

DLA Dissertation Thesis Abstract

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The Great Romanian Composer and Master of the Violin,  
George Enescu, the Creative and Virtuoso Violinist

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## **I. Before the investigation**

The subject-matter of my doctoral dissertation is George Enescu, one of the most significant composers and violinists of the 20th century. Certainly, I couldn't have made an attempt to research the whole oeuvre of Enescu, therefore I focus on the three sonatas composed for violin and piano, and the suite *Impressions d'enfance*.

In the international musical life Enescu was mainly known as a violinist, so no wonder that only a few written documents are available in connection with his composing activity. Moreover, I was surprised by the fact that in the last forty years research into Enescu has also resulted in just a couple of publications – even in Romania. Former documents, which were born at the time of the socialist regime, are well impregnated with the current political ideology. The only monograph that shows his complete life-work in a truly scientific way was published by the Romanian Academy in 1971. However, even in this book we can only find shady and distorted explications of Enescu's emigration to Paris, and his last years of destitution there.

## **II. Resources**

In the course of writing my dissertation, the most important guideline was *Les souvenirs de George Enesco*. This book was written and published by Bernard Gavoty and includes a series of radio interviews with the composer, which were made by the author in 1951. Although these reminiscences are very subjective: the interviewee doesn't remember everything accurately, or the mind's eye embellishes certain things.

To demonstrate the history of Romanian composed music, I used two resources: *The Genesis of Romanian Music* by István Lakatos, published in Cluj Napoca in 1938, and Zeno Vancea's two-volume book about Romanian composition in the 19th and 20th century, published in 1978. Unfortunately, according to researches in 1938 none of the contemporary musicologists could provide any new details in relation to the conception of Romanian composed music. Therefore, to the best of my belief, the most objective work so far was made by Istvan Lakatos, his writing is the most synthesized. Out of the records related to Enescu, I would like to highlight the monograph that I've mentioned before: the result of the joint work of Mircea Voicana, Clemansa Firca, Alfred Hoffman, Elena Zottoviceanu, Myriam Marbe, Stefan Niculescu and Adrian Rațiu. Yehudi Menuhin's *Human's music* and *Endless journey*, his books which were published even

in Hungarian, also included points of interest that helped me to get more information about Enescu's pedagogic activity.

I considered it important to find works not only by Romanian but also by other foreign authors, as an outsider has a much more objective view on the theme than an often biased compatriot. The book by Noel Malcolm, *George Enescu - His Life and Music* with Yehudi Menuhin's prologue was published in 1990 in English, and its Romanian translation came out almost two years ago. Noé Malcolm was the first westerner who could have an insight into Enescu's legacy, which had been locked by communist authorities.

For the analysis of works I used the following scores:

George Enescu: Sonate pour piano et violon op. 2. București: Editura de Stat Pentru Literatură și Artă, 1956.

George Enescu: Sonate pour piano et violon, op. 6. București: Editura de Stat Pentru Literatură și Artă, 1956.

George Enescu: 3<sup>ème</sup> Sonate pour piano et violon (*dans le caractère populaire roumain*). Paris: Enoch, 1933.

George Enescu: *Impressions d'enfance*. Paris: Salabert, 1952.

### **III. Method of investigation**

Since I found only a few Hungarian publications regarding Enescu, after having studied them, I tried to obtain all the relevant foreign-language books available. These sources were mostly written in Romanian, except for the interview-book written by Gavoty, which I had access to in French and Romanian as well. I translated the relevant parts of these books into Hungarian. After that I tried to free the text from the poetical and ideological exaggerations so that the reader could have an objective view of the composer-virtuoso's life and works.

In my dissertation I interpret the compositions principally from the viewpoint of the pedagogue and the performer. I have no intention of demonstrating them from the angle of musicology.

#### **IV. Results**

I started my musical studies at Cluj Napoca and I also graduated there, at the music academy. I came across Enescu's music as early as my childhood: his rhapsodies were daily played in the radio or on TV. At the examinations we had to play Romanian compositions every single time, and the fact is that when you are forced to do something, you start to exclaim against it and feel repugnance. Maybe the best example of this is the attitude of students to compulsory readings.

By the time I reached the level when I could learn to play Enescu's violin-piano sonatas, I had lost all my enthusiasm. Moreover, the fact that playing these compositions meant a serious trial both technically and musically enhanced my repugnance even more.

Two decades passed by and after I listened to an old recording, *Sonata No.3 for Violin and Piano* played by Enescu and Dinu Lipatti, I was under its influence for several days. When I wished to learn some more about the author and the work, I surprisedly discovered that there was hardly any bibliography available in Hungarian in relation to the topic. That was the moment when I came to the decision that I would try to do as much as I could in order to increase the composer's recognition in Hungary.

I managed to access a large number of studies in Romanian, which then I translated and summarized. These sources could support my more elaborate exposition of the topic.

As far as I know, no academic paper has been written in Hungarian about the detailed interpretation of Enescu's works composed for piano and violin. This is the reason why the most important result of my dissertation is that it serves as a stopgap since it contributes to the Hungarian recognition of Enescu, one of the most versatile personalities of the 20th century - a virtuoso violinist, composer, pianist and conductor.

#### **V. Documentation of activities connected with the issue of the dissertation**

In the last few years I have not played many violin and piano compositions by Enescu in public. However, as a chamber orchestra teacher at the university I always try to follow those musical principles that Enescu also considered important. While listening to and

analysing his momentous recordings, we can learn and get a great deal of inspiration from them, even if his performing style seems obsolete nowadays.

*Unisono Prelude* from the Orchestral Suite No. 1 is a permanent repertoire piece of the music faculty's student chamber orchestra, which I am the leader of, and I regularly teach Enescu's chamber compositions at the same faculty at the University of Szeged.