

<b>JAZZ</b>
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## JAZZ IN ROMANIA

### Closings and openings – before and after 1989

The Romanian jazz domain has always been - as the title points to - marked by two opposed tendencies, that is openings and closings, continuity and discontinuity in all its directions: Education, Clubs, Festivals, Literature, Mass-media, Production, Management, Musicians.

In Romania, the jazz activity had a good start, recording progressive openings that lasted for more than fifteen years. In 1926 was founded the first jazz group (The Hot Chaps) that represented itself mostly through direct radio broadcastings. First the jazz was spread in Romania owing to imported gramophone discs, to radio and to some foreign bands that gave concerts here. Soon improvising instrumentalists, then groups and orchestras based on drive, swing and show elements will appear and impose themselves. During the WWII the jazz activity diminishes, but after 1944 the jazz wave rises up, alas, for a short period of time. Yet, individual talents were born and grew up permanently. Many of them activate as pop music singers and/or players.

The communist regime was not fond of the term jazz itself or of the jazz activity in itself, and, at the extreme, especially during the 1950s. These were considered dangerous for the individual mind and the national integrity. Under the mask of pop music, the Electrecord orchestra (large band of the state records printing house) will not just record jazz on disks but will also play, even on occasions like the Youth' festival in Moscow (1953). Under the same umbrella provided by pop music will also activate the Radiotelevision's Big Band (since 1949) of course performing proper jazz. Only in 1964 one can speak of real jazzistic openings. The first jazz club is launched now in Bucharest, and other jazz clubs will be opened in some other Romanian towns. In the same year, jazz programs were broadcast on the National Radio Station. In 1969, in Ploiesti, the first national jazz festival was produced, lasting for three editions. The national festival in Sibiu dates back from 1974 and will become from 1978 international. And a few other events will come out: issues of records and books (the jazz dictionary included), festivals and concerts.

In 1990 the Romanian Jazz Association is founded and in 1992-1995 the most important jazz festival are organised and held in Bucharest. Giants of the international jazz and blues are our guests. After 1995, the economic situation is hitting the jazz activity very hard. Only private clubs that appeared after 1990 can

keep up with modern standards and needs, hosting live performances, which keep alive the taste for jazz of fans and jazz musicians. The private clubs are today the main supporting source for many instrument players and a generous springboard for the newcomers.

## 1. Education

Many valuable jazz musicians in Romania have been studying jazz on their own since they graduated their classical studies.

The first jazz school in Romania was founded by the pianist, composer, teacher Edmond Deda in Bucharest as early as 1941 (until 1948). He himself had studied jazz at "The Billy Mayerl School of Modern Syncopation" in London in 1938 and 1939.

Elements of jazz were taught occasionally to various classes of pop music in art schools in our capital and in the country. The method is being applied nowadays, too. Within an official organised framework, jazz has been studied at the Art School in Bucharest since 1985 in a course which was initiated and coordinated by the pianist and composer Marius Popp and since 1990 also at the Academy of Music in Bucharest by Mircea Tiberian (instruments) and Florian Lungu (history). Since 1992, jazz has been studied at the Academy of Music in Iassy under the leadership of Romeo Cosma (instruments) and Alex Vasiliu (history). For many years, in Iassy, jazz has been taught within a course or club at the Students' Cultural House by the same Romeo Cosma – pianist, composer, and teacher. Since 1998, a course of jazz was on at the Academy of Music in Cluj too, with the same musicians teaching it (Mircea Tiberian and Florian Lungu), but its activity was interrupted (hopefully only for a short time) because of the lack of financial funds.

In connection with the higher musical jazz education in Romania one should not forget a very sad thing that happened during the 1960's and 1970's and that was and still is difficult to be understood by the younger generation: two of the brightest Romanian jazz musicians were expelled from the Academy of Music – Eugen Ciceu, who then left the country and Richard Oschanitzky, who, at the age of 40 left this world..., leaving behind a very rich work in all music styles, including film music (for over 40 films) and some valuable recordings.

## 2. Clubs

Before 1964 only in the radio and in some special restaurants one could play and listen to jazz.

Also between 1964 and 1990 there were jazz clubs with a more or less steady activity, in which there were weekly lectures and examples on the history and aesthetics of jazz. There were though very rare concerts. After 1990, those lectures disappeared almost completely. They were replaced by live concerts in clubs and bars.

Before 1989, certain clubs came in the foreground through their jazz activity: for example the ones in Bucharest, Cluj, Sibiu, Brasov, Iassy, Timisoara, Constanta.

After 1990 – the clubs in Bucharest (7), Cluj (2), Brasov (2), Timisoara (2), Iassy, Constanta have got leadership in the country.

Speaking of clubs, I would like to mention the fact that one of the greatest jazz clubs in US, the one in Hollywood Catalina Bar&Grill is owned by a family of Romanian immigrants since 1988.

### 3. Festivals

The first Romanian Jazz Festival took place in Ploiesti – three editions: 1969, 1970, 1971, with Romanian bands. After a three-year break, the festival was resumed in Sibiu. Since 1980 the festival in Sibiu became international due to the participation of the band Traditional Jazz Studio – Praga. For ten editions (1978 – 1988) there was also a contest show with prizes for freshly released bands. The festival in Sibiu was cancelled in 1996 and 1999.

Since 1978, another jazz festival was organised in Brasov, too. During the first twelve years ten editions took place. Then it was interrupted because of financial reasons (1995-1998) and was resumed in 1999.

Since 1980 there has been a summer jazz festival in the youth seaside resort Costinesti (on the Black Sea coast).

During the last 2 decades in many Romanian towns, festivals have been organised with interruptions (out of which some have disappeared) – Cluj (with a jazz contest dedicated to youngsters), Iassy, Timisoara, Satu Mare, Galati (composition contest for a while).

Between 1992-1995 a jazz festival was organized in Bucharest. The 1992 edition also had a contest section for the bands of Academies of Music (Russia – the first prize, Germany, Moldavia, Bulgaria and Romania). The 1993, 1994, 1995 editions benefited from the presence of the most important foreign names: John McLaughlin Free Spirits, Bob Berg Quartet, Steve Coleman Five Elements, Joe Zawinul Syndicate, Les McCann Group, Paquito D’Rivera Quintet, Billy Cobham Band, Mike Stern Trio.

In 1995 I organised a blues festival, too, starring John Mayall Bluesbreakers.

In 1993, in Bucharest, there was a jazz festival entitled Camel Jazz Alive of a most valuable participation: Chick Corea solo, Airtro Moreira and Flora Purim, Fourth World, Barry Altschul Band with Sam Rivers, James Blod Ulmer.

In 1988 and 1999 the Positif Agency from Turkey organised in Bucharest a blues festival staging only American musicians.

Most of the participation in Romanian concerts and festivals were supported by the foreign embassies and foreign cultural centres in Romania. The last editions of the Jazz Festival in Sibiu (1997, 1998) and Bucharest (1999) were held exclusively owing to their support.

#### 4. Literature

The first cultural magazine in Romania in which a series of articles on jazz was published is "Tribuna" (The Tribune) Cluj. In 1965 in this magazine an article was published by George Sbarcea entitled "Jazz – a story with Blacks" (which was revised and published in volume nine years later).

Here is a list of books on jazz issued in Romania:

Louis Armstrong – *SATCHMO - My Life in New Orleans* (1966)

Andre Hodeir – *Hommes et problemes du jazz* (1976)

Mihai Berindei – *A dictionary of jazz* (1976)

Virgil Mihaiu – *Cuția de rezonanță* (The resonance box) (1985)

Virgil Mihaiu – *Jazzorelief* (1993)

Adrian Andries – *A Dictionary of Jazz* (foreign musicians) (1998)

#### **Mass-media**

As early as March 1965, a lot of jazz articles were published in many cultural magazines: "Secolul XX" (20th Century), "Săptămâna Culturală a Capitalei", "Flacăra", "Transilvania", "Contemporanul", "Steaua", "Cronica", "România Literară", "Azi" ("Spectacolul muzicii" - 1996 and 1997).

After 1990 some others could be added: "Melos", "Star", "Acum" (which disappeared, meanwhile) or "Musical Report & Stage Pass" (which have come out more recently).

Since 1990 the magazine "Actualitatea muzicală" (Music Actuality) of the Association of Romanian Composers and Musicologists (UCMR) has had a constant heading written by myself and also has offered yearly awards including one for jazz activities.

Here are some daily newspapers too, which published articles on jazz: "Cronica Română" (Romanian Chronicle) – weekly, "România Liberă" and "Ziua" – from time to time.

Within the last weeks, the weekly cultural newspaper "Observatorul Cultural" (Cultural Observer) started to publish jazz materials, written by me, too.

The radio station broadcasting the most numerous jazz programs is Radio Bucharest on all its five channels: News, Culture, Music, Youth and Bucharest Antenna. Local radio stations with jazz programs are also in Cluj, Iassy, Timișoara, Constanța and Brașov.

The only TV broadcasting with a permanent jazz program is TVR 1 (national station), but occasionally there are jazz recitals both on private TV stations and on local branches of the national ones.

The most well known jazz journalists in Romania are Florian Lungu, Virgil Mihaiu, Alex Vasiliu, Iosif Viehmann, Gyorgy Zsolt and myself.

Articles on Romanian jazz written by V. Mihaiu, Octavian Ursulescu and N. Ionescu were published abroad in special magazines.

We should not forget the jazz journalist and promoter Cornel Chiriac who held a jazz program on Radio Bucharest between 1964 and 1968 and who has

written the presentation of four jazz LP's and published a large study *Jazz – sources and meanings* in the magazine "20th Century" (March 1965). Afterwards, Cornel Chiriac immigrated to Germany and ran jazz and pop music programs at the Free Europe Radio channel, programs for which he received large recognition (as for instance from Willis Conover). He was mysteriously killed in 1975 in Munich.

Let us remember that the first journalist who send articles abroad to the magazine *Jazz Hot* in France, starting with number 4 in 1935, was a pianist and classical music composer Mihail Andricu.

## 5. Production

Whereas before 1989 in Romania there was only one music, production and publishing house state-owned (Electrecord), since 1990 several such companies have appeared, which also produced some jazz albums:

Intercont Music – Anca Parghel, Mircea Tiberian and Black Cat Blues Band

Casa Radio – Orient Express and Interzone Group

Eurostar – Jazz Festival Bucharest '93 and Jazz Festival Bucharest '94

Green Records – two albums with the group Jazz Unit and one album with Johnny Raducanu and Teodora Enache.

Soft Records – with George Baicea and "KUM" (two albums)

Of course, Electrecord has the richest and most valuable collection of specialised albums, such as the "Jazz Series" and "The History of Jazz" as well as "Portraits" and "Restitutio".

After 1990, Electrecord issued one jazz LP album of Marius Popp – "Flasnetarium".

Other different production houses have also released some albums of Romanian blues groups.

## 6. Agencies

Before 1989 the state impresario agency (OSTA, then ARIA), brought occasionally and with American aid prominent personalities such as Louis Armstrong, Dave Brubeck and Gerry Mulligan, Memphis Slim, Papa Bue, Kenny Ball, Dusko Goykovic, Lionel Hampton, Duke Ellington, Dizzy Gillespie, Art Blakey, Thelonious Monk, Ornette Coleman, Gary Burton, Elvin Jones, Charles Mingus, Sarah Vaughan, Randy Brecker, Charlie Mariano, Guido Manusardi, Friederich Gulda. (Not all of them were brought by the above-mentioned agency). After 1990, this institution, now called Artexim, has unfortunately given up jazz. Unfortunately, the show-business management in jazz became our weakest side.

Before 1989 many concerts were organised locally, in the capital and in the country by enthusiastic amateur promoters and club leaders. Of them, the most prominent were Nicolae Ionescu in Sibiu and Costinești, Roland Andrei in Galați, Iosif Viehmann in Cluj, Alexandru Șipa in Brașov, Costinești and Bucharest and Valerian Mareș in Bucharest. The latter, succeeded after 1990 in bringing to

Bucharest great names such as the ones mentioned at Camel Jazz Alive plus, in separate concerts, Larry Coryell (in 1993 together with Romanian musicians and in 1999 with his own band), The Bluesbrothers (in the same concert with Larry Coryell), Michel Petrucciani (solo), and again Chick Corea – this time with “Origin”.

The Sibiu festival can also boast with distinguished figures all through the years:

Milan Svoboda, Ganelin Trio, Gut-Markovici, Gunter Hampel, Jeane Lee, Emil Vicklicky, Csaba Deseo, Bela Szakcsi Lakatos, Zbigniew Namyslowski – twice, String Connection, Leonid Cijik, Simeon Sterev, Gunter Sommer, Cekasin Quartet, Jan Garbarek, Steve Grosman, Rudolf Dasek, Albert Mangelsdorf, Petras Vysniauskas, Martial Solal, Didier Lookwood, Joachim Kuhn, Klaus Ignatzek, Barbara Dennerlein. The Sibiu festival was organised after 1990 by Mihai Chiorean (1993,1994,1995) and by Titi Stoiculescu (1997,1998).

## 7. Musicians

### A. From Romania:

*Before 1945:* Gicu Koffer, Iulian Ghindă, Steve Bernard, Dinu Șerbănescu, Teodor Cosma, Bibi Alexandrescu, Norbert Schmidt, Petre Firulescu (pian), Marcu Albahary, Johnny Mirea, Marcel Süßmann, Eugen Levința, Ladislav Arany, Johnny “Chiorul” (saxofons), Adam Wendling, Fonea Socolov, Filia Berman, Sică Aronovici (trompet), Alexandru Klein (trombon), Leonard Grünbaum (guitar), Joe Reininger (violin), Hary Reininger, Sam Schmidt (double bas), Sandu Svetanovici (drums) and Dan Rădulescu (violin, banjo & duple bas).

*“The Sacred Monsters”:* Johnny Răducănu – c bass and p, Marius Popp – p, and not far from them: Miky Ampointan, Bebe Prisada, Alin Constanțiu – sax; Nicolae Farcaș, Cornel Meraru – tb; Nelu Marinescu – tp; Alexandru Avramovici – g; Titel Popovici, Andrei Colompar, Zoltan Boros, Radu Maltopol – p; Adrian Enescu - synth.; The Big Band Radio

*The middle generation :* Mircea Tiberian, Romeo Cosma, Harry Tavitian, Puiu Pascu – p; Garbis Dedeian, Liviu Butoi, Virgil Popovici, Marin Petrache Pechea – sax; Marian Toroimac, Titi Herescu, Tudi Zaharescu, Mihai Popovici, Lucian Păiș – dr; Mihai Porcișan – tb, Id; Eugen Csapai – cl; Ion Leonte, Bogdan Stegaru – tp; Jean Stoian, Marian Georgescu – g; Eugen Tegu, Dan Dimitriu, Virgil Popescu, Victor Miclăuș – gb; Johnny Bota – v & c bass; Bella Kamocsa – vc&g; Anca Parghel – p, vc and comp; Tony Kuhn – keyb; Sinners Quartet

*The younger generation:* Cristian Soleanu, Eddie Neumann – sax; Sorin Romanescu, Eugen Mihăescu, Ady Manolovici, Mircea Bunea, George Baicea – g; Emil Bazga – tp; Eugen Nichiteanu, Mirel Butoi, Lucian Maxim, Vadim Tichișan, Dinu Simon – dr; Pedro Negrescu, Vlaicu Golcea – c bass; Laurentiu Horja – g bass; Marta Hristea, Rudi Teianu, Berti Barbera – vc, Ionuț Baranga – c bass;

Marius Vernescu, Petrică Andrei, Lucian Ban, Daniela Nicolae – p; Jazz Unit Group

*The newcomers:* Florin Răducanu, Sorin Terinte, Cătălin Crețu, Alexandru Borșan – p; Gabriel Datcu – g; Sorin Petrescu – g bass; Marcela Buruian, Oana Severin, Ozana Barabancea, Maria Răducanu, Cristina Mihai – vc, Tudor Parghel, Vlad Popescu – dr; Ciprian Parghel – c bass; Rotary Cromatic jr. Big Band and Big Band “Gaia”

All our musicians in the first two categories and most of those in the third category have played on numerous European and American stages; both in the country and abroad they have played in concerts and in jam sessions with great names of European and American jazz and have even recorded with them.

According to the styles Romanian jazz musicians belong to the “mainstream”. There are a few exceptions, though: Harry Tavitian and Corneliu Stroe – blues and free; Alin Constanțiu and Cornel Meraru – Dixieland, too; Marius Popp, Mircea Tiberian, Cristi Soleanu, Eddie Neumann – jazz-rock, too; Orient Express Group – ethno jazz rock.

Let us not forget the generation of those who disappeared entirely, to whom I wish to pay my respects and express my gratitude and admiration: Emil Berindei – a.a.s.t. and Id; Sile Dinicu – p, Id and comp; Jean Ionescu – v and Id; Gerry Podgoreanu, Sile Vișan – ss, cl; Teodor Cosma – p, Id and comp; Alexandru Imre – cl, Id and sax; Dan Mândrila – sax, Id and comp; Eugen Ciceu – p, Id and comp; Costel Ulinici – c bass and Id; Rudolf Kalo – c bass; Nicolae Ionescu – promoter, journalist and manager of club and festival, leader of Vocal Jazz Quartet; Ion Tanoviceanu – promoter; Mihai Berindei – tp, tb, p, sax and promoter, journalist; Gabriel Mărgărint – p, Id and comp.

A very good area in the jazz field of our country is that of the blues groups (and jazz musicians as well), more or less original, some of them with ethno-autochthonous influence: Black Cat, Bega Blues Band, A.G.Weinberger Blues Machine, Nightlosers, Blues Convention, Harry Tavitian and the Blues Community, Red Roosters, Albiter Blues Company, Alex Andrieș and The Band, Blue Spirit, Blues Service.

Of course, the stylistic closings and openings, continuity and discontinuity of every musician have been and are conditioned by changing trends, partnership, interests, artistic and financial requirements and also to technical and musical possibilities.

The value of creations and personalities of Romanian jazz influenced many of our poets, novelists, painters, sculptors and choreographers.

In this short history of the Romanian jazz one should not forget the composers of classical music who used elements of jazz in many of their works and got involved in jazz activities in Romania by commenting and participating as jury members in several contests. One can mention here: Dumitru Capoianu, Pascal Benteoi, Dumitru Bughici, Cornel Țăranu.

## B. From the diaspora:

- Aura Urziceanu – vc; Dan Ionescu – g (*Canada*)

- Iancsi Korossy – p; Radu Goldiș – g; Cătălin Rotaru – c bass; Adrian

Ștefănescu – dr (*USA*)

- Peter Wertheimer – ts (*Israel*)

- Alexandru Bălănescu – v (*UK*)

- Florin Niculescu – v (*France*)

- Marian Petrescu, Ion Baciú jr., Doru Apreotesei, Cristian Colan – p

(*Sweden*)

- Mircea Stan – tb (*Finland*)

- Puiu Minda – dr (*Austria*)

- Eugen Gondi – dr (*Holland*)

- Ovidiu and Decebal Bădilă, Wolfgang Güttler – bass; Ștefan Berindei –

as; Nicolae Simion – ts; Paul Weiner, Adrian Neagu – p; Pupa Hromadka, Stelian

Andronic, Ioan Bontaș, Mihai Farkas, Adrian Ciceu, Coca Moraru, Bob Iosifescu –

dr (*Germany*)

- Tommy Beretzky – fl, sax (*Hungary*)

(As it is very difficult to come up with an exhaustive list, I apologise for

possible omission of certain names)

Such a list can honour any country's jazz, art and culture. Thus, we are

proud of the fact that Romania with its specific characteristics, with its musicians in

the country or in the Diaspora and their work can offer to the jazz world so many

valuable works.

If I were to use a symbol for the development of the whole jazz activity in

Romania, I would choose the Endless Column by the famous Romanian artist

Constantin Brancusi (illustrating the cover page). I think that that masterpiece, by

its superimposed modules, perfectly illustrates my presentation: the idea of

openings and closings in human creativity and in the history of jazz in Romania.

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