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## Lipatti's Generation: A Rediscovery\*

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Ever since the December 2nd, 1950 death of Dinu Lipatti due to an unforgiving illness, both his biography and artistic accomplishments have been analysed, compared and assessed into such detail that it seems there is little new to contribute. Few other historical figures can claim such a constant positive reputation like Dinu Lipatti: the audience and critics are competing with generous superlatives about his musical and personal qualities: from “prince of pianists” (Ainley 2011)<sup>1</sup> and “all too early gone angel” (Kaiser 2004), up to “artist of divine spirituality”<sup>2</sup> (Legge 1998: 180; Lempfrid 1991: 26-35). The mere association with the Romanian musician confers even to well-established artists an added credential. Such was, among others, the

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<sup>1</sup> A revised form of an article that was published in the summer of 1999 edition of the *International Piano Quarterly*.

<sup>2</sup> “In Paris, in 1944, Francis Poulenc told me about this ‘artist of divine spirituality’, a judgment I was fully to endorse a few months later at a rehearsal of Chopin’s Concerto in F minor.” Typo or factual error: Lipatti played Chopin’s Concerto in E minor on March 31st, 1944 in Geneva, with Suisse-Romande Orchestra and Ernest Ansermet; he never played Chopin’s Concerto in F minor (“M. Dinu Lipatti au Conservatoire” 1944: 5).

case of Sviatoslav Richter, who was called in 1957 a “Russian Lipatti” (*La Patrie* 1957) or Nelson Goerner, whose performance reminded of Lipatti.<sup>3</sup>

The young generation of pianists relishes when a critic mentions them in the same sentence with Lipatti (Lonchampt 1981): “For example the case of the young pianist Alice Sara Ott, who presents the Chopin Waltzes with a flavour and determination reminding Lipatti’s legendary 1950 recording”<sup>4</sup> (Theurich 2010). At the same time, whenever one of the acclaimed contemporary pianists mentions Lipatti’s legacy as an inspiration, this gesture implies their reverence towards an absolute value, universally accepted.<sup>5</sup>

Already during Lipatti’s lifetime, the vast majority of documents mentioning him attest to a consensus about his genius. Yet exactly in this unanimity of opinion lurks the danger of losing objectivity, concerning both the accuracy of biographical details and his place in the history of modern piano playing. As Terry Teachout wrote in an article in 2006:

Thanks to the dramatic story of his illness and death, he is remembered not as a historical figure but as a near-mythic one who made some of the most beautiful piano recordings of the century. Yet these recordings, powerfully compelling though they were and are, do not exist in a cultural vacuum. To the contrary, they were made by a profoundly self-aware artist who was in every sense a man of his time. (Teachout 2006)

Lipatti’s status as a consumed and universally acknowledged artist is nowadays so prevalent that in the exercise to imagine the beginnings of his career one has to take into account the competition presented by other pianists, both aspiring and already established, all while prospecting the historical backdrop of those years. It is difficult to imagine, for example, that Lipatti himself was presented in 1943 as a “second Horowitz” (“Dinu Lipatti” 1943: 4) or that in the same week Lipatti played his last Berlin concert in mid-January 1943, other two legendary pianists were to present himself to the same audience:

<sup>3</sup> “Goerner préfère d’autres voies, celles du cantabile ou du sotto voce, dans la descendance de grands enregistrements historiques comme celui de Dinu Lipatti (Warner), auquel la présente version fait irrésistiblement penser.” (Hévy 2015)

<sup>4</sup> “Zum Beispiel bei der jungen Pianistin Alice Sara Ott, die Chopins Walzer mit einer Würze und Unterschiedenheit darbietet, die an Dinu Lipattis legendäre Aufnahme von 1950 erinnern.”

<sup>5</sup> The Norwegian pianists Leif Ove Andsnes mentions in a radio interview at NPR (on October 20th, 2011) that he sees Lipatti as “the greatest pianist of all time” (Huizenga 2011).

Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli and Géza Anda (both respectively three and four years *younger* than the Romanian pianist).

How did Lipatti become the legendary musician we are celebrating today? Are there such ingredients for a perfect career? In retrospect, one can notice a lucky combination of talent, extraordinarily disciplined work and opportunity. In Lipatti's case, his talent and work have always been acknowledged. To illustrate the complex ensemble of events that shaped the course of what would become the "Lipatti legend", I will explore two episodes: his participation at the 1933 Vienna International Piano Competition and his Berlin concerts, ten years later.

Arguably, a professional career of a pianist has more chances to be launched by participating in at least one big international competition. Usually strategically planned right from the beginning of the studies, such participation follows the logic that winning a competition would represent an effective and immediate career launch. While widespread nowadays, this very idea evolved in time. International music competitions started to play a significant role in the complex picture of the musical life at the end of the third decade of the 20th century: the Chopin Competition in Warsaw debuted in 1927, a second edition took place five years later; the Liszt Competition in Budapest was launched in 1933 and the Queen Elisabeth Competition (at first named after the Belgian violinist Eugène Ysaÿe) in 1937.

The second edition of the International Music Competition took place in Vienna between May 26th and June 16th, 1933 and was included in the Vienna Festival Weeks. The first edition of the competition (1932) had invited violinists and singers; the 1933 edition – pianists and singers. How did it come to Lipatti's participating in *this* competition? Anna Lipatti wrote: "One morning I read in the newspaper that there would be a big music competition in Vienna, where candidates between 16 and 30 years of age would be accepted" (Lipatti 1967: 33).

Which newspaper might that have been? In spite of all the efforts, I could not find an article in the Romanian press that would advertise the 1933 Vienna competition. This did not mean that it lacked press coverage, both in Austria and elsewhere. The coverage of the competition started almost immediately after and fed on the success of the previous edition. The international resonance of the event was also based on the participation in the jury of remarkable pianists of the day. Such was the Swiss pianist Johnny Aubert, professor at the Geneva Conservatoire, whose participation was expressly mentioned by *Gazette de Lausanne* both in the February 5th and 26th, 1933 issues.

The scope of the competition, practically citing from the competition's presentation booklet, was made clear on the same occasion: "it is our mission to facilitate little or not known pianists the way to the big audience".

Some of the 173 pianists<sup>6</sup> lined up for the first round of the competition would find in the jury a present or former teacher. The French pianist Ida Perin – one of the third prizes – had studied with Isidor Philipp at the Paris Conservatoire. Both Julian Károlyi (Hungary) and Gina Bachauer (Greece) had studied in Paris with Alfred Cortot and left the competition with a Silver Medal. Julius Chajes (Austria) studied in Vienna with Julius Isserlis and the American pianist John Robert Crown – with Moriz Rosenthal. Emil von Sauer's students, the Dutch Marinus Flipse and the Latvian Stasis Andriaus Vainiunas, both obtained a Diploma; the latter was awarded – according to some sources (Gaudrimas 1970-1979) – the first prize, which has erroneously been claimed on behalf of the German pianist Karlrobert Kreiten, as well.

It must be added that the sheer number of the laureates, combined with the fragmentary press coverage of the time, led to several confusions and inaccuracies: the list of laureates, the jury, the year and even the place of the competition are in very many cases erroneously reported.

While the objective of the competition was indeed the promotion of exceptional pianists little or not known to the audience, this did not mean that several participants at the competition were not already very active in the musical life of the regions they came from. Radio Vienna's printed programs bring to attention that many pianists were already busy during the years prior to the competition. A special remark on the Romanian competitors: next to Maria Fotino, still known to a small circle of musicians, Kornelia Kraft was also awarded Diploma, while Ghizella Krasniansky and Stefan Bernhardt were awarded a Silver Medal. Their names all but sank soon after into oblivion.<sup>7</sup>

Lipatti's Bucharest debut was announced in the June 16th, 1932 issue of *Radio Wien* ("Sendeprogramm des Auslandes" 1932: 65) when he played Chopin's Piano Concerto, then in the May 18th, 1933 issue with Chopin's Sonata in B minor ("Sendeprogramm des Auslandes" 1933: 53).

<sup>6</sup> This number is taken from the final report of the competition, as it was made available by the Archive of the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna. Depending on the source, other numbers have circulated, from 252 (Wieser 1987: 156) to 220 ("Succesul românilor" 1933: 2).

<sup>7</sup> The only proved hint so far of their activity in Romania was the radio broadcast concerts between 1932 and 1933. For more details about Ghizella Krasniansky's concerts, see <http://anno.onb.ac.at/anno-suche#searchMode=simple&query=krasniansky+&from=1&sort=date+desc>.

Anna Lipatti's fond recollections on Vienna let us understand it was a city well known by the family, where they had spent two months on holidays and had already made friends.<sup>8</sup> There is no clear indication that Lipatti's mother spoke German; still, supposing that she had access to the Austrian press, which had been running ads about the 1933 competition already since November 1932, it is possible that an ad published even by a ladies' magazine, *Illustriertes Familienblatt* ("Internationaler Wettbewerb für Gesang und Klavier, Wien 1933" 1933: 17), requiring a minimal proficiency in German, might have caught her attention.

It is just as likely that the pianist's mother had recalled the coverage in the Romanian press of the 1932 edition of the Vienna competition. There is also another hypothesis to explain the circumstances leading to Dinu's participation in the 1933 edition: one of the two vice-presidents of the 1932 competition was the Romanian conductor George Georgescu and – a fact ignored until now – one of the jury members of the violin section had been none other than George Enescu, the godfather of Dinu Lipatti.

It is possible that these two distinguished musicians provided the Lipatti family the information of the very existence and maybe also details concerning the demands of the competition.

Indeed, even compared to the standard of an international competition today, the demands of the Vienna competition in 1933 were very high, matching the accomplishments of the members of the jury. Among several celebrated pianists of the day (Wilhelm Backhaus, Alfred Cortot, Ignaz Friedman, Lubka Kolessa, Moriz Rosenthal, Emil von Sauer, Eduard Steuermann, Paul Wittgenstein), the jury counted many piano teachers held in high regard also due to other achievements: among them the Greek pianist Loris Margaritis, who founded in 1927 the renowned International Summer Academy of the Mozarteum Salzburg, and the Polish pianist Józef Turczyński, who was the first editor of the complete and definitive Chopin edition.

Maybe some of the young pianists were also tempted by the perspective of winning one of the cash prizes: the 3,000 shillings attached to the first prize meant in 1933 as much as 10,000 euro after conversion at today's exchange rate, according to a mail from the press bureau of the Austrian National Bank<sup>9</sup> (the second and third prizes were awarded 2,000 and 1,000 shillings, respectively).

<sup>8</sup> "Nous connaissons d'avance cette merveilleuse Vienne, car nous avons passé déjà deux mois de vacances, mon mari, les enfants et moi, de sort que Dinu était un peu en pays de connaissance. Nous avons même des amis là-bas." (Lipatti 1967: 34).

<sup>9</sup> "3.000 Schilling im Jahr 1933 entsprechen kaufkraftmäßig einem Betrag von 10.467 EUR im Jahr 2017." This information has been obtained directly from the Press Bureau of the National Bank of Austria, which kindly answered my direct inquiry.

Coming from Prague, Alice Herz-Sommer hoped to prove herself that, even being almost 30, she was still capable to deliver an artistic performance of international standard<sup>10</sup>; in fact, she was at the time only one year younger than the youngest member of the jury, the Ukrainian Lubka Kolessa, considered one of Europe's most celebrated pre-war pianists.

Some of the competitors had previous experience in other contests: among them, the Pole Leon Boruński (placed sixth in the 1932 Chopin Competition in Warsaw) and the Ukrainian Taras Mykysha, who ultimately shared the second prize with Dinu Lipatti and who came directly from Liszt Competition in Budapest, where he also placed second after Annie Fischer.

The Vienna Radio broadcast live and completely all three stages of the competition. Unfortunately, there are no official recordings of these live broadcasts, since the radio only started to record such events around 1950 (according to the press bureau of the Austrian Radio).

Moreover, the competition had the support and attention of the highest officials: on May 28th, 1933, the Vienna Mayor Karl Josef Seitz invited the participants and the jury to a gala event where the legendary opera singer Lotte Lehmann performed a lied recital ("Der internationale musikalische Wettbewerb in Wien" 1933: 7).

For the Romanians, the presence of the Queen Mary at the reception would bring even more significance to this music competition; a note on the final financial report attest that 50 shillings were spent for "Rosen für die rumänische Königin".

The physical presence of the Queen in Vienna can be documented until June 10th, 1933; an article from the June 13th issue of *Adevărul* (Bucharest) salutes her return at the Cotroceni Palace. Five days later, the same newspaper announced the Romanian laureates.

Undoubtedly, the unique recipient of the first prize was the Pole Bolesław Kon, aged 26. Then why are there so many sources, especially German and English, indicating Karlrobert Kreiten as the winner? The confusion comes from an unfortunate mix of ambiguous statements quoted without being fact-checked. In Karlrobert's biography published by his father (Kreiten 1947), the only hint at the outcome of the Vienna competition was a quote from a Dutch newspaper article saying that the pianist ought to be a favourite to the first prize. Almost 50 years later, the German weekly magazine *Der Spiegel*<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> "Einmal im Leben, sagte sie sich, wollte sie doch sehen, ob ihre Fähigkeiten internationalen Ansprüchen genügten." (Müller; Piechocki 2006)

<sup>11</sup> "... unter 252 meist weitaus älteren Konkurrenten, aus dem Internationalen Klavierwettbewerb in Wien als Sieger hervorgegangen. Mit der 'Dante-Phantasie' von Liszt hatte er nicht nur das strenge Jurymitglied Wilhelm Backhaus günstig gestimmt,

(Wieser 1987: 156) writes “Karlrobert won the first prize” – a piece of information which from that moment on would be cited in a long row of books and newspaper articles (both German and English) mentioning Kreiten and the German musical life during the Third Reich.<sup>12</sup> Even the prestigious musical encyclopaedia *MGG* (*Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*), both in the printed and the online edition, also perpetuates the error.

This kind of inaccuracy is even less understandable since the Austrian press had published a complete list of the laureates (*Salzburger Volksblatt* 1933: 6)<sup>13</sup>:

1st Prize (3,000 shillings):	Boloslaw Kon (Poland)
2nd Prize (2,000 shillings each):	Constantin Lipatti (Romania),
3rd Prize (1,000 shillings each):	Mykyscha Taras (USSR)
4th Prize (400 shillings):	Ida Perin (France), Peter Stadlen (Austria), Therese Tröster (Austria) Sophie Gurewitsch (USSR)

**Table 1.** The table with the laureates, as they appear in the Austrian press.



**Fig. 1** Sophia Gurewitsch



**Fig. 2** Taras Mykysha

sondern nebenher über den genialischen Rumänen Dinu Lipatti triumphiert, der sich unter Protest seines Mentors mit Silber begnügen mußte.”

<sup>12</sup> Practically the majority of German and English books on music and musicians during the Third Reich quote either Karlrobert Kreiten's biography written by his father or the *MGG* entry on Kreiten, both erroneously indicating him as the winner of the Vienna competition.

<sup>13</sup> Here it has been opted to keep the original orthography of the names and their country of origin as the printed article.



If Alfred Cortot indeed left the jury as a protest that Lipatti did not win, this detail still needs to be checked and documented. The reports of this episode are dated *after* Lipatti's death.

Dinu Lipatti's second place at the Vienna competition achieved its goal, drawing attention to the young Romanian pianist; as it would soon become clear, the echoes of this prize accompanied him for quite some time. Same year in November, the Berlin musical magazine *Signale für die musikalische Welt* published an article under the title "From the Bucharest musical life", where Lipatti is mentioned as the country's forerunner talent "combining a fine technique and a quality of sound with a real musicianship" (Glückselig 1933: 5). Even after starting the studies in Paris, Lipatti's reputation was linked to his performance at the Vienna competition. The announcement of his debut in Geneva on October 28th, 1935 at the Conservatoire Hall is clear in this regard: "for the very first time in Geneva . . . we present Dinu Lipatti, laureate of the International Competition for pianists in Vienna" ("Concerts annonces" 1935: 6). Even the review after Lipatti's recital in January 1941 in Vienna brings back to memory the pianist's old acquaintance with the city (Junk 1942: 260).

For Lipatti, as for his fellow competitors, participating at this competition would become a turning point in his professional path. One year later, he would be studying with Cortot in Paris; yet he was by far not the only laureate who would choose to continue studying with a former jury member. Julius Isserlis would offer the fourth prize, Sophia Gurewitsch, to stay in Vienna and continue her studies with him. Another young pianist, the Pole Halina Kalmanowicz, would return to Vienna to study with Emil von Sauer, after participating in the Chopin competition in 1937.

The International Music Competition in Vienna would take place every year until 1938 with one exception, in 1934. Among the best-known laureates, there were Monique de La Bruchollerie and Emil Gilels (both at the 1936 edition).

\*

In ten years, Lipatti's rise as a leading musical figure in Romania has been exemplary: at 26 years, he was named by royal decree as a member of the Order of Romanian Crown bearing the title of "Commander" (mentioned in the act signed by King Mihai on May 9th, 1943, according to *Monitorul oficial* 1943: 4984).

Already at 24 years, Lipatti was celebrated in his homeland as an equal of the greatest Romanian musical personalities of the time. General Radu R. Rosetti, full member of the Romanian Academy and minister of National

Education between January and November 1941, pronounced during May 28th, 1941 session:

Today one cannot say that in the different branches of Art we do not have personalities able to represent them honourably for their specialty and for the Academy. . . . In music: M. Jora; Cuclin; Sabin Drăgoiu; Marțian Negrea; Perlea; Alexandrescu, Th. Rogalski, M. Andricu, Paul Constantinescu, Brăiloiu, Lipatti, Zira. ("Desbaterile" 1942-1943: 174)

One year later, Dorin Speranția wrote about Lipatti: "he represents more than a hope for the future, as one says about the young . . . he is a reality and a presence for the Romanian art" (Speranția 1942: 471).

Undoubtedly, all the comments lauded Lipatti's activity as pianist and composer. In parallel, his name appears in connection with a few of administrative obligations: on November 30th, 1940, Lipatti was designated as member of the provisional committee with the mandate to draw a new statute of a professional organization dedicated to all Romanian performing musicians (*Monitorul oficial* 1940: 6427); on July 16th, 1941, followed the appointment to the control committee under the National Propaganda Ministry, where Lipatti joined a fellow musician, Constantin Brăiloiu and the writer Corneliu Moldoveanu (*Monitorul oficial* 1941: 4323); on August 7th, 1942, Lipatti participated at the constitution meeting of the Romanian-German Society at the Law School Hall in Bucharest, where it was decided on the sections and their program (Boia 2014: 208). Given the historical and political backdrop at the time, these assignments were not exceptional, at the most only given the pianist's age.

There is no evidence so far that Lipatti himself was able to see through the complex, interwoven conglomerate of persons, interests and events he witnessed and took part to. Nor did he purposely try to steer his way through the complicated political scene of the time in order to draw benefits for his career. The circumstances surrounding Lipatti's concert activity in Germany prior to his settling in Switzerland are an example in this respect.

By the end of January 1943, Lipatti played as soloist four times in Berlin: on January 3rd with Berlin Chamber Orchestra conducted by Hans von Benda, when he performed his own Concertino in Classical Style; then on January 15th with the Berlin Philharmonic and Wolfgang Brückner in Liszt's Piano Concerto in E♭ major.

The first performance in Berlin took place on January 8th, 1941 and was part of a longer tour with the Bucharest Philharmonic and George Georgescu,

which included concerts in Vienna, Prague and other German cities. The tour was meant as a part of a large campaign to promote the Romanian cultural values and was approved by the Romanian Government, which also granted a loan<sup>14</sup> for the orchestra especially for this purpose (*Monitorul oficial* 1941: 376). Without doubt, this tour turned out to be of paramount importance to launching Lipatti's name both as pianist and composer in some of the most important European musical centres. The German press reported on the entire tour (Stege 1941: 17; Krause 1941: 124); the Berlin concert on January 8th has also been broadcast on the radio the following month ("Konzert des rumänischen Staatsorchester" 1941: 12).

Lipatti's second concert in Berlin took place on March 23th, 1942 at Singakademie. The title *Internationaler Austausch-Konzert* covered the practice of event organization, promoting musicians whose native countries were on friendly terms with the Nazi regime. To be clear, this practice was widespread: Lipatti's case was only one of the several Romanian-German exchange concerts; also, there were Hungarian, Bulgarian and Italian partnerships (Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli's recital in Berlin on January 17th, 1943 was an *Austausch-Konzert* as well).

The two concerts in January 1943 and the recording of the Concertino in Berlin with Hans von Benda and Berlin Chamber Orchestra took place in an increasingly dire and uncertain historical situation.

Hans von Benda was at the time one of the most active German conductors and musical administrators. Under his leadership, Karajan conducted his first concert with the Berlin Philharmonic, in 1938, which in part contributed to Benda's animosity with Furtwängler and in the end to the former's dismissal by 1940. The founding of the Berliner Kammerorchester in 1935 was a political act initiated by Benda, reflecting both ministerial volition and the conductor's attempt to consolidate favour with the regime.<sup>15</sup> "I

<sup>14</sup> The loan had a value of 2,000,000 lei, which given the galloping inflation of the time, is difficult to estimate. Inquiries on this subject at the National Bank of Romania were not answered.

<sup>15</sup> Benda created the Kammerorchester der Berliner Philharmoniker shortly after arriving to the orchestra in 1935. The founding of the chamber group served a number of personal and political purposes. First, to satisfy his own conduction ambitions without the misguided pomposity of his predecessor Hermann Stange, Benda assembled a modest group of about 25 Philharmonic musicians, programming principally baroque music. The chamber orchestra was further designed primarily for touring and recording purposes. In this way, Benda could exercise his career ambitions while avoiding the critical Berlin spotlight. Also, the founding of the Kammerorchester was a political act, initiated by Benda, but reflecting both ministerial volition and an attempt by the conductor to consolidate favour with the regime.

recognized the utility of a chamber orchestra of approximately 25 players for foreign propaganda, as it represents easy mobility and much lower costs than a large orchestra", explained Benda (Aster 2007: 83). By 1943 though the ensemble had dropped the link with the Berlin Philharmonic and concentrated on concerts for the regular German audience, military hospitals as well as tours abroad. From 1938 until 1944 Benda and his Berlin Chamber Orchestra toured Romania six times; each time several concerts were planned in Bucharest and different other towns: Braşov, Sibiu, Reşiţa, Arad, Timişoara, where they were played for the regular local concert audience, German officers or German minority representatives, respectively. On June 3rd, 1941, the conductor and his ensemble were invited at Peleş Castle for a private concert in the presence of King Mihai, Queen Mother and officers of the Romanian and German Corps. This is another example of how the artistic and political interests found not only a common ground, but also reached the highest level of representativeness ("Vom Tage" 1941: 5).

The only concert<sup>16</sup> having Benda and Lipatti on the same stage together in Bucharest took place at the Romanian Atheneum. Lipatti performed during the same evening his Concertino and the Piano Concerto in D minor by Mozart.



**Fig. 3** *Dinu Lipatti and Hans von Benda at the Romanian Atheneum (Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg, Abt. Staatsarchiv Freiburg, W 134 Nr. 033506b Sammlung Willy Pragher).*

<sup>16</sup> According to Benda's tour diary found at the Berlin Landesarchiv, the concert took place on March 31th, 1943, although a well-known photo of Benda and Lipatti at the Atheneum took by Willy Pragher is dated the next day (Fig. 3).

The repertoire of the ensemble (which continues to exist to the present day as a commercial, not state funded ensemble) focused on baroque, classical and a handful of early romantic compositions for chamber orchestra; only on rare occasions did Benda include works by modern or contemporary composers. Lipatti's Concertino in Classical Style suited the orchestra's profile, at the same time satisfying the conductor's wish to draw attention to his international connections and serving the cultural interests of both Romanian and German state. The simultaneous presence of all these factors explains how Lipatti's concerts were covered by extended articles in the newspapers of the time.

The January 15th, 1943 concert with the Berlin Philharmonic is also raising a number of questions just by reading the concert program . . . which do not refer only to the typo: "Dina" instead of Dinu.

This concert has been organized by the association *Kraft durch Freude – Gau Berlin* (KdF), one of the several organizations used by the Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda to control the recreational and cultural activities of the German citizens. KdF had been a constant presence in the administration of cultural events ever since its founding in 1933. Not only did KdF follow clear ideological objectives, but it also disposed of a wide and well-functioning organizational infrastructure, funded through membership fees. This way the cultural institutions had an additional financing source, while in turn the members would be granted access to some events at a preferential tariff. Many German members of the *Reichsmusikkammer* (an organization similar to the Musicians' Union) have played in KdF-organized events: from Kreiten to Arrau, from Furtwängler, Karajan to Celibidache. (Membership to *Reichsmusikkammer* was compulsory until 1945 for the active German musicians; the foreign musicians, resident in other countries, needed a special permit in order to perform on a German stage, according to Bailey 2015.)

The concert on January 15th, 1943 of the Berlin Philharmonic was conducted – for the first and last time – by Wolfgang Brückner. Born in 1905, he had led the Radio Orchestra in Königsberg (today: Kaliningrad) until 1942, when he was appointed as the chief conductor of the orchestra and opera house in Kiev. The Ukrainian capital was at the time under Nazi occupation, so Brückner's appointment was not possible without a membership to the national-socialist party. Indeed, Brückner had adhered on August 1st, 1931, and the number of his membership card was 595.385. After the liberation of Kiev, at the end of 1943, Brückner all but disappeared from all musical life. There are indications that after the war he managed to escape to Sweden where he died in 2001 (Prieberg 2004).

It is still unclear who initiated the Lipatti-Brückner concert at the Berlin Philharmonic. Its entire archive, containing all administrative correspondence, along with the concert hall, were destroyed during the Allied bombardments at the end of November 1943.

Two weeks before the Stalingrad defeat, on the eve of the 10th anniversary of Hitler's chancellorship, right before the decision that in Berlin all cultural events should end no later than 7 p.m. in order to save heating and electricity, days short of the first big bombardment of Berlin – these were the backdrop of Lipatti's last Berlin performance.

In parallel with Lipatti's travel from Berlin back to Bucharest in January 1943, then again to Berlin in September in transit to Sweden, Finland and finally Switzerland, many war-related dramatic events started to unfold.



**Fig. 4** Alice Herz-Sommer

Sophia Gurewitsch, one of the fourth prizes at the Vienna competition a decade earlier, had disappeared without trace. Excepting Maria Fotino, all other former Romanian competitors (Paula Kornelia Kraft, Ghizella Krasniansky and Stefan Bernhardt, likely Jewish) all but disappeared, too; to this day there is no reliable and verified information on their whereabouts.

Alice Herz-Sommer had been arrested in 1942 together with her husband, son (then aged 6) and mother, and deported to the Theresienstadt concentration camp. She gave over 100 performances there for other detainees and prison guards, and she also participated in the rehearsals of the children opera *Brundibár* by Hans Krása, while her son Stefan Raphael performed as one of the child actors in over 50 representations. While in Theresienstadt, Alice Herz-Sommer took up the intensive study of the 24 Chopin *Études*, an enterprise that the pianist described as life-saving, decisive for surviving the horrors of the concentration camp.

At the end of 1943, four of Lipatti's former competitors of the Vienna competition were already dead: Bolesław Kon (first prize), Leon Borunski and Halina Kalmanowicz (diplomas), as well as Karlrobert Kreiten (silver medal). Kon committed suicide in 1936, aged almost 30; Borunski (born in 1909) and Kalmanowicz (born in 1914) were around the same age when they died; as Jews, they were deported to a Polish and, respectively, a Latvian concentration camp. Their exact death dates remain unknown, probably in 1942.

Karlrobert Kreiten, who already had played twice with the Berlin Philharmonic, conducted by Wilhelm Furtwängler, and whose shooting star status seemed assured, was arrested on May 3rd, 1943, as a result of a denunciation. The young German pianist, who would turn 27 only a month later, had committed one of the capital crimes that the German civilian population could be guilty of: he listened to the enemy radio program from BBC and expressed freely his critical opinions towards Hitler and the war course.

Following the denunciation, the Gestapo arrested Kreiten just before his May 3rd, 1943 concert in Heidelberg. Neither the family's appeals, nor Wilhelm Furtwängler's personal intervention resulted in Kreiten's release (Shirakawa 1992: 288). After a show trial during which it became clear that the regime intended to set an example, on September 3rd, 1943 Kreiten was sentenced to death by hanging and executed four days later at Plötzensee prison in Berlin. A receipt of 639,20 Reichsmarks (about 4,500 euro today<sup>17</sup>), representing the execution costs, was sent to Kreiten's parents who were given a week to meet the payment (Prieberg 1982: 341-343).

In retrospect, Claudio Arrau, Kreiten's teacher in Berlin, wrote in 1983:

Kreiten was one of the biggest piano talents I have ever met. Had he not been executed by the Nazi regime, he would have been taken a place among the greatest German pianists. He and others represent the lost generation who could have been able to follow Wilhelm Kempff and Walter Gieseking.<sup>18</sup> (Lück 1984)

<sup>17</sup> At an exchange rate of 7.15, see <http://www.dm-euro-rechner.de/die-reichsmark.html>.

<sup>18</sup> "Kreiten war eines der größten Klaviertalente, die mir persönlich begegnet sind. Wäre er nicht durch das Nazi-Regime hingerichtet worden, so hätte er ohne Zweifel seinen Platz als einer der größten deutschen Pianisten eingenommen. Er bildete die verlorene Generation, die fähig gewesen wäre, in die Reihe nach Wilhelm Kempff und Walter Gieseking zu folgen." See also: [https://www.lexm.uni-hamburg.de/object/lexm\\_lexmperson\\_00004437](https://www.lexm.uni-hamburg.de/object/lexm_lexmperson_00004437), accessed January 2018.



The very same September week as Kreiten was murdered, Dinu Lipatti transited Berlin on the way to Sweden, Finland then Switzerland, where he was part of events of larger scale, intended to promote Romanian culture through music, paintings and conferences. Lipatti, who made the trip accompanied by his future wife, Madeleine, was the best-known member of the Romanian delegation, which also included the writer Oscar Walter Cisek, the architect Nicolae Cucu and the painters Jean Steriadi and Nicolae Dărăscu.

Lipatti's arrival in Switzerland in October 1943 meant for both the pianist and his life partner Madeleine the start of a new chapter. Such is the spirit of a letter signed by Lipatti (the only handwritten document in a German library). The letter, dated on January 7th, 1944, was addressed to an official at Romanian Legation in Bern.<sup>19</sup> "I have been appointed professor for the superior level of the Geneva Conservatoire", wrote Lipatti; "it is a big honour, and even if the material conditions are ridiculous, basically zero, I could not make the big mistake to refuse it. On the other hand, Jora wired: *votre nomination sera faite!* This is good news, especially because *only* with the Conservatoire I can't make a living" (sic). Lipatti also mentioned: "I wanted to come personally to Bern and was looking forward to seeing you, but at the moment I am shaken with fever and prefer to express my grievances in writing". While waiting for the nomination as cultural attaché at the Legation (which was put on ice because of the rapid change in political events), Lipatti was asking for a six-month prolongation of his passport and a loan of 1,000 Swiss francs and 100 meal coupons.

Sorrows, health-related and financial, would become part of the background of Lipatti's most significative stage of his career, the backdrop of his accomplishments we cherish him for. In spite of all difficulties, just as many of other former competitors in 1933, Lipatti followed his musical path for as long as it was meant to be.

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While revering Lipatti's memory, remembering his fellows is an act of restitution. This is how some of them fared:

<sup>19</sup> The letter is addressed to a certain "Master Gigi" (*dragă coane Gigi*); the only official bearing this name working for the Romanian Legation in Bern at the beginning of 1944 was the commercial attaché Gheorghe (Gigi) Atanasiu.



**Gina Bachauer (1910-1976)**

It is claimed that Gina Bachauer played over 630 concerts for the Allied soldiers on the Middle East front during the Second World War. A champion of romantic repertoire, she sustained a busy concert schedule up to her death in 1976, due to a heart attack. An International Piano Competition is held each year in Salt Lake City (Utah) to honour her memory.

Gina Bachauer also signed in *Tempo* magazine a review of Madeleine Lipatti's book where, surprisingly, she noted: "I am not amongst those fortunate people who had the privilege of meeting Dinu Lipatti but the two concerts at which I heard him play were an unforgettable experience" (Bachauer 1954: 34).

**Julius Chajes (1910-1985)**

Chajes left Vienna in 1934 for Palestine and then emigrated in 1937 to the United States, where he concentrated his efforts on composition. Henryk Szeryng often played Chajes's Violin Sonata in recitals and wrote of him (in a letter dated August 3rd, 1978): "His music is to Israel what Chopin's was to Poland, de Falla's to Spain and Bartók's to Hungary".

**John Robert Crown (1910-1985)**

Little is known about Moritz Rosenthal's student in Vienna, other than the enthusiastic and grateful tributes of his best-known student, the distinguished American conductor Michael Tilson Thomas.<sup>20</sup> He described John Crown – who taught at University of Southern California – as a consummate pianist and teacher, a true example of the Viennese Piano School.

**Sophia Gurewitsch (1914-2011)**

Julius Isserlis' former student reappears at the end of the war, after seven years spent in the Soviet Gulag – "but not under this name" (Isserlis 2016). Having married a Romanian citizen and adopting his last name, Sofia Cosma settled in Romania where she took up practicing piano with Lipatti's former teacher, Florica Musicescu. She managed to launch a concert and recording career already during the 1950s. In 1976, Sofia Cosma recorded Lipatti's *Sinfonia Concertante* for Two Pianos and Strings, Op. 5,<sup>21</sup> together with Corneliu Gheorghiu, another student of Florica Musicescu. In 1981 Sofia

<sup>20</sup> See also: <http://michaeltilsonthomas.com/mtt-files/program-8-five-degrees-of-separation/>.

<sup>21</sup> Dinu Lipatti, Symphonic Suite Șătrarii, *Sinfonia Concertante* for Two Pianos and Orchestra, soloists Sofia Cosma and Corneliu Gheorghiu. Philharmonic Orchestra of Cluj, conductor Emil Simon, recorded in 1976, Electrecord STM-ECE 01120.

Cosma defected to the United States, where she died in 2011, aged 97. The same year was released a documentary titled *A Suitcase Full of Chocolate*, documenting her life and personality.

#### **Alice Herz-Sommer (1903-2014)**

She and her son survived the concentration camp of Theresienstadt. Before emigrating to England towards the end of her life, she taught over 40 years at the Jerusalem Conservatoire. Her autobiography (*A Garden of Eden in Hell*) and the short documentary (*Lady in No. 6 – Music Saved My Life*) witness her resilience and optimistic stance. She died in 2014, aged 110.

#### **Julian von Károlyi (1914-1993)**

Having gained a strong reputation as an accomplished Chopin specialist during the 1950s and 1960s, Károlyi also taught at the Würzburg University until his death in 1993.

#### **Taras Mykysha (1913-1958)**

Little is known about the Ukrainian-born pianist, other than he renounced his citizenship in 1935, toured Europe until 1947 when he settled in Buenos Aires. He died there, aged 45.

#### **Peter Stadlen (1910-1996)**

As one of the avant-garde champions already during his studies in Vienna with Paul Weingartner, Stadlen premiered in 1937 the Piano Variations Op. 27 by Anton Webern.

Right after the *Anschluss* in 1938, Stadlen fled to England; still, being considered an element of risk, he was interned in the summer of 1940 and shipped under atrocious conditions to Australia. It took over a year to come back to England, yet his health deteriorated to the point he no longer could sustain a regular concert activity. Since 1959 he turned to journalism – he was the *Daily Telegraph's* music critic for more than 25 years. Stadlen's writings on Beethoven have become milestones of scholarship and research.

In retrospect, one may say – like once Claudio Arrau – that these were some of the biggest piano talents of the first half of the 20th century. They represent the lost generation who could have been able to follow, next to Lipatti, the likes of Cortot, Rosenthal, Wittgenstein and many others. They are Dinu Lipatti's generation, finally rediscovered.

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