

Octavian Lazar Cosma
The Romanian Music Chronicle
vol. I (1973) - vol. IX (1991)

The first Romanian treatises of Politics, Literature, Education, History of Art or Culture, appeared in the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century (and here we quote the work of A. D. Xenopel, V. A. Urechia, N. Iorga, E. Lovinescu), but a comprehensive History of Music had to wait for its main components and establishment and investigation of principles.

Time was needed to clarify all these problems but the next threshold is the fusion with the western culture. Besides all these attempts, which may constitute a “protohistory” of Romanian music, there are almost two millennia of folk and Byzantine music, both of them interdependent, complementary and interfering with one another and with other spiritual zones. Just think of Anton Pann, who was a well known psalt (performer, teacher, chant creator, editor, s.o.) and a real treasure of folk and old entertainment music as well. He is the link between Oriental and Western culture, being considered a huge personality of the Romanian folklore creation, preserving and spreading.

The great similarity between Christianity and the old religion of the Romanian people explains the ease in accepting St. Andrew’s sermon; one used to say that Romanians are born Christians. Romanians adopt the new, Christian, later Byzantine music, that finds, on their territory, a place for preservation after the Byzantine Empire decayed, for development and flourishing. What else can the well known monastic schools from Neamt, Ptina, Scheij Brasovului, Iasi, Cozia, Targoviste, Ramnic, Bucuresti, Buzau, s.o., be than the Orthodox equivalent of western “schola cantorum”, where even foreigners were coming to learn Byzantine music, that is still in use nowadays, where musical books were written, and that was a worthy refuge for Greeks during the Turk occupation.

On the other hand, Romanian folklore represents very tangibly the spirituality of a people that loves beauty, who created a real musical art that made its contribution to maintaining the personality of a country that had too much to endure all its lifetime.

The nine volumes of the “Romanian Music Chronicle”, printed by the Music Publishing House, Bucharest, in 20 years (1973-1991) are the fruit of an extremely elaborated investigation, that broke all the walls that tried to hide this real patrimony of spirituality. The author, Octavian Lazar Cosma, shouldered the responsibility of a difficult cultural mission - to establish the main points of the Romanian music evolution during these two millennia.

The aim is remarkable considering the fact that this work is the first Romanian cultural treatise in the field, that influences other spiritual fields and mirrors not only the history of the Romanian people but the culture, the aesthetics, the literary history as well, and the links with Europe from all points of view.

The work is completely different from previous ones. For example, consider “Istoria muzicii la Romani” (The Romanian Music History) by Mihail Poslusnicu¹, printed in 1928 and subtitled “From the Renaissance to the Era of Artistic Culture Setting”. To quote N. Iorga, “its merit is to bring together all our folk, church, and some west music sketches”². The work, dated 70 years ago, didn’t achieve too much because of a lack of historical concept or “backbone”, so it was quite a difficult task to put in order all the worthy information.

George Breazul was surely aware of the significance of such a synthesis but he considered two other chapters, very fashionable at that time: the psychology of the Romanian folklore and the Romanian folk music outset. Obviously, the last one was projected to be the first chapter of a history, proposed in a broad study - “Patrium Carmen”³, subtitled “Contributions to the Romanian music investigation”. This is the second edition of the work “The Romanian Music Today”⁴, printed two years earlier in collaboration with I. Popescu-Pasarea, Constantin Bobulescu, Gavriil Galinescu, Tiberiu Brediceanu, Liviu Rusu, Mihail Jora, Alfred Alessandrescu, Alexandru Zirra, Augustin Bena. The new edition contains 747 pages and adds reviews dedicated to the representative Romanian musicians, and to the history of the Romanian musical education.

¹ Poslusnicu, M. Istoria muzicii la Romani, Bucharest, Cartea Romaneasca, 1928.

² Iorga, N. Prefata, in Poslusnicu, M., as quoted, p. 5.

³ Breazul, G., Patrium Carmen. Contributii la studiul muzicii romanesti, Craiova Scrisul Romanesc, 1941.

⁴ Breazul, G., Nitulescu, P., Muzica romaneasca de azi, Bucharest, 1939.

PhD professor Octavian Lazar Cosma's history is a real "life-oeuvre", being extended over 20 years of publishing. Some other works prepared it, and here we quote a History of the Romanian Musical Theatre⁵, printed in 1962, which won the Romanian Academy Award, an exhaustive musicology treatise of the opera *Oedip*⁶ by George Enescu, and many other reviews. As a professor at the Bucharest Academy of Music, he is the author of the Romanian Music History courses⁷.

A treatise is, obviously, necessary, and this idea is sustained in almost all the nine volumes' forewords. And here we quote from the 5th volume's preface: "Now, in the present stage of the Romanian historical way of thinking, we are ready for extensive works, for serious and deep researches, to demonstrate, now and for ever, that we have a real musical culture"⁸.

The aim is really difficult to be accomplished not only because of the huge temporal space that has to be covered, but also because of the complexity of the phenomena: the cultural situation of the Romanian provinces throughout their history, and, as it was already pointed out in the first volume, "the main manuscripts, the sources of musicological information, are unapproachable "whitelands"⁹. More than that, in the case of Byzantine music, most of the documents are unknown. The best example is the well known monastic school from Putna (XVI-th century): only six extraordinary musical manuscripts were recorded at the time when the first volume of the "Chronicle" was printed. Later, five more such manuscripts were discovered in different archives or libraries in the world: Sofia, Petersburg, Moscow, Leipzig, Leimonos Monastery from Lesbos island. There is room, obviously, for more discoveries because the area of the Carpathian Mountains is the boundary between the three worlds: Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant. In a circle with a radius smaller than 100 km within the Romanian boundaries, three representative monuments can be found: the Orthodox Monastery Veronet, the Catholic St. Michael Cathedral of Cluj-Napoca

⁵ Cosma, O., *Opera romaneasca*, Bucharest, Editura muzicala, 1962.

⁶ Cosma, O., *Oedipul enescian*, Bucharest, Ed., muziacala, 1967.

⁷ Cosma, O., *Curs de istoria muzicii romanesti. Principii fundamentale*, Bucharest, Academy of Music course.

⁸ Cosma, O., *Hronicul muzicii romanesti*, vol 5, Bucharest, Ed.muzicala, 1983.

⁹ Cosma, O., *Hronicul muzicii romanesti*, vol 1, Bucharest, Ed. muzicala, 1973.

and the Protestant Black Church of Brasow. The permanent mixture of culture and religion marks this world, even in its musical culture, as pointed out from the monastic school of Putna to the creation of Michael Johann Haydn, Carl Ditters von Dittersdorf, Daniel Speer, Daniel Croner, Johannes Honterus, s.o.#

The complexity of the field of investigation, which includes religion, culture and education, has to be underlined. In other words, the aim is far from being superficial, looking for an explanation that takes into account the profound political, religious and spiritual mechanisms of a high amplitude phenomenon that is compartmented for a better approach. This compartmentation becomes obvious in time, the last volumes being built as monographies, dedicated to certain musical domains. Dominated by an aesthetic conception, the construction - extended on 4000 pages - is pyramidal.

The first volume is concerned with the earliest data in the old music of Thracians and Dacians, the first Romanians. Music and theatre are dealt with from aesthetic point of view, but only few archaeological figures and some examples of Latin or Hellenic literature are the basis of the approach. The work treats the personality of Niceta de Remesiana, who represents the early Byzantine music. He was Bishop of Dacians as well, and the author of the hymns *Te Deum Laudamus* (well known in the Catholic world as well, the hymn was translated into German by Luther) and *De psalmodiae bono*, the last one being one of the first dedicated to the music and its worth in the spiritual life.

In the second period - the medieval one - the two plans - of the folk music, with all its complexity (modes, structure, instruments, dances, Western style melodies - Ion Caianu, Joseph Sulzer), and of the Byzantine music, followed, later, by the gregorian chant, especially in Transsylvania - are regarded. It is the period of the monastic music school from Putna, and of the protopsalts, that made the first steps towards the institution of the Romanian language as a cult language. The court music adds to the two previous plans of the folk and Byzantine music, and creates the opportunities of a cultural life, that includes music and theatre performance by musicians that were established in the Romanian area.

The second volume is concerned with the evolution of Romanian music between 1774 and 1823, taking into account the M. Moldovanu attestation at the St. Sava school from Bucharest, and the first Romanian works that were printed in Vienna,

by Macarie the Protopsalt: "The Theoreticon, The Anastasymatar and The Hymnologyon". These are the basic books that served for the Hrisantic reform implementation in Romania, and for the establishment of Romanian as a cult language. In the field of the folk music, we quote king Dimitrie Cantemir, a real encyclopedia, who recorded some foreigners' notations and the "Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung" review. The folk Romanian music seemed to be really appreciated in the West. The first Romanian musical works with Byzantine notation appear in 1820, in Bucharest. This is the era of the big circuits of the great Western troupes of opera and of the celebrities, that came to Romania and have made their contribution to the public artistic taste forming. The first entertainment melodies, based on the local poetry, and Romanian theatre appeared at that time.

The third volume of "The Romanian Music Chronicle" covers the period 1823-1859, beginning with the first union between two Romanian countries. Anton Pann is the main figure of the Byzantine music, but the influences of the Western or Russian choral music do not cease to appear. Folk music becomes a subject of research, and inspires many creations for piano or other instruments. The western music protrudes on many channels: army assemblies, camera music, institutes of music in Bucharest and Iasi, musical theatre troupes. Romanian subjects are put into the light by means of a local form of musical theatre - named "vodevil". Later, creations for voice, instruments and orchestra, and, obviously, the first critics and teachers appear, most of them foreigners that decided to come to Romania for good.

The romantic period is the subject of the fourth volume, which came out in 1898 and is concerned with the musical life expanding, till George Enescu. This is the period of the Romanian musical school genesis. Its roots are the Romanian Philharmonic, which established the concert life in Bucharest, the Romanian Opera in Bucharest, many other troupes of opera and music-hall from other towns, and the two Academies of Music in Bucharest and Iasi. The choral influences of the church-music find their climax in the works of Paul Constantinescu (the *Byzantine Oratoriums for Christmas and Easter*, the *Psaltic Liturgy*), Martin Negrea (*Requiem*), D. G. Kiriac (*Psaltic Liturgy*), Theodor Teodorescu (*Liturgy for Choir*). In the field of creation, the modal harmony is discovered by Musicescu,

for the folklore to be left unaltered. New methods of the folk-*melos* research are formulated and the Romanian school comes to join the other important national schools. For a systematic approach, the author divides the creation into four categories: vocal, instrumental, symphonic, and musical theatre. Each one is regarded from the point of view of the main categories: the choral and vocal song, the patriotic song, the creation inspired from folklore, the madrigal, the choral poem, the religious concert, and the vocal genus - the ballad and the oratorium. The instrumental creation includes the miniatures, the rhapsodies, the first sonata and quartets, but the symphonic production - national ouvertures, instrumental concerts, Enescu's symphonies - as well. The "vodevil" is not in fashion any more, having been replaced by the music-hall and the opera, represented by Ciprian Porumbescu and Eduard Caudella. The first musical reviews are recorded in Bucharest, Iasi and Blaj, and the musical critics must have made their contribution to the cultural life emancipation.

From now on, the musicologist needs new compartmentation, the next volumes being dedicated to certain problems or creations. The VII-th volume is concerned with the vocal, choral - again branched out (patriotic, religious and inspired by folklore) -, and symphonic and vocal creation, and with the composers in the field: Gavriil Musicescu, D. G. Kiriac, Eusebie Mandicevschi, Gheorghe Dima, Iacob Muresianu, Teodor Teodorescu, Gavriil Galinescu, Timotei Popovici, Ioan Bohociu, Gheorghe Cucu, Alexandru Zirra, Ion Vidu, Augustin Bena, Mihail Jora, Sabin Dragoi, and others.

The VIII-th volume is a listing of the symphonic and cameral creations before Enescu, of the Castaldi's school, dominated by a pragmatic concept, and of some Western, impressionist, neoclassicist influences and of the national schools. The composers that are considered belong to the "old" generation (Eduard Caudella, Constantin Dumitrescu) but also include representatives of the young generation that has been trained in the West: I. N. Ottescu, Alfre Alessandrescu, Stan Golestan, Mihail Jora, Alexandru Zirra, Dimitrie Cuclin, Enrico Mezzeti, Gavriil Galinescu, Ioan Bohociu and others. A special place belongs to the early creation of George Enescu: *Poema Romana*, *The third Symphony*, *Praeludium in fa diez minor*, *The third Suite for Piano*.

The last volume is a high quality investigation and analysis of the opera, music-hall and ballet creation. The representative figures in the field are: Eduard Caudella, Tudor Flondor, Alexis Catargi, Iosif Paschill, George Cosmovici, Theodor Fuchs, I. N. Ottescu, Alexandru Zirra, Tiberiu Brediceanu, Dinitrie Cuclin and others.

The last volumes are dedicated to the musical creation, so the V-th contains the data of the musical life, and the VI-th is reserved for musical thinking. Finally, the musical life will be coordinated by the Romanian Composers Society, which organizes the symphonic series in Bucharest and in other big centres, and constitutes the basis of the National Opera in Cluj and of the musicians' syndicate. A specifically Romanian feature is found in all creations, based on local tradition and history. Together with these organized forms of musical life, other musical societies, following the example of the choral society *Carmen*, conducted by D. G. Kiriac, and the metropolitan choir from Iasi, conducted by Musicescu, flourish in many places.

The volume that is concerned with musical thinking is a listing of the main musical reviews, of the musical pages of different issues of that time, of the main musical critics, of the great "fights" in the field of music, of the main studies of musical folklore and the early history of music, of the poetic reflection of music, the poets being sustainers of the evolution of music.

We have to emphasize the chronological tables of the Romanian music history, that complete each volume, and offer the basic elements of this branch of spiritual life. The bibliography is extremely vast and differs from one volume to the next.

A deep analysis of the early manuscripts helps us to define the complex personality of the author, a specialist of the field who draws on the knowledge of many other great figures of the domain: I. D. Petrescu, George Breazul, Gheorghe Ciobanu, Grigore Pantiru, etc.

Even if the author predicts an end of the *Chronicle* near 1920, the year of Romanian Composers Society and Romanian Opera outset, the temptation to overcome this limit was higher. Recently, Octavian Lazar Cosma printed a huge study of 600 pages, entitled "The Universe of the Romanian Music"¹⁰. Is this the

¹⁰ Cosma, O., *Universul muzicii romanesti*, Bucharest, Ed. muzicala, 1995.

X-th volume of the "Chronicle"¹¹? It resembles the V-th volume because it presents all the institutions of Romanian musical life in the last 50 years. The period is much more extended, and contains facts that are hard to understand or to appreciate; all the ideological changes, the crimes against culture, but the great figures that had the courage to stand firm against these, as well, are recorded: George Enescu, Mihail Jora, Ion Dumitrescu, and many others. To reconsider all the personalities that were artificially eliminated from the Romanian culture because of their resistance, and to remove the "dirt" that replaced the true values all these 50 years is a really difficult task, but professor Octavian Lazar Cosma can afford it, with his professional and moral competence, his scientific thoroughness and huge knowledge that is evident in all the "Chronicle of the Romanian Music" volumes. This work is an absolutely remarkable cultural event that maintains its place as a basic treatise of Romanian musicology and can offer very important data to the history of universal music.

¹¹ Vasile, V., "Cartea alba" a muzicii romanesti, in *Litere, Arte, Idei*, Bucharest, no. 14, April 8-th, 1996.