

Introduction

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When I was invited to guest edit a volume on music in nineteenth-century Romania, I realized that there were many unexplored issues in musicology written in Romanian. I called upon authors independently to consider how they would redress this situation, and to my great surprise, the subjects they proposed were all consonant with each other. They presented in various contexts one fundamental aspect: *change*. In all the articles in this issue, the narrative is about the shift towards westernization, induced by the gradual independence from the Ottoman Empire, and about its effects on the understanding of culture and on Romanian music in general. Hence, *westernization* is the leitmotif and guiding principle of this issue, which tries to express the essence of musical circumstances in nineteenth-century Romania in the words of a proverb: 'The times change and we change with them'.

The revolt led by Tudor Vladimirescu in 1821 ignited a process of cultural reform¹ that led to the emergence of a modern Romanian culture and culminated in the unification of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia under a single ruling prince in 1859. There followed the formation of the nation state named Romania in 1862, with its capital in Bucharest, which from 1866 was ruled by a monarch from the Hohenzollern family. This development affected the life of the country as a whole and had a major impact on the dynamic city of Bucharest in particular, bringing mostly beneficial alterations to the structure of institutions, urbanism and lifestyle, and thus to every facet of culture. Consistent modernization fostered the victory in the 1877 War of Independence and the period of stability brought by the long reign of Carol I (Ruling Prince of Romania from 1866–1914; King of Romania from 1881). It was in this period (earlier than in other South-East European cities) that important musical institutions were founded in Bucharest: a conservatoire (1864, preceded by one in Iaşi, established in 1860), a Philharmonic Society (1868) and a prestigious concert hall, the Romanian Athenaeum (1889).

The beginnings of westernization coincide with the beginnings of the modernization process, both marking the onset of a 'new' century. Thus, for historian Nicolae Iorga, the nineteenth century began in 1791, when Wallachian noblemen and landowners (boyars) demanded to be treated not as the inhabitants of a Turkish *paşalık*, but as a 'Wallachian nation'.² Musicologists resolve questions of chronology in a similar fashion, establishing the beginning of the century

¹ For further reading on the political, social and cultural transformations after 1821 see 'The Romanian Lands in an Age of Reform and Revolution, 1821–1822: The Triple Revolution', in *A History of Romania*, ed. Kurt Treptow (Iaşi: The Centre for Romanian Studies, 1997): 229–32.

² Nicolae Iorga was a prominent Romanian historian and politician in the inter-war period. In his claim about the boyars, he refers to the immediate influence of the ideas of the French Revolution, and sees this as the dawn of a new epoch, first marked by the demand

according to a cultural rather than temporal criterion. For example, musicologist Romeo Ghircoiașu sees translations from Voltaire and Metastasio or music by Bach and Haydn at the 'feudal courts'³ of Romanian aristocrats before 1821⁴ as heralds announcing a new age of cultural upheaval. An emerging systemic move towards westernization became manifest in the 1830s and was perceptible in various areas of musical life. Military ensembles played on Western instruments, European music was taught in salons and in public schools (in Bucharest in 1834⁵ and in Iași in 1836⁶); German, Italian and French opera ensembles visited Romanian towns more frequently; Italian theatres with regular activity were formed in Bucharest (1843) and Iași (1851); local musicians composed overtures and vaudevilles; finally, a National Theatre opened in Bucharest in 1852.

The history of nineteenth-century music in Romania begins, therefore, with the process of westernization, largely concerning the culture of the urban learned classes, both as practitioners and as audience. First opera and then symphonic and chamber concerts became the preserve of bourgeois intellectuals, a large cosmopolitan group within the social hierarchy. Despite stumbling blocks and a lack of adequate financial support, opera and concerts attracted growing audiences. Be it with comedy or drama, the theatrical stage reflected the unfolding social changes. Prosperity, which was unevenly distributed but present at the upper levels of both the towns and villages, had a beneficial effect on shaping and fostering musical activity. For example, the fact that the families of foreign musicians who settled in Romania remained active for many generations can be viewed as evidence not only of the expansion of the musical market into South-Eastern Europe, but also of the continuity and stability of professional and amateur musical circles in Romania.⁷ The Royal House and the aristocratic families in its entourage displayed an interest in promoting music, which in turn stimulated an interest in concert-going on the part of the middle class.

This transformation is explored in this volume from different perspectives. In her study 'The Beginnings of Romanian Composition: Between Nationalism and the Obsession with Synchronizing with the West', Valentina Sandu-Dediu takes a summarizing and introductory approach. Sandu-Dediu offers an overview of original choral, instrumental and orchestral music, outlines the concert life and the development of musical institutions, explores the tours of foreign orchestras and famous musicians and takes into account musical societies, bookshops, impresarios and publishing houses. Her study also raises some issues connected to the regions that – before 1918 – lay outside Romania's borders: Transylvania,

for constitutional law and complaints against Turkish abuses. See Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria românilor prin călători* (Bucharest: Editura Eminescu, 1981): 444.

³ The term 'feudal' is used in this context in a slightly pejorative sense, referring to the pre-capitalistic period in Romanian lands, without direct connection to feudalism as medieval form of rule in Western and Central Europe.

⁴ Romeo Ghircoiașu, *Cultura muzicală românească în secolele XVIII–XIX* (Bucharest: Editura muzicală, 1992): 121.

⁵ A European-oriented school of chant was founded within the 'Philharmonic Society' in 1834.

⁶ In Iași a 'Philo-Dramatic Conservatoire' was founded in 1836 by Moldavian intellectuals and statesmen Gheorghe Asachi, Vasile Alecsandri and Stefan Catargiu and functioned until 1840.

⁷ Among prominent non-native families of musicians in Romanian cities were the Wachmann, Wiest, Gebauer, Kratochwil and Caudella families. A more comprehensive list is found in my article in the present volume, at footnote 16.

Bukovina and the Banat. In all these issues, the attempt to approach the Western 'standards of civilization' appears as a secondary, implicit aim of Romanians, with the first and more explicit aim being the ideologically underpinned search for a national expression in music. As is well known, this ideal, intensively propagated by revolutionaries around the bourgeois revolution of 1848, had actually been generated by the Enlightenment and was an intellectual construct of the West, too.

Based on primary sources and analysed through the prism of current academic thinking, Florinela Popa's essay 'Aspects of Nationalist Propaganda in the Late Nineteenth-Century Romanian Musical Press' depicts more closely the ideological framework in which the 'national language' described by Sandu-Dediu came into being. Popa investigates the collections of two newspapers published in Bucharest in the late nineteenth century, *Lyra română* (1879–1880) and *România musicală* (1890–1904), focusing on the particularities of a certain historiographic 'style' created by journalists of the period. The author identifies contradicting attitudes in the texts of the two newspapers: on the one hand, 'the idealization of Romanian music', and on the other, 'harsh criticism of Romanian musical life', as a possible manifestation of an 'inferiority complex'. The study casts a critical glance at the generally low level of music journalism at the turn of the century and admonishes the 'excess of zeal' of some reviewers, clumsy theorists of 'Romanianism' in the musical press.

Nicolae Gheorghită's essay 'Military Bands in the Romanian Principalities between 1821 and 1878' approaches the topic of *modernization–westernization* as the backdrop of reforms regarding the music of the army. Gheorghită demonstrates the important role played by the army bands had in fostering culture (both 'high' and 'popular') in the urban centres of the time. The reform of the military bands constituted the first tangible renewal in Romanian musical life, and it facilitated and maintained in various ways the modernization of musical life in general (for example, by fostering a public taste for promenade concerts). Just as significant was the pedagogical activity of the conductors, who also trained active instrumentalists in city theatres and orchestras, contributing to the professionalization of music.

Finally, in my contribution, 'Modelling the Public's Taste: Local Habits, Ethnic Pluralism and European Music in Bucharest (1821–1862)', I regard westernization as a shaping factor of musical practices and preferences. I have tried above all to show how the public's musical taste mirrored – if on a smaller scale – large-scale social changes. Supply and demand, the circulation of information, and the public's ethnic and social make-up guided the highly varied musical production of the time. In order to document the diversity of musical practices in the period under study, I have supplemented the literary sources (the accounts of foreign travellers) with excerpts from collections of songs and piano albums (preserved in manuscript in the Music Cabinet of the Romanian Academy Library, Bucharest). These collections evidence the plurality of styles then in circulation, the mixture of different influences, and the hybridity and eclecticism of dynamic, motley 'transition music' – music at the crossroads between East and West, between village and town, between traditionalism and cosmopolitanism.

Although the articles collected here are individual contributions, they are unified not only by the theme of *westernization* and *modernization*, which weaves through the issue, but by the historical details of the establishment of the Romanian nation, which forms the backdrop for all the musical developments discussed here.

This is not intended as a comprehensive overview of nineteenth-century Romanian music. Some aspects have of necessity been mentioned in passing or not at all. It has not been possible to deal in any great depth with the major contribution of Iași to the Byzantine church music tradition or with the choral music of the Banat Country; with the organ music in Transylvanian cities or with the activity of music associations whose history is of regional interest; with multiple links between popular and bourgeois culture; with leading musicians, performers, composers, music historians and critics; with the musical culture of the Saxon, Hungarian and Székely minorities, which flourished in Transylvania and the Banat; or with the musical life of the Romanian villages in the nineteenth century, with their specific dances and instruments.

The history of Romanian music may of course be viewed also as a *histoire croisée*, and therefore as a comparative history, related to or intertwining with that of other European cities or regions. Also welcome would have been a study dealing with wider trends in repertory, touring ensembles and Western musicians active in Romania, as well as an article about George Enescu, the only Romanian composer of international stature to have been born in the nineteenth century.

In the absence of all these aspects, and many more besides, the picture of the epoch of course remains incomplete, and I hope the efforts of the contributors to this volume will be continued by other researchers in future and that the results of their research will be made available internationally.

The Union of Romanian Composers and Musicologists, the George Enescu Museum and the Military Music Service Library placed the illustrations at our disposal free of charge. The volume would not have been possible without Bennett Zon's initiative to publish a special issue dedicated to Romania or without the hard work and good will of the authors. I extend my warm thanks to them all.