

Musicology Today

Journal of the National University of Music Bucharest

Issue 2 (34) April-June 2018

Title: Artistic Management on Your Own: A How-To Guide of Reliable Solutions. Case Study: Bucharest Symphonic Orchestra (OSB)

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Source: Musicology Today: Journal of the National University of Music Bucharest / Volume 9 / Issue 2 (34) / April-June 2018, pp 117-120

Link to this article: musicologytoday.ro/34/MT34thoughtsOpreoiu.pdf

How to cite this article: Cătălin Oprețoiu, "Artistic Management on Your Own: A How-To Guide of Reliable Solutions. Case Study: Bucharest Symphonic Orchestra (OSB)", *Musicology Today: Journal of the National University of Music Bucharest* 9/2 (34) (2018), 117-120.

Published by: Editura Universității Naționale de Muzică București

Musicology Today: Journal of the National University of Music Bucharest is indexed by EBSCO, RILM, and ERIH PLUS

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Artistic Management on Your Own: A How-To Guide of Reliable Solutions. Case Study: Bucharest Symphonic Orchestra (OSB)

It all started with an idea – that of creating a private symphony orchestra, such as exist, in significant numbers, in the world's greatest music centres, joined with the strong, sincere, impetuous wish to add, on one's own, something substantial, something *different*, to the musical and cultural life of today's Romania.

There was also a firm, unabated will to attract, to mobilize artistic forces which would answer to the requirement of the highest professional standards, would wager on the same goal – not an easy one at all, would share the same extraordinary stake – of truly, freely affirming and expressing oneself while sharing common values, of individuals uniting in a self-contained ensemble, forming a spiritual family and efficiently working together, an ensemble which would prove its value on a competitive European and international music market.

The option for a trio management formula followed the infallible principle of the union, under the aura of friendship, of three personalities, thus guaranteeing a beneficial balance: flutist Cătălin Oprițoiu, violinist Gabriel Gheorghe, and cellist Alexandru Duțulescu.

The year of the creation of Romania's most important private orchestra – as, over its eleven years of existence, the Bucharest Symphonic Orchestra turned out to be – is 2007. Its evolution was indeed spectacular, surpassing everyone's, including the founders', expectations. This amazing journey is due both to an inspired management which brought together originality and pragmatism (intelligently taking advantage of unhoped-for opportunities – a stroke of luck gracefully allowed by destiny) and to a team brimming with

artistic energy naturally powered by an infinite passion for music and intertwined, in its turn, with a legitimate patriotic breath. With regard to this, the exact, objective, honouring portrayal that *În premieră* TV show made the orchestra, its members and its management (following the return from the second South-American tour, in November 2017) only replicates the impact that the phenomenality of the OSB project has on the audience:

A handful of talented people created an orchestra and, paying for it themselves, with money loaned from the bank, went to the end of the world to represent Romania, knowing ever since their departure that they will not gain anything out of it other than thunderous applause, incredible reviews and the respect of the entire South America. We could describe these people in many ways . . . beautiful, crazy, talented, nice, cool, but patriot fits them best! Due to them, Enescu was performed in Latin America's greatest concert halls, and Romania's National Anthem majestically rose over the Andes! (*În premieră* 2017)

Bucharest Symphonic Orchestra thus becomes – after being praised by the audience, critics (“a capsule of force and passion . . . a dynamic and expressive orchestra”, *În premieră* 2017), organisers, officials from that distant part of the world – a powerful representation of Romania both locally and abroad, receiving, from the state authorities, the title of cultural ambassador of Romania.

The managerial strategy always kept two desiderata in sight. The first concerns approaching a palette as diverse and large as possible as regards music genres and styles (showing an exceptional flexibility), from those, many, of classical music, to the least conventional (written for orchestra) but quite popular – symphonic pop,¹ symphonic rock,² Italian *bel canto* (in concert version), film³ and animated film soundtracks, crossover music, this impressive repertoire having sometimes been accordingly re-arranged/re-orchestrated with remarkable skill, in a distinguished classicising manner, a number of works benefiting from unusual and spectacular symphonic transcriptions – origi-

¹ Such as *Beatles Symphonic* or *Queen Classics* by Vlad Maistorovici, with Vlad Maistorovici – solo violin and conductor and his guests: Robin Green – solo piano, Harry Cameron Penny – solo clarinet, Christian Elliott – solo cello; and others.

² Such as *SymPhoenix* alongside pop-rock group Phoenix or the concerts at alternative rock festival *Summer Well* 2017 and 2018, when OSB performed the invited bands' greatest hits.

³ *Star Wars: A New Hope, Live in Concert*.

nal versions, selected by the orchestra's management itself. This extensive and diverse repertoire can also cover any type of event, from usual concerts and recitals⁴ to extraordinary occasions such as, festivals and competitions,⁵ tours,⁶ anniversaries, commemorations, Christmas⁷ and New Year concerts (the latter, aimed at synchronising Bucharest with the great European capitals, has reached its fifth edition and proposed, for its last night, a particularly attractive programme which combined diversity with quality),⁸ among others.

Wishing to approach a rarer stock of works (first and foremost, from the Romanian cultural and musical area), the management – nonconformist musicians, in tune with the latest orientations in music performance – promoted a concept quite popular in the US and the UK, where it has been proposed for over a century, namely, family concerts, which, under the generic title *On the Wings of Music*, have been very well received by those to whom they were destined. All these performances are addressed to an ever wider audience, which OSB wants to introduce to the musical masterpieces, to educate, without discounting the quality of performance. In this *crescendo* of values, OSB worked with first-rate Romanian singers and performers such as Angela Gheorghiu, Irina Baianţ, Viniciu Moroianu, Ioana Croitoru, or Vlad Maistorovici. This objective has the connotations of a real and positive social impact, both immediate and on medium- and long-term. The appreciation

⁴ The all-Beethoven feast from the 2018 *SalutCultura* season, with the composer's fifth piano concerto featuring Viniciu Moroianu and fifth symphony, conducted by Jin Wang.

⁵ The Gala Concert in the Final of the International Symphonic Orchestra Conducting Competition, in the *SalutCultura* 2018 season, with a rich program: Mozart – overture to *The Magic Flute*, Beethoven – *Egmont* Overture, Brahms – Variations on a Theme by Haydn, Tchaikovsky – *Romeo and Juliet* Overture-Fantasy, Bruch – Violin Concerto No. 1, Dvořák – Symphony No. 9 “From the New World”.

⁶ High points in OSB's evolution were the two tours in South America (2013 and 2017), the concerts in Santiago de Chile and Lima being premieres in the sense that no Romanian symphonic orchestra had ever played there before.

⁷ *Holy Christmas Night* 2017 – OSB and Andrei Tudor Band featuring Monica Anghel, Luminița Anghel, Aurelian Temișan, Vlad Miriță, Andra, Nico, Marcel Pavel, Loredana, and others.

⁸ Part I – Tchaikovsky: Polonaise from *Eugene Onegin*, Pas de deux and Waltz from *Sleeping Beauty*, Trepak from *The Nutcracker* and the second movement from Symphony No. 6, Waltz from *Swan Lake*, *Romeo and Juliet* Overture-Fantasy; part II – David Newman and Stephen Flaherty, *Once Upon a December* (from the *Anastasia* movie), Dvořák: Allegretto from Symphony No. 8, Berlioz: *Un bal* from *Symphonie fantastique*, Richard Strauss: closing waltz from *Der Rosenkavalier* Suite, Brahms: Hungarian Dance No. 1, Waldteufel: *The Skaters Waltz*, Giménez: Intermezzo from *La Boda de Luis Alonso*, Johann Strauss II: *Voices of Spring*.

and respect for, first of all, local, but also for international audiences are written in the professional deontological code of the ensemble's members.

A second goal ensues from the pragmatic evaluation of the phenomenon in its complexity and from placing and engaging it in our society's complicated activity network. The Western model answers to the managerial strategy adopted by the OSB's management, according to whom the artists

must make themselves useful . . . must have ideas, be versatile, and have the courage to put those ideas into effect! The main issue is how to attract an audience, so you must do what it takes in order to attract one. If the public will not come to us, we will go to the public. It's that simple. (Dan Dediu, quoted in Rădulescu 2008: 68)

Implementing ideas regarding innovative alternatives concert spaces, OSB has performed in the most unusual locations, fully enjoying, together with the ad hoc audience, programs both balanced and spectacular – the flash mob from the Henri Coandă Airport, concerts in malls, parks, on the outskirts of Bucharest, in a spa etc. With the amendment that in the case of OSB the project began as an exclusively auto-financed enterprise, the magisterial remarks made (like in a succinct and valuable guide to artistic management) by Dan Dediu in one of his interviews (Rădulescu 2008: 68) essentially tallies with everything of value, novel, and successful initiated and implemented within this both daring and worthy of applause project orchestra, the Bucharest Symphonic Orchestra – and, as a consequence, in Romanian music and culture.

English version by Maria Monica Bojin

În premieră cu Carmen Avram [Premiering on the Carmen Avram Show]
2017 “Încântarea României” [Enchanting Romania], TV show, reporter Carmen Moise, producer Carmen Avram, *Antena 3*, season 14, November 25th, <http://inpremiera.antena3.ro/reportaje/incantarea-romaniei-424.html>.

Rădulescu, Antigona

2008 “Interviu cu Dan Dediu despre globalizare și manele” [Interview with Dan Dediu on Globalization and *Manele*], *Muzica*, new series 19/4 (76), 60-68.