

5. ENESCU AT BĂLȚI: HISTORY AND CONTEMPORANEITY

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Abstract: *In the many musicological researches on the encyclopedic creation of the genius Enescu, a very important aspect – the mass distribution of the great violin art – is less reflected. The present investigation fills in this gap by describing the concertistic and charity activity that George Enescu carried out in Bălți in the interwar period. In Bălți, this phenomenon is valorized and George Enescu’s name is immortalized by being conferred to the Children’s Music School only after about 80 years, in 1994. From this moment on, a whole array of cultural and artistic and educational activities begins to unfold, the apex of which consists of three editions of the “George Enescu” Festival-Contest where students – musicians from the pre-university artistic education schools – as well as notorious personalities in the interpretative and pedagogical-artistic field from Moldova and Romania compete.*

Key words: *George Enescu, Festival – Contest, cultural and artistic activities, music school, Children’s Philharmonic*

1. Introduction

George Enescu’s outstanding personality calls for a deep and multilateral study. The complexity of this personality, the vast activity of the great Romanian music *maestro*, the special role he played in the cultural and musical development of the time and which is reflected in such a comprehensive manner in our nowadays musical life, are able to determine a special exigency regarding Enescu’s personality, creation and activity in the Bessarabian parts, especially in Bălți, where the great *maestro* lodged repeatedly during the interwar years, between 1918 and 1937. Nowadays, we have a vast factual material that reveals the charity and musical art propagation in the masses activity carried out by the genius Enescu. In the archives of Bălți and Chișinău, there are a number of selected documents and testimonies, which eloquently testify that George Enescu was not afraid to go on quite complicated tours, in unbeneficial material conditions. These are virtues that complete the musician’s portrait, enlightening the singularity of the Enescian genius. Although more and more contemporary researchers acknowledge in the Romanian creator a spirit of universal synthesis, George Enescu is known – first of all – for the primordial synthesis personality of the Romanian musical culture. As the writer Gala Galaction rightly said, for us, Enescu is a “national wealth” that expresses the Enescian artistic and illuminist activity for the autochthon art (Cozma, 1981). How do we nowadays perceive the artistic and illuminist legacy of the musician genius from a historical perspective?

If during the interwar years the citizens of Bălți needed concerts of valuable music in order to contribute to the aesthetic education of the great

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public, and if these artists were rare on the local stage then, nowadays, a total revival of those traditions fathered in the interwar period under the “stick” of the great genius, is needed in our whole modern culture.

2. Discussions

After the important metamorphoses that took place at the beginning of the twentieth century, in the 1990s (the Romanian Revolution, the fall of the Soviet Communist Empire), the great Bessarabian spirits increasingly focused on the real national values. In this context, in 1995, at the Bălți Children’s Music School principal’s initiative, Mr. Valeriu Tetelea, PhD, and by the decision of Bălți City Hall, the school was named after George Enescu. Mr Tetelea was inspired to choose the name of the genius following his doctoral studies in Iași, under the guidance of the great Ioan Pavalache, choir master, a distinguished personality of the Romanian choral culture in the second half of the twentieth century. In 1997, Master Pavalache was invited as a guest of honor at the inauguration of the school name – GEORGE ENESCU.



In the same period, factual data on the illuminist and artistic activity of the genius in Bălți were found in the archives of Bălți. George Enescu’s first visit to Chișinău with his famous concerts impressed the master so profoundly that it made him say that “the Bessarabian audience knew how to appreciate the true value of the symphonic concerts. To a large extent, the people there are cultivated. Our concerts thus achieved a great contrast and were appreciated well enough. Many parts have been performed additionally and repeated” (Dănilă, 2006).

At the same time, Enescu pleads for the necessity of founding a Conservatory and a symphonic orchestra in Chișinău. The Master asserts that: “For us, Bessarabia is a gem on all accounts and it is our duty to help the people awaken to the cultural and artistic life by all means, seeking the sympathy of our Bessarabian brothers and making them all the good they have been deprived of for so long” (Dănilă, 2006). “I came to love this country so much – was the master to confess to the same newspaper (March, 29) – that I will soon come back again to give concerts in Bălți, Soroca and wherever they would call me. I would be happy if the concert profits would be of help to any kind of charity” (Dănilă, 2006).

George Enescu, the famous musician of the epoch arrives in Bălți on the 12th of April, 1918, giving a concert in the “Modern” Cultural Hall. From the local press of those times, we learn that George Enescu gave away all profits for

cultural purposes, the “George Enescu” *Cultural Society* and the *Reading House* being thus founded in Bălți. Therefore, on the 15th of August, 1918, in Bălți is founded the *George Enescu Cultural Society*, which was voted by statute, and the election of an administration committee for the 20000 lei left by Enescu after his April concert. The *George Enescu Society* of Bălți was proposing an activity worthy of a ministry.

The second time, George Enescu came to Bălți on the 25th of May, 1923. Accompanied by the talented pianist Nicolae Caravia, he gave an exceptional concert at the *Unirea* theater. On the day of the recital, the great master visited the Library of the Society bearing his name, where he left several book volumes. The president of the Society, Mr. Buzenschi, PhD, thanked him warmly in the name of the townspeople. Also hosted by Mr. St. Sadovici, the chairman of the interim committee of the city, at nine o'clock in the evening, in a hall that became too small, the famous artist fascinated the audience. Also during this period, G. Enescu becomes acquainted with the violin class of the music school of Bălți, where he writes in the guest book: “My sincere congratulations to the professor of violin, Beno Echerling, for his exceptional method, and the righteousness and the attitude of his worthy of praise students” (Dănilă, 2006).

The researched archives also reveal the fact that George Enescu gave concerts in Bălți in 1927 (March, 13-14), 1932 (May, 24) and in 1937, when on the 24th of November, at the Pămînteni railway station, the famous composer and musician was welcomed with ovations by the intellectuals Romanian, led by Mihail Cucer, the city mayor, who gave his best to entertain the honorable guest. At a *Scala* Theater concert, the master was honored by the *Enescu Society* at the Military Circle, where the General Bengliu, commander of division, the county prefect Em Catelly, the director of “Ion Creangă” high school and the first vice-president of the company, M. Văluță, the Dean of the Law Office Ioan Pascu and others delivered warm and emotional speeches. As the local press mentioned, the first years after the union of 1918, when master Enescu, brilliant emissary of the Romanian pathos, conquered the heart of Bessarabia, were evoked.

These historical chronicles, related to the cultural-artistic and the educational life of Bălți, convinced the pedagogical staff members of *George Enescu Music School* of Bălți to perpetuate and eternalize the name of the great genius. Starting with 2006, at the celebration of the 125th anniversary of George Enescu’s birthday, at the Bălți Music School was inaugurated and held the first edition of the *George Enescu Young Musicians National Festival-Contest*, in collaboration with the Union of Composers and Musicologists from Moldavia.

The “George Enescu” Festival-Contest became a tradition, taking place every 5 years, with the occasion of the brilliant composer’s anniversary. At the 2nd edition of 2011, this great event was sponsored by the famous German violinist Tanya Becker, who performed in Bălți in 2010. The main objective of this Festival-Contest (3 editions) was the selection and valorisation of young violinists and pianists enrolled at the art education establishments from Northern

Moldova and included interpretative competitions between violinists and pianists from the music/art schools from the North of the Republic of Moldova.



All these contests have been evaluated and judged by high-profile specialists in the musical and artistic field from Romania and the Republic of Moldova.



Ist edition, 2006



IInd edition, 2011



IIIrd edition, 2016

In the same context of the professional interpretative art exploitation, the activity of the Children's Philharmonic on behalf of *George Enescu* was formalized in Bălți, at the *Alecu Russo* University, at the Faculty of Sciences of Education, Psychology and Arts, and at the Arts and Artistic Education Department (*extract from minutes no. 16 of the Bălți State University "Alecu Russo" meeting from the 25th of June, 2014*). *George Enescu* Children's Philharmonic was founded in 1999, at a turning point in the history of the Republic of Moldova, when the regaining of state independence just began, when in every field of human activity culture became an imperative, and when the old ideological organizations were destroyed, but nothing was created in their place. This gap easily began to be covered by the numerous discos with a low-value repertoire and video-salons.



The highest goal of the *George Enescu Children's Philharmonic* became not the art itself, not the education/cultivation of the young individual as something special, but the establishment of the HUMAN-ART relationship within a diversity of cultural and artistic actions. The pupils from the pre-university education establishments in Bălți, as well as the students from all USARB faculties, have a high-level creative artistic potential, expanding in all artistic fields. The *George Enescu Children's Philharmonic* has become an opportunity, a possibility to achieve this potential. Within the activity of the *George Enescu Children's Philharmonic*, partnership is a second dimension, as it has become possible to extend the activity beyond university and municipality – through the participation and competition of the pupils enrolled at the artistic education schools from the Northern localities of the Republic of Moldova.

The first concert of the *George Enescu Children's Philharmonic* was organized in 1999 by the teaching staff of the Faculty of Music and Musical Pedagogy, USARB in collaboration with the artistic education schools of Bălți municipality, entitled “We go carol-singing, we go carol-singing”. Both the artists of this musical spectacle and its public were students at the pre-university institutions in Bălți. Traditionally, these thematic spectacles/concerts were held every month (from September to June) and, in time, they have expanded artistically with the participation of classical and folk music artists/interpreters from both our country and abroad.



Today, the *Philharmonic* has in its track record more than 300 concerts given by the talented students from Bălți Music/Art Schools, the “Jakobsplatz” Symphony Orchestra of the Munich Philharmonic (Germany), the “Remember Enescu Society”, Bucharest (Romania), the Polish House (Bucharest), the “Serghei Lunchevici” Philharmonic Orchestra of Chișinău, the Organ Hall of Chișinău, the Iași Philharmonic, Romania, the State Conservatory of Kiev (Ukraine), the “P. Ceaikovski” Conservatory of Moscow (Russia), the “George Enescu” State University of Iași (Romania), the music/art high schools of Chișinău, and the Academy of Music, Theater and Fine Arts of Chișinău.

Every year, within the *George Enescu Children's Philharmonic*, at the “Alec Russo” State University, Polivalent Hall, Concert Hall of the IInd Block, during the “Mărțișor” International Festival days, various academic music concerts of high quality given by interpreters from the country and abroad and whose audience is made up of University students and Bălți pre-university education institution pupils are held. One of the objectives of this festival within the *Philharmonic* of Bălți is to valorize George Enescu's creation.

In addition to the Children's *Philharmonic*, there is also the methodical committee that organizes master classes every semester, by selecting the best

performing musicians and pedagogues from the artistic education institutions of Moldova, Romania, Italy, Russia, and France. Through its activity at the USARB, in these 18 years, the *Children's Philharmonic* has become a methodological, scientific and creative center recognized nationally and internationally. The strategic development plan of the USARB Childrens' Philharmonic is an imperative of the higher education reform process, which provides the mechanism needed to plan and carry out the modernizing life process through and for culture. The strategy provides the basis for organizing the activity of cultivating the scholarly students of the university and the community environment of the Northern Area of the Republic of Moldova.

For the elaboration of the strategy, an ample analysis of the cultural and artistic conditions and offers in the university environment, of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, was carried out within the local/national social and economic context, but also in terms of globalization and integration in the European Union. The representative members of the USARB teaching staff were consulted regarding the complementarity, the synergy in accordance with institutional and national regulatory acts in the field of education and culture policies, especially in that of higher education.

George Enescu Childrens' Philharmonic aims to be a complementary substructure of the "Alec Russo" State University of Bălți, which has been established out of the need to carry out a society general culture complementary program. For 15 years, and currently, on a monthly basis, Childrens' Philharmonic shall propose a cycle of activities and actions meant to educate, cultivate, and spiritualize students and future teachers, intellectuals, who will find their place in the life of modern society under its various aspects, especially the educational and cultural one.

The actions of the *Children's Philharmonic* offers an enhanced chance to faculty graduates regardless of their profile; facing the European life and culture, they shall honor their demands, thanks to the development degree of their personal culture and that of the community they represent. Several universities from Germany, France, U.S.A., and England practice this activity of raising the general culture level regardless of the type of faculty, through specific actions outside the curricula. As a university substructure, the concept of the *George Enescu* Children's Philharmonic ensures a special receptivity for the national/universal culture, but also for the new, authentic cultural and artistic phenomenon. By participating in the actions of the *Children's Philharmonic*, both graduates and the entire community are winners. The university *Children's Philharmonic* offers cultivation opportunities and equal chances of affirmation in the cultural and artistic field for students of all faculties and pupils enrolled at pre-university education institutions from the Northern area.



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3. Results

Motto: “Man is not born cultivated, but becomes so” (Alexandru Tănase)

Mission: national and universal culture values – the value of the Self for each pupil, student and graduate of the “Alecă Russo” USARB.

Vision: The *George Enescu* Childrens’ Philharmonic (USARB) – an influential factor in changing the quality of cultural life in the Northern Area of the Republic of Moldova.

The *George Enescu* Childrens’ Philharmonic (USARB) acts taking into consideration the following **strategic directions and objectives:**

I. Developing the organizational culture by:

- promoting and implementing the concept of *Strategic Planning for the cultural sector organizations* in all regulatory acts of the *Childrens’ Philharmonic* activity;
- monitoring the Children’s Philharmonic through the WEB page on the university SITE;
- the legal registration of the organization;
- self-assessment and assessment of the staff activity;
- creating an archive of cultural and artistic materials accumulated in the actions of the Children’s Philharmonic.

II. Organizing the cultural and artistic life in the university space by:

- achieving for the “Alecă Russo” State University of Bălți, as well as for its graduates, besides the status of didactic training, professional, and scientific research center, attributes of a main center of education, civilization and culture of the socio-economic community of the Northern area of the Republic of Moldova;
- conceptualizing and implementing the optional general culture curricula for students and approving a cultural agenda with a traditional status for the USARB;
- passing on the artistic and cultural heritage, the traditions and the local specifics of these domains to the next generations;
- promoting novelty and experimentation as a means of developing the arts, as a generator of artistic and cultural phenomena in the university environment and the entire community;
- increasing the number of human resources involved in the formation/self-education of the general culture within the collegiate environment;
- offering and supporting cultural and educational programs in all cultural and artistic fields in the university and community lyceum environment of the Northern Area of the Republic of Moldova through cultural volunteering movement, based on opportunity, creativity, efficiency, and performance criteria.

The *George Enescu* Childrens’ Philharmonic would also be responsible for supporting and holding musicology and musical pedagogy festivals, competitions, and symposiums. After three *George Enescu* National Festival-Contests, the functioning of the *George Enescu* Childrens’ Philharmonic within which the possible potential on the both banks of the Prut, between the

promotion of young musicians, pianists and violinists enrolled at the music/art schools of the Republic of Moldova through the recognition and the final imposition of the greatest Romanian musician, obliges the artistic intellectuals of Bălți not to stop at valorizing and eternalizing the great name. In the spring of 2017, inside the premises of the *George Enescu* Childrens' Music School the Museum, which valorized the multitude of factual materials on the eternalization of the name of the Romanian music Genius, was opened and inaugurated.



4. Conclusions

That is why we consider that, in parallel to the old efforts – School, Festivals, Museum – it is worth investigating new forms of stimulating the general interest towards the Genius of the Romanian music: one of the most effective and imperiously needed being that of founding of the *George Enescu* Childrens' Philharmonic.

George Enescu remains the “god Ianus” of the entire Romanian musical culture, who looked with a rare clear sightedness at the most distant and hidden nooks of the ancient national treasure, and with the other eye darted the future of the autochthon music school, suggesting the path to universality to the generations that shall follow him.

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