

# Romanian music masters: an outsider's catalogue of early 20<sup>th</sup> century

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We often get a new perspective on the familiar by the opinions of outsiders, by the interpretations of independent parties and of course through the illumination offered by the passage of time. I would like to summarize the principal scholars of Romanian music as seen by a Turkish musicologist in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Undoubtedly, most of these musicians are familiar to you, but then a few are probably not and maybe even forgotten at present. My summary is directly from a book published in 1937 on the music of the Balkans by the scholar Mahmut Ragıp Gazimihal. Of course most modern (for us) Romanian musicians were not even born when this book was written.

## Gazimihal

Mahmut Ragıp Gazimihal (1900-1961) was a prominent Turkish ethnomusicologist. He obtained his music education in Berlin and Paris during 1921-29. In Paris he worked with the famous teacher Eugene Borrel. After his return to Turkey, he taught at the Ankara State Conservatory, as well as at the Military Music Academy and other music institutions. He has later shifted his focus to music theory, musicology and folklore research and worked tirelessly in these areas. He is considered to be one of the first and the possibly the most significant musicologist of the Turkish Republic. Gazimihal made invaluable contributions to the study and cataloguing of folklore. He has published literally thousands of works on music, starting with articles in *Le Monde Musical* in the 1920s. He has studied regional customs, music history at large, studied sources of folk music, published guides, wrote biographies of major musicians, translations and published works on the history of musical and cultural interactions between Europe And Turkey. His knowledge in these areas seemed limitless.



Mahmut Ragıp Gazimihal (1900-1961), Turkish musicologist and music teacher. Gazimihal was a prolific researcher of folk music and history with a huge number of published research articles and numerous books to his credit.

One of his many books is on the history of the development of music in the Balkans. This was written in Turkish and published in 1937 in Istanbul under the title *Musical Movements in the Balkans*.<sup>1</sup> Almost a hundred pages in

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<sup>1</sup> Mahmut Ragıp Gazimihal (Köseihal), *Balkanlarda Musikî Hareketleri (Musical Movements in the Balkans)*, Nümune Matbaası, İstanbul, 1937, (386 pages).

it are dedicated to Romanian music: its origins and development, early and contemporary musicians, the establishment of music institutions, schools, educators, conservatories and cultural traditions, the state opera, vocal artists, the establishment of *Socetății Compozitorilor Români*, and the repositories of Romanian folk music that were being created. A detailed list of Romanian composers, their contributions and works are given. The great master George Enescu's contributions and legacy, and the establishment of the Enescu prize are expounded on in a separate section at great length and merits an independent treatment.

### **The beginnings**

Gazimihal considers the complicated and the interwoven history of the region that has shaped modern Romanian music. Part of his interest is the early scholar of Turkish music Dimitrie Cantemir (1673-1723). Cantemir stayed a long time in the Ottoman Istanbul studying Turkish music, and invented notation to put it down on paper. Some of his invaluable works were published in Leipzig and Vienna by the initiative of the Romanian Academy in the first decade of the twentieth century. Gazimihal goes on to note some words in Romanian/Turkish as they relate to music such as *meterhanea/mehterhane*, *surlă/zurna*, *kobuz/kopuz*.

The development of church music, the Kapellmeisters who were brought from Transylvania for music education by the nobles and the royalty, and the first attempts at a failed (because of censure) Philharmonic Society in early 19<sup>th</sup> century are discussed at length.

Gazimihal divides the great masters of Romanian music into two periods, classical and modern (Enescu being a class of his own in the latter).

### **The early masters**

Among the great early masters and their works, Gazimihal starts with Ludwig Antonio Weist (1819-1889), who was brought in from Vienna and placed in charge of the Imperial Orchestra in Bucharest. He also conducted musicals. Weist was a fiery violinist, and quickly became popular. In addition to the melodrama *Constantin Brâncoveanu*, he composed the ballet *Doamna de aur*, and wrote many fantasies and caprices which derive their force from Romanian airs.

The Bucharest Conservatory started out under the direction of Anton Wachmann. Wachmann wrote many operettas and vaudevilles with apparent ease. His son Eduard Wachmann (1836-1909) first studied with Weist, and then went to Paris to study music, and became a first rate pianist and composer. As the director of the Conservatory, he composed a large number of works, taught harmony to Queen Carmen Sylva, and most importantly initiated symphonic concerts, which were an important contribution to the artistic life of Bucharest. Later, these came under the direction of Dimitrie Dinicu.

As harmony professor at the Bucharest conservatory George Stephănescu worked on the creation of an opera company in Bucharest, and left behind numerous compositions for voice, stage works, and church music.

Constantin Dimitrescu was a student of the famous cellist Franchomme, and composed concertos, overtures, string quartets, and national operas and opera buffas.

The early masters of Romanian music include Moris Kohen Linari (*Mazeppa*, *Insula florilor*, *Tudorel* operas) and the great master and tireless proponent of Romanian music Demetri G. Kiriac. I. Scărlătescu composed *Symphonic Sketches*, sonatas, string quartets, three *Romanian Rhapsodies* for orchestra, a *National Fantasia* and many songs. Other scholars include Oprea Dumitrescu, Ioan Bunescu, the musical Burada family members: Vornic Teodor Burada, and his sons Teodor T. Burada and Dr. Mihail Burada. One of the most influential musicians that helped shape Romanian music scene was Adolf Flechtenmacher. When Liszt visited Iași on 1847,

his second concert in the New Theater started with the orchestral work *Moldova* by Flechtenmacher. Liszt congratulated him, and then played variations on the piano based on the themes from the work to great applause of the audience. Flechtenmacher has composed many operettas and some of the most popular works of this period of Romanian music. Among the early masters, we also have F. S. Caudella, Constantin Gross, Eduard Caudella, Gavriil Musicescu, Enrico Mezzetti, M. A. Theodorini, Gheorghe Scheletti, Alb. Cirillo, Alexandru Zirra, Titus Cerne, Gheorghe Dima.

Iacob Mureșianu was educated in Vienna, and then lived and taught in Blaj. He has composed operas which formed the foundation of Romanian opera. In 1888 he has started the first music journal in Romania, and worked to catalogue folk music. Among his students we can count V. Cherebetiu, E. Ștefănuț and V. Șoban.

Other musician that can be classified among the early masters of Romanian music are Marțian Negrea, A. Bena, Ion Vidu, Gheorghe Cucu, Nicodim Ganea, Timotei Popovici, Ciprian Porumbescu, Tudor Folondoroglu and Grigore Pantasi.

### **The modern masters**

Gazimihal writes about the new masters Stan Golestan, a proponent of indigenous Romanian music and a winner of the Enescu prize for composition. Among his works are *Dembovitzza* rhapsody, *Dix chansons populaires Roumaines*, works for voice and piano, *Doines et chansons*, *Rhapsodie Română* for orchestra, various works for piano and other instrumental pieces. Alfons Castaldi as the teacher of Enescu prize winners Cuclin, Nonna Otescu, Alessandrescu, Enacovici at the conservatory in Bucharest. Of these, Demetre Cuclin worked with Charles-Marie Widor and Vincent d'Indy in Schola Cantorum in Paris and won the Enescu competition with his Scherzo for orchestra. *Soria*, *Traian*, *Bellérophon* operas, sonatas for piano and violin/piano solo suites for string instruments are among his many compositions. Ion Nonna Otescu was the composer of *St. Matthew's Passion*. He also studied with d'Indy at Schola Cantorum in Paris. Cuclin was a prolific composer, a first rate conductor and the founder of the *Societatea Bîrică Opera*, and the founder and the first director of the Romanian State Opera. Alfred Alessandrescu also studied at Schola Cantorum in Paris with d'Indy and served as the director of the Philharmonia Orchestra and also of the Bucharest Opera. His compositions include *Amurg de toamnă* for string orchestra, a *Romanian Fantasie*, and a symphonic poem titled *Achteon*. Ion V. Borgovan was by profession a medical doctor. After turning to music, he produced *S'au stins faunii*, *Le paradis de Monmartre*, *Aquarelă de primăvară* and *Sept Nocturnes*. Georges Simonis won the Enescu composition prize twice: in 1919 and 1922. He was also a student of d'Indy at Schola Cantorum in Paris.

### **Scholists**

It is interesting that starting with D. C. Kiriac, just about all early creative minds of Romanian music and the winners of the Enescu competition are Schola Cantorum graduates. These are collectively known as "Scholists". We can name among them Robert Cremer, Ioan D. Chirescu, Ștefan Popescu, George Enacovici, Teodor T. Rogalski, Marcel Mihalovici, Constant Castrișanu.

Of the Scholists, Robert Cremer has composed *Mi-am aninat brâul*, *Melodies*, *La soeur gardienne*, *Diane et Poitiers*, *Marșul Regelui Carol I*; Ioan D. Chirescu served as a professor of theory and solfège at Bucharest Conservatory. His works are mostly choral. Ștefan Popescu is from Iași. He was the founder of the Bucharest High School of Music and composed many masses, choral works, a symphonic poem, a symphony in D, and an orchestral *Suite of Romanian dances*. Violonist George Enacovici was the winner of the 1915 Enescu competition with his E major piano sonata. Teodor T. Rogalski won his Enescu composition award by his string quartet. Among his works are an *Allegro* for orchestra and *Symphonic Sketches*. Marcel Mihalovici won his Enescu prize for his composition *Introduction et mouvement symphonique*. He wrote two ballets and a one act opera titled *L'intransigent Pluton*.

In addition to the Scholists, composer Constantin Brăiloiu wrote *Troise poèmes arabes*, melodies for voice and string orchestra, and adaptations of folk songs. Iona Ghika-Comănești worked with Kiriac and composed vocal works; Gavriil Galinescu studied in Leipzig and with Reger; Eusibie Mandicevschi wrote mostly choral music; Constantin C. Nottara composed music for *Polyeucte*, *Hecuba*, *Iris* and works for violin and piano; Tiberiu Brediceanu catalogued folk music and worked as the conductor of the Cluj National Symphony Orchestra. Mihai Jora won the Enescu competition in 1915 with his Suite in D minor for orchestra, and wrote other orchestral works such as *Poveste indică*, *Privești moldovenești* and various chamber music compositions. Sabin V. Drăgoi started his studies at the Iași Conservatory, and worked as the director of Timișoara Conservatory. Dragoi composed two operas, three orchestral pieces, a string quartet, and other chamber music compositions. Georges Boskoff was another pianist/composer from Iași who wrote for the piano and made transcriptions from the organ works of J. S. Bach.



An early production of Offenbach's "The Tales of Hoffmann" on the stage of the Bucharest Opera.

### **An overview of the modern period**

If we look at of the modern influential composers in Romania, among the most representative masters, in addition to the great George Enescu, we must count the following: composer of melodies, choral and church music G. Dima from Transylvania; religious music composer G. Muzicescu; choral musician Vidu; the influential composer D. G. Kiriac; Otescu, who was a follower of Kiriac and wrote symphonic music and *St. Matthew's Passion*; Alessandrescu, who composed the *Acteon* symphony; the composer of *Scenes from Moldavia*, ballet music and string quartets, M. Jora; the composer of solo violin suites, symphonic music and music for the stage, C. Cuclin; piano pieces, melodies, and the opera *Namasta* composer S. V. Drăgoi; G. Enacovici (sonata for piano, violin pieces, suite for orchestra, poem for violin and orchestra); M. Negrea (Sonatine for piano and symphonic works); G. Cucu composed choral pieces; T. Rogalski composed two dances for orchestra, symphonic sketches and chamber music; F. Lazăr wrote suites for piano, melodies and symphonic works; similarly A. Zirra was known for his melodies, symphonic works and music for the stage; there was the choral composer I. Chirescu; the composer of an opera and a symphony, A. Catargi; chamber and stage music composer G. Castrișanu; chamber and symphonic music composer Scarlătescu. From the new generation of musicians, there is of course the great master George Enescu.