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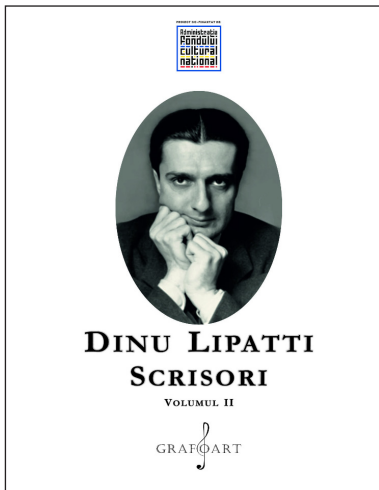
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Dinu Lipatti – *Scrisori* [Dinu Lipatti – Letters], 2 vols. (eds. Monica Isăcescu and Ștefan Costache)

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Letter writing – a habit which most of us have either lost or replaced – still turns out to be that unforeseen, personal and intimate opportunity of discreetly entering the inner world of those around us, when the context favours it. Over time, letters or diaries thus become an object revealed to other eyes than those they were first destined to, occasioning an unexpected familiarity with celebrities otherwise untouchable.

It has been 100 years now since the star of a great Romanian pianist has risen. It would set in sad circumstances

and much sooner than if its ascension had followed a normal, complete course. Sublime Dinu Lipatti passed away at 33, his short artistic lifespan resounding nevertheless even today with echoes of his singular talent. The initiative of musicologists Monica Isăcescu and Ștefan Costache – with the support of Casa Artelor Cultural Centre and of the Administration of the Cultural National Fund – materialised, in the year marking this centenary, in an encounter with Dinu Lipatti’s personality viewed yet from another angle, by means of easing the access to the reading of his correspondence with mentors, teachers, colleagues, friends, and supporters as collected into two substantial volumes published by Grafoart. There is also a “musical” letter, in the

guise of the score of an unknown work for voice and piano which the editors discovered at the Paul Sacher Foundation in Basel. Both the French original and the Romanian translation are given, so that the reader has wider access to the letters' contents.

In their great majority previously inedited, these letters are in fact an important page in the musician's life, as there was a time interval dedicated to letter writing, either by hand or typed. The necessity of communicating with those he loved or who were important to him proved to be for Lipatti a considerable motivation. In addressing himself to his composition master Mihail Jora (whom he calls by such sobriquets as the diminutive *Coane Mișucă*) or to the one who had helped him discover the secrets of the piano Florica Musicescu (*Dona Flora*), Lipatti can be formal and serious or friendly, warm, spontaneous and sarcastic. A surprising optimism seems to help him through life's darkest moments, the use of nicknames, laughing at himself, geniality, and a free style rounding off the portrait of a solar temperament or, as Paul Sacher saw it, one "under the sign of grace" (Vol. 2: 167).

The first volume of letters juxtaposes the correspondence between Lipatti and his two important Romanian teachers, Mihail Jora and Florica Musicescu, and his Parisian mentor, Nadia Boulanger. If one takes the time to go through them, one discovers a Dinu by turns thrilled or deceived by Stravinsky's music – which "will not cease to amaze you" or will prove "more uninspiring and insipid than ever" (Vol. 1: 108) –, under the spell of Horowitz – who "borders on perfection" (Vol. 1: 38) –, finding fault with Rubinstein, in search of discipline with maestro Cortot or for ever benefiting from George Enescu's time, fondness and majestic assent. In the letters to Mihail Jora, the main subject will always be his troubles and trials in composing. As if he himself were guilty of only finding the time to compose at the expense of piano playing, Lipatti keeps on apologising, expressing the wish for an existence where creating "sounds loving one another" were his only goal, "a chapter very dear to me and one I always treat with a frightening idleness" (Vol. 1: 92). "I am a handdog and a sinner", he wrote to his master, "and I have to be driven like an animal, with a whip" (Vol. 1: 48), he joked in 1935. In fact Lipatti's artistic career was taking wings, he was avidly learning new pieces, and, between the classes with Nadia Boulanger, the meetings with Cortot, the conducting lessons and the attending of various remarkable concerts, he was left with too little time for composition. From the same epistolary narrations we learn about his encounters with Ansermet, Menuhin, Toscanini, Celibidache or Bernstein, about his looking critically or in admiration to Gieseking, Kempff or Backhaus, his sounding out Filip Lazăr or Stan Golestan, about his

unreserved regard towards Igor Markevitch as well as about his collaborations with Lola Bobescu or Antonio Janigro.

The same is recounted to Florica Musicescu. But the relationship with *Dona Flora* seems much more humane, almost colloquial when compared to his way of addressing Jora, the mentor's replies being simple and warm-hearted, as if intended for a child, and strewn with serene, tranquil descriptions. One thus discovers an affable, respectful relationship blended in fact into a tender friendship where all secrets are shared. During the Second World War and its subsequent complicated state of things, Lipatti, having moved to Geneva, begins to write in French, and by hand, insisting and trying hard to bring both his mentor and his mother, Anna, to the Western part of Europe.

Letter writing, as piano playing, was a daily practice, flowing in charges of four to five a day. The second volume brings some exceptional surprises. Of particular wit is the correspondence with Clara Haskil, whom Lipatti calls by the endearing name of *Clarinette*. We discover an out of common friendship which goes beyond the barriers of good manners or simple news exchange. They overtake each other in sarcasms, share hearty laughs, including at themselves, and write poems to each other, Clara disclosing to her "dear little baby bro and maestro" (Vol. 2: 23) her innermost fears, and showering him, with undisguised pride, with her affection. Sprinkled with surreally lively drawings, Clara's letters describe for us a warm-hearted and kind Lipatti, of an unearthly talent, "an apostle-like musician" (Vol. 2: 17), majestic and noble-minded. In his turn, *Grégoire*, "yours truly and truly low-spirited", *Dinomade* (Dinu + Madeleine) or simply *Dinu* confessed her his concerns and discussed everything from program ideas, music passages, and notions on performing to the situation of some common friends such as *The dwarf* (Maria Fotino) or their mentor Florica Musicescu.

Another epistolary chapter is dedicated to George Georgescu, one of Lipatti's favourite conductors. Even if the mode of addressing is polite and affectionate, Lipatti, encouraged by the affection and the continual support shown by maestro Georgescu, succeeds here too in surpassing a certain solemnity, sometimes dropping such humoristic signatures as another diminutive of his actual given name, Constantin – *Costică the cimbalomist*.

The relationship with Swiss conductor and Maecenas Paul Sacher is apparent from an impressive number of letters. Soon moving from cordiality to couple friendship (the Lipattis becoming very close to the Sachers), their bond is strengthened by an outstanding professional collaboration. Between concerts and ganglionic episodes, Lipatti describes Paul, as jocosely as ever, how he undergoes an X-ray treatment causing "the individual [to be reduced]

to a heap of ashes” from which “he must regenerate, if possible, just like the cunning Phoenix. All in all: challenging the crematory! That’s all, folks!” (Vol. 2: 288). And still Lipatti will not be overpowered, and in none of his letters does he seem to lose his proverbial optimism.

The last two chapters of the second volume contain the letters to the director of the Geneva Music Conservatory, Henri Gagnebin, and to pianist Nikita Magaloff. When acute illness periods manifest, Gagnebin would continue to hold Lipatti’s teaching position, thus helping him during strained circumstances and proving to be the pianist’s fervent supporter after his relocation to Switzerland. Being no longer able to teach, Lipatti asks Magaloff for help and proposes he take over the piano class, the consequence being the development of a fond, vibrant relationship as is hard to be imagined between two great musicians sharing, at least in theory, the European concert stage. With Clara Haskil as common friend, they end up being members of the same juries, they chat, they recommend each other scores, and they dedicate each other poems (*Kiki the Magnificent*).

Lipatti is getting worse and worse, Giesecking had been banned by the Americans, Kempff, reported missing after he had left Potsdam on foot with his family, Vienna sang the praise of Karajan, the public was either falling out with Furtwängler or acknowledging his authority – the European musical world was boiling between the sublime and danger.

It is then that the letters to Jora, Florica Musicescu, Boulanger, Clara Haskil, George Georgescu, Paul Sacher, Henri Gagnebin or Nikita Magaloff stop . . . Dinu has passed away. But the initiative to bring to light such previously unknown documents gives us the chance to see, behind the performer of Bach’s chorale *Jesu bleibet meine Freude*, a dynamic, exuberant character, full of substance and grace, deserving to be followed through his thoughts so purposefully laid out on paper.

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English version by Maria Monica Bojin