publishing House and Music Aid” fund, which increased the funds derived from the artistic endeavors of military bands throughout the nation and its capital;
- ♦ a substantial quantity of instruments were procured for the bands operating within the territory.

The first step in increasing the musical level of the subordinate musicians was the establishment of a specialization department for chaplains within the Bucharest Conservatory of Music. He acquired a large number of musical instruments, especially according to the French and Italian models, and introduced works from numerous musical genres into his repertoire (Sandu-Dediu 2013, 190).

The conservatory graduates compete to become the heads of music, and the admission exam is very demanding, covering concepts from many different areas, such as conducting, choral ensemble, harmony and counterpoint, theory and solfege, instrumentation, and composition. Upon passing this test, one was also promoted to the rank of officer, or second lieutenant.

As a conductor with extensive experience, he gave ample concerts, for example in 1933 at the Roman Arenas, with a staff of 500 instrumentalists, or in Chernivtsi, Craiova and Timișoara. The concerts included a symphonic repertoire adapted to the fanfare band, such as the Fifth Symphony by Ludvig van Beethoven

(1770-1827), played for the first time by a wind orchestra; the Romanian Poem by George Enescu (1881-1955); the Overture to the opera "Tannhäuser" by Richard Wagner (1813-1883) etc. (Badea 1996, 71).

Another great musical success was the international tour with a band of 760 instrumentalists in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia in June 1934, through which Romanian military music was promoted, the Romanian composers, together with valuable instrumentalists, being considered by the press of the time as true ambassadors of Romanian culture in full affirmation (Gheorghită 2020, 250).

Egizio Massini first founded the Royal Guard Orchestra in 1932, then the Palace Symphony Orchestra and the Army Symphony Orchestra in 1939. His desire to have a nationally and internationally representative orchestra for the Romanian Army was an older desire of all the inspectors general before him, since Mihail Mărgăritescu (1861-1925), (Gheorghită 2020, 252).

In the same year, he supported the publication of the Army Music Magazine by establishing his own publishing house within the General Inspectorate. The magazine appeared monthly with the aim of completing the instrumental technical training, military education, but also to strengthen the collegial ties between the Military Music staff, by promoting their exceptiona Before World War II, Massini organized grand parades that featured a great deal of military musicians and were well-received by the general public at both formal and informal events. Actually, because of the political ideology of the day, Massini also established guard bands in factories and schools during this time.

In 1936, Massini fulfilled another of his personal goals by founding the School of Student Musicians, a music school for young people interested in pursuing careers in music, military band instrumentalists, and band children. Despite going through many changes, this institution has carried on with its operations almost to the present day (Modern Military Museums Magazine 2021, 17)

After the earthquake of November 9/10, 1940, which seriously damaged both the headquarters of the General Inspectorate of Military Music, as well as the School of Student Musicians, they moved to a place in Victoriei Square.

The war had decimated the Military Bands, and the period following 1944 marked the installation of the new regime was challenging for them. During a time of economic hardship and international disarmament, Egizio Massini, who had been called back to lead the General Inspectorate, waged a valiant struggle to preserve the 47 bands that were already in place and to augment them with new musicians or music directors. Over the course of the following three years, he composed and printed the national anthems of the belligerent nations (the USSR, England, the USA, and France), instituted new drills and parade routes, and established fees for military bands to perform for the benefit of the local communities.

In 1945 he was appointed director and conductor of the Romanian Opera, as a sign of recognition of the musical and organizational merits of the highest value, fulfilling both functions until 1947. Being a reputed conductor, he was also appreciated abroad through opera performances and symphonic concerts, therefore, in 1947 he gave up the position of inspector general of military music, remaining director of the Romanian Opera until 1949 (Gheorghiuță 2016, 29).

The professional, musical, military and organizational merits of the inspector general and conductor Egizio Massini are undeniable. Perhaps his most important achievement was to change the perception of public opinion regarding the professional and artistic quality of military fanfare bands and the repertoire performed by them.

Along with these, we mention the establishment of the first Romanian military music school, a prestigious institution that supported the training of all Romanian military musicians.

3.3. School of Musical students

The first kind of musical education for children and youth in our nation was the institution of band children, or more specifically, the minors whose parents entrusted them to military units and from whom notable military musicians and general inspectors of Military Bands, like Iosif Ivanovici (1845–1902) or Ioan Vlăduță, were raised. On the other hand, music education was empirical in nature, with music theory and instrumental knowledge being imparted by non-commissioned officers. Together with instrumentalists from the civilian world, these band kids provided the military bands with the majority of their power (Ignat 2012, 33).

After completing a lengthy tour of Poland and Czechoslovakia, Egizio Massini was inspired by European military musical education programs and made repeated, adamant attempts to establish an educational institution in Romania dedicated to teaching instrumentalists from the military bands of the day.

A ministerial resolution created the School of Student Musicians in 1936 under the General Inspectorate of Military Music, with the stipulation that the new organization is administratively and technically subordinate to the General Inspectorate. The acceptance of the General Staff imposed certain conditions, namely: the statute, the organization of the school, as well as the didactic programs will comply with the legislation in force; The General Inspectorate will provide a venue for conducting courses in its own premises; the obligation of school graduates to remain active in the army for a clearly specified period of time; ensuring safe funds so as not to jeopardize the teaching act; the school to provide courses with military specificity and a continuity towards the higher levels of military training.

The main purpose of the school was to train instrumentalists, non-commissioned officers and sometimes officers (chief musicians). The courses were organized over six years of study, comprising four years of high school and two years of practice at the Military Bands in the territory (Gheorghită 2020, 251).

We can say that this school was a pioneer for Romanian education because, at the time, there was no secondary or high school music education in Romania. The courses followed a curriculum that covered military discipline, music discipline, and general culture subjects from the high school curriculum.

Musical training included the study of a main wind instrument, music theory, solfege, music history, choral ensemble, fanfare band ensemble, and study of a secondary instrument (a string or percussion instrument). The teachers and instructors who teach music courses were from the Bucharest Military Bands, instrumentalists from civilian musical and artistic institutions (Philharmonic, Romanian Opera and Radio), as well as teachers from the Conservatory.

The school had administrative management: the school commander (Captain Bongar Leon), the director of musical studies, the director of secondary studies, the school doctor, the student company commander, non-commissioned officers and administration. The General Secretariat of the Ministry of National Defense determined that military units that included military music in their compositions should contribute 20% of their earnings to the school in order to guarantee its smooth operation. These monies were used to buy instruments, scores and supplies; pay the salaries of the teaching and support staff; supply the students with food and clothing; and maintain the school (Ignat 2012, 34).

The students were recruited from among band children aged between 12 and 15, but also from civilian children who wanted to pursue a musical-military career. The students were internal scholarship holders of the state, lived in the boarding school, wearing uniforms like students from other military schools, only they wore the sign of the lyre on their epaulettes and had a white belt with a diagonal.

The distribution of the students on instruments was made according to well-established criteria according to the conformation of the lips, teeth, fingers, receptivity, musicality, rhythmic sense etc. The program of the theoretical courses took place in the morning, and the practical classes took place in the afternoon. The evaluation of the students was done in the same way as in civil education, with grades from 1 to 10. Students who were repeating or had disciplinary offenses were removed from the school, with reintegration into the family or military unit from which they came.

The School of Student Musicians continued its activity, going through periods of spectacular evolution or regression, having numerous other names, but keeping the educational specificity in the field of military music (Ignat 2012, 35).

4. Conclusions

Military music has known periods of development, glory or decay and restraint. The historical alternation between war and peace intertwined the destiny of the military brass bands with that of the Romanian Army. Throughout their nearly 200-year history, the appointment of inspectors general with the highest professional standing, like Egizio Massini, to lead the Military Bands was noteworthy. The concerts with large numbers, the spectacular parades, the tours in the country or abroad, the repertoire adapted to all musical genres, the remarkable artistic outfit, all these changed the perception of the public, who understood and appreciated the value of the Military Music bands. Egizio Massini is a turning point in the history of Romanian military music by raising the musical level of all military fanfare bands in our country.

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