

George Enescu In The American Life *

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The Romanian - American relations have played a special part within the general international relationships of modern Romania. Far from being limited to the economic, political, diplomatic or strategic fields, these ever-developing relations are also due to culture, owing to the fact that aesthetic affinities and tastes can quickly cross all borders, removing prejudices and establishing close links among nations. A rewarding example is provided by music and especially by George Enescu, one of its highest summits, who acted for nearly half a century through his own ways and means as a genuine envoy of the Romanian spirit not only throughout Europe, but also in America.

Unlike Europe, which had become familiar with Enescu's artistic genius since the turn of the century, America responded to it with some explainable delay due to the special historical circumstances, though it has done it steadily and thoroughly ever since.

George Enescu was indirectly introduced to the American public in the first decades of this century through a couple of short portraits written by Herbert Peyser (1912) and Minnie Tracey (1916) respectively, both of them sufficiently expressive and accurate. As a composer, several of his early pieces had already been played. His début to American audiences seems to have taken place in 1902 (i.e. nine years earlier than most biographers tend to consider), when the conductor Longy played his piece, *the Romanian Poem*, before the audience at the Boston Orchestra Club.

Later on, several famous musicians such as Gustav Mahler, Frederick Stock, Leopold Stokowski and Walter Demrosch made known to and appreciated by the Americans some other musical pieces, among which *The First Suite for the Orchestra*, *the Dixtuorum*, and *the First Symphony in E flat* successively in New York, Chicago and Philadelphia during the year 1911.

In 1912 the two *Romanian Rhapsodies* were added to the repertoire, which increased the composer's fame in record time. Played initially in Boston, New York and Washington, *the Rhapsodies* were included in the repertoire of the Chicago Philharmonic

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Orchestra the next year and during the year 1914 they were performed for the first or second time in other American musical centres: Cincinnati (Ohio), Utica, Lockport and Buffalo (New York), Minneapolis, Chicago, Kansas City etc. As regards authorized criticism, important for this early stage are the remarks of the Philadelphia "Public Ledger" music critic who wrote after hearing *The First String Quartet* op.22: "...it is probably the most unusual piece of this kind I have ever heard... It sounds 30 or 40 years ahead of the most modern works written for such a group". Such a remark spread in a centre renowned for its artistic exactness, tradition and taste is an evidence of America's primacy over Europe in recognizing Enescu's musical priorities, particularly the superiority of the composer over the virtuoso (both performer and conductor) and over the teacher.

Leaving such classifications for posterity to draw and settle, Enescu was not indifferent to America's appreciation of the componistic side of his personality. Years later he confessed: "I was highly thankful to be welcomed to America first as a composer and a conductor and then as a violinist. I was awarded the quality of composer above all others, which meant to me the ultimate satisfaction...". The extent of his gratitude was rendered in deeds, rather than in words, since his numerous tours overseas during a span of about three decades, in spite of all hindrances created by distances, means of transport, changes of environment and the failing of his health, were to reward the warmth and enthusiasm of both the music lovers and the music critics shown for his work and artistic mastery. Late in life he made a final pathetic statement of "high esteem and admiration for the United States". The American period of his artistic biography bears the stamp of uniqueness and originality as well as continuous improvement when considered as a whole.

Enescu first sailed the Atlantic in December 1922, responding to the invitation of the Philadelphia Philharmonic Orchestra for a tour of several North American cities. After making a brilliant debut in New York in the evening of January 2, 1923 with a programme including two of his own works (*The Second Romanian Rhapsody* and *The First Symphony*) he appeared during the winter season as a conductor or a violinist in Philadelphia, Washington, Baltimore, Harrisburgh, Pottsville, Boston, Detroit and Cleveland. The renowned "The New York Times" praised him after his very first performance as a stylistically independent modern composer avoiding both "ultramodernism" and the current influence prevalent in contemporary France and hailed as "a superman of music" or "one of the distinguished musicians of our time", every new concert turned him into a favourite topic with commentators in their arduous endeavour at classifying his artistic gifts. At the same time the national feeling strongly revitalized by his presence among the USA-Romanian groups and communities at a time when the motherland was striving hard to preserve and consolidate its territorial *status-quo* caused many spontaneous manifestations of sympathy and solidarity with the national ideal, bringing into strong relief art's educative powers. Activated by a firm, though unobtrusive patriotic pride and deeply rooted into the folk and educated Romanian artistic background whose aspiration toward universality Enescu helped forward, he confessed his artistic credo after the series of American tours of 1923 and 1929: "When seeing that something is being done here (in America) for my country, I tend to forget the meaning of fatigue. I have unconditionally devoted my entire life to art, whereas my art belongs to the whole world. But the world must know what my country

is really like. Wherever I may be I never forget that this is my foremost duty". It was with this credo that Enescu travelled all over the vast North-American continent, from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from Florida to Canada, adding every year other places and other unforgettable moments to his artistic itinerary: Pittsfield (famous for its chamber music festivals), Springfield and Cambridge (where, after a 1924 recital, he was to return during the years 1928-1930 with academic contracts with the famous Harvard University), New Haven, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Los Angeles, San Francisco (where, in 1925, he met Yehudi Menuhin, his future disciple and friend), Portland, Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal, Quebec, Rochester, Miami etc., a list of places which may suggest, rather than convey, the extent of his extraordinary work.

After a three years' self-imposed interruption of overseas travel (between 1933 and 1936) in which Enescu completed *Oedipus*, "the work of his life", whose première was performed by the Paris Opera in March 1936, he resumed his series of American tours. His steady relationship with the American musical life, with Yehudi Menuhin particularly, had gained new traits to his personality and an increase in popularity. Yehudi Menuhin confessed that "Enescu meant for me both the hand of Providence that was to sustain me and the inspiration that had raised me off the ground".

America offered the artist much greater opportunities of making Romanian music known, in comparison to Europe, since, as a guest conductor of several famous symphony orchestras he could include an increased number of musical repertory works in his concerts. The climax of his endeavours took place in May 1939 during the musical festivals at the New York World Fair. He conducted two memorable concerts in Romania's pavilion, whose programmes included works by Romanian composers of various generations and trends: Alfred Alessandrescu, Mihail Jora, Sabin Drăgoi, Ionel Perlea, Stan Golestan, Theodor Rogalski, Marcel Mihalovici, Dinu Lipatti, Ion Nonna Otescu and, naturally, George Enescu himself. The two Romanian concerts he conducted, following the previous promotions he made in his undifatiguable activity, revealed the power and maturity of the Romanian musical school to a larger audience. On this occasion, Olin Downes, the *New York Times* reputed music critic re-affirmed his admiration for Enescu's powerful personality, "doubtless one of the greatest musicians of our times, whose *First Rhapsody*, which had graced the end of the programme was a symbol of Romania's contribution to the world artistic thesaurus."

After a longer interruption, of seven years, due to the outbreak of World War II, the great Romanian musician's series of overseas tours was resumed in the autumn of 1946. Doubtlessly, Enescu's connections and fame, in the New World must have given great hopes to the Romanian political and diplomatic circles in their endeavour to form a favourable trend in international public opinion aiming at obtaining Romania the cobelligerent rather than the defeated nation status at the pending Peace Conference. Despite his avowed indifference to politics, the artists met the high national demands, which drew him closer to L.J. Paderewski, another great musician and patriot. Enescu endeavoured to alleviate the suffering inflicted by the war, by the burden of the "liberation" as well as by the draught plaguing Romania, by a work of charity substantiated in a series of New York recitals during the spring of 1947, the funds thus raised being offered to the aid of undernourished children back home.

His fame as composer, conductor, violonist and pianist gained during his many American tours, as well as that of a teacher of Yehudi Menuhin and other leading names

in the musical life of the age, made several American organizers of artistic training contact Enescu for academic work, to which the Romanian artist was far from agreeable. Nonetheless in the winter of 1948, two decades after the Harvard University courses of lectures, Enescu was employed on the staff of the future Academy of Music "Mannes School of Music" in New York, where he was to give "lectures in performing" to advanced performers. The master's high gifts were subordinated to his credo, imparted unobtrusively to his students and imprinted in their memory as revealed by Yehudi Menuhin's famous statement: "To Enescu music was not a trade, but his very life".

On January 21, 1950 the American musical world paid homage to the Romanian artist in the celebrated Carnegie Hall in New York on the 60th anniversary of his first public appearance. Holding the "lion's share" in the concert, in the words of a music critic, Enescu was also paid homage to by Yehudi Menuhin and Ionel Perlea, the latter conducting the Philadelphia Philharmonic. The concert showed his fourfold aspect, namely as composer, violonist, pianist and conductor, in which he "reminded the audience" as music criticism noted, "that he is still an unsurpassable master". Unfortunately that artistic and sentimental manifestation was to be his last appearance in an American concert hall. The failing health of his last years forced him to a gradual diminishing of and eventually to total renunciation to all physically demanding activities, having to be content with the unimpaired command over his spiritual power which the progress of his disease left unaffected until his death, on May 4, 1955. It was not merely the end a man's lifetime, but of one entirely devoted to music, which, despite the depressing reflections of its epilogue, was relevant in each and every moment of the grandeur of genuine and the devotion and suffering of the apostle.

America, to which the great musician was artistically and spiritually nearly as close as to his own country, regretted his extinction and paid homage to his memory by a wide range of manifestations, among which are to be mentioned the consummate memoirs signed by his former partners, admirers and disciples (Yehudi Menuhin, Pablo Casals, Frank Milburn Jr., Helen L. Kaufmann, Jacques Malkin, Helen Aroff, Ignace Strassfogel etc.), the foundation of the "George Enescu" Society with easily understandable purposes, the inclusion of his best-known works in the programmes or the permanent repertoires of some world-famous symphony orchestras as well as the encouragement of scientific or academic research in universities and colleges of the American "affinities" of his artistic personality.

In the memory of the world and of America particularly, George Enescu has been and will always be an embodiment of the Romanian artistic genius and spirit at its most brilliant and purest. Whether the posterity's viewpoint be either of "Romanian master of the world music", in Georges Auric's words, or "creator of the Romanian symphony" according to Fernand Lamy, this truth is self-evident that his long American experience besides his vast European one, enabled Enescu to ensure Romanian music the starting-points for future development and to discover its own roads into universality.

George Enescu a fost făcut cunoscut publicului american, la început, prin intermediul portretelor făcute de Herbert Peyser (1912) și Minnie Tracey (1916), apoi - datorită unor muzicieni ca Gustav Mahler, Frederick Stock, Leopold Stokovski și Walter Demirosh - prin lucrări ca *Suita I pentru orchestră, Dixtuorul, Simfonia I în Mi b major*.

Cântate pentru prima oară în America în 1912, cele două *Rapsodii* l-au făcut celebru, astfel încât - după cum el însuși remarca, - a fost cunoscut mai întâi în calitate de compozitor și apoi ca violonist.

A făcut numeroase turnee în America, în timpul cărora a promovat neîncetat valorile românești. În mai 1939, în cadrul Târgului Internațional de la New York, a dirijat în pavilionul României, două remarcabile concerte cu lucrări de mari compozitori români.

În 21 ianuarie 1950 a fost sărbătorită a 60-a aniversare a primei apariții publice a lui Enescu, la Carnegie Hall din New York, urmată de omagiile aduse de Yehudi Menuhin și Ionel Perlea.

În lumea americană, Enescu va constitui întotdeauna întruchiparea cea mai fidelă a geniului artistic românesc.

Iosif Naniescu - reprezentant de seamă al muzicii psaltice (I)

Vasile Vasile

În 1895 eminentul istoric moldovean, A.D. Xenopol, reținea pentru istoria culturii românești, marea realizare a contemporanului său, Gavriil Musicescu în următoarele fraze: "Toată această înălțare a muzicii noastre religioase, tot acest progres realizat pe cale artistică de noi care suntem destinați, oricât de mici am fi, a ține facla civilizației în orient, ar fi fost cu neputință, dacă Înalt Prea Sfinția Sa D.D. Naniescu, mitropolitul Moldovei și Sucevei, n-ar fi autorizat pe d-l Musicescu a face această însemnată înnoire în cântările slujbei Dumnezeiești. Venerabilul prelat, deși ajuns la o vârstă înaintată, deși și-a primit educația și și-a format caracterul în vremile în care soarele civilizației era ascuns de nouri pentru noi, totuși a înțeles, ca om inteligent, că trebuie să țină pasul cu cultura. Aici stă meritul oamenilor conducători. (...) După cum Înalt Prea Sfinția Sa a învoit ca picturile catedralei Mitropolitane să iasă din formele cele înguste (...) ale artei bizantine și a lăsat pe eminentul pictor, Tătărăscu, să împodobească zidurile bisericii cu figuri imprimate de idealul frumosului, astfel acuma pune încununarea operei sale, Mitropolia din Iași, din punct de vedere artistic, creând un cor, care să satisfacă în totul cerințele muzicii moderne".¹

Dacă ar fi fost numai acest sprijin direct, în cadrul unor confruntări acerbe care trebuiau să înfrunte canoanele ecumenice privind prezența femeilor în cultul religios ("mulier taceat în eclesia"), sprijin al debutului răsunător al muzicii corale religioase mixte românești în catedrala mitropolitană ieșeană, dacă ar fi fost, deci, numai acesta, înaltul ierarh și-ar fi asigurat un binemeritat loc în istoria muzicii românești.

Dar mitropolitul ieșean nu reprezintă pentru muzica românească numai atât, ci rămâne una din personalitățile de primă mărime a secolului său, cu o activitate ce se extinde și în domeniul interpretativ și pedagogic, și în cel al creației.

Înainte de a contura aceste direcții ale activității lui, mai puțin cunoscute, vom încerca să creionăm evoluția personalității sale, insistând îndeosebi asupra antecedentelor muzicale.