

# Musicology Today

Journal of the National University of Music Bucharest

Issue 4 (36) October-December 2018

**Title:** Inside the Archives of the National University of Music Bucharest

**Author:** Antigona Rădulescu

**E-mail:** [antigonaradulescu@yahoo.com](mailto:antigonaradulescu@yahoo.com)

**Source:** Musicology Today: Journal of the National University of Music Bucharest / Volume 9 / Issue 4 (36) / October-December 2018, pp 351-363

**Link to this article:** [musicologytoday.ro/36/MT36studiesRadulescu.pdf](http://musicologytoday.ro/36/MT36studiesRadulescu.pdf)

**How to cite this article:** Antigona Rădulescu, "Inside the Archives of the National University of Music Bucharest", *Musicology Today: Journal of the National University of Music Bucharest*, 9/4 (36) (2018), 351-363.

**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

*Antigona RĂDULESCU*  
*National University of Music Bucharest*

## Inside the Archives of the National University of Music Bucharest

**Keywords:** history of music institutions, totalitarianism, music and politics

During its 150 years of existence since its founding in 1864, the Conservatory of Music and Declamation (today's National University of Music Bucharest, UNMB) was highly sensitive to changes in Romanian society. It was therefore strongly affected by the actions of 20th century totalitarian regimes our country was subjected to from the 1940s to the fall of communism at the end of the 1980s.

Exploring the University's Archive Collections gave me the chance to come into contact with documents recording the political intrusion on the institution's life and which testify to its effects on musicians and their music. I also referred to the files kept in the Human Resources Archives, which concentrate information on the individual but give, at the same time, the possibility of evaluating the mechanisms of professional and human assessment which a thinking profoundly distorted by ideological exigencies exerted over a long period of time. To this is added a not too extensive bibliography, constituted in the recent years and which foregrounds new information on the University and its leading musicians.

As it was to be expected, the two periods are covered unevenly, this quantitative disparity being obviously due to their different duration and, as such, it is the second one, lasting for more than forty years, that is favoured. There is also what we might call a difference of contents. The impact of the two totalitarian extremes of the political spectrum on the University (far-left communism and the far-right dictatorships under the National Legionary State, King Carol II, and Marshal Ion Antonescu) had different intensities and consequences.

The dictatorial regimes of the first period put pressure on a Conservatory<sup>1</sup> still defended, both from the outside and from the inside, by democratic forces, and didn't therefore succeed in their goal to modify the very structure of the prestigious establishment.

Things were to change, though, with the instauration of "people power" which took pains to radically and systemically change the substance of the Romanian culture, while those targeted had to make a tremendous effort to both resist it and dissimulate their resistance behind a variety of means of expression.

Far-right ideas, such as nationalism, recruitment and adhesion to the Legionary Movement make their presence felt among some of the teachers and students. Depending on benefits derived and on the ruling party, people are sanctioned, arrested, or excluded from the community on political or ethnic criteria. Abuse is allowed after a decision of the Ministry of Education from February 1939 (Cosma 2008: 433-434) which states that only Romanian citizens can hold public functions. At the Conservatory, Professor Umberto Pessione, Italian citizen, is in danger of being fired. He would stay only after the Management of the institution (Ion Nonna Otescu<sup>2</sup> was then rector)<sup>3</sup> had insisted on it. At the height of legionary fervour, the Decree-Law no. 2650/940 from August 1940 sets the Jewish community membership criteria, thus preparing the ground for the persecution of the Jews. It is no wonder then that there were voices asking for change at the Music Academy, as the institution was regarded as being penetrated by "parasite infiltrations" which prevented its modernization in the "new patriotic Romanian spirit and soul . . . giving a new, fecund life to Romanian art"<sup>4</sup> (as a part of the press would put it). In July 1940, the Archives' register books show that there were no persons belonging to the Jewish community susceptible of being discharged, according to the law. Just one case needed to be settled, that of the piano tuner N. Thilemann (Cosma 2008: 463).

Using its favourite instruments – antisemitism, nationalism, chauvinism –, the power tried to exercise strict control at all levels. The Conservatory was impacted by such mechanisms, too, as shows, for example, the case of com-

<sup>1</sup> The Royal Conservatory of Music and Dramatic Art was the full name of the institution between 1942 and 1948.

<sup>2</sup> Composer and conductor Ion Nonna Otescu (1888-1940), who had studied in Bucharest and Paris, first taught, then was director of the Bucharest Conservatory (1919-1940) and vice-president of the Society of Romanian Composers (later called Union of Composers) between 1920 and 1940.

<sup>3</sup> File from 1939, in the UNMB Archives.

<sup>4</sup> Romeo Alexandrescu, "Academia Regală de Muzică trebuie reorganizată" [The Royal Music Academy Must Be Restructured], in *Universul literar* 49/40, September 20th, 1940, 5, quoted in Cosma 2008: 464.

poser Marțian Negrea.<sup>5</sup> Much effort had been made to bring him from the Conservatory of Cluj to teach harmony, counterpoint and composition in Bucharest, but it would meet with unexpected opposition: the Academy's Management, and especially Principal Dimitrie Cuclin,<sup>6</sup> a well-known supporter of the Legionary Movement, resisted the idea, on the grounds that Negrea "has been seen to nurture a great admiration for the Hungarians".<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, as most of the teaching staff in the field thought highly of him, the composer would eventually be hired.

Named Head of the Academy on March 12th, 1941, Mihail Jora<sup>8</sup> would provide the counterweighting force needed to control these political excesses. From the very beginning, he pleads before the academic community for a sense of self-restraint and balance: "I ask that, at least as long as you are enrolled in this school, you keep your political views private".<sup>9</sup> Jora himself had quite recently almost been purged when, in 1938, he had been mistakenly put, by the Munich *Judentum und Musik* on the list of Jewish musicians to be excluded from any public activity (Popa 2009: 15). After August 23rd, 1944, still the Head of the institution and again demonstrating his integrity, Jora would stand against the consequences of the Communist Party rapidly taking power in Romania, when political interference gained in intensity. Until 1947, the year he was dismissed, he would protest against and would oppose the communist whirlwind shaking the foundations of music education. He would finally fall under the guillotine of the new exigencies instituted immediately after the war, being removed from the Conservatory and marginalized.

<sup>5</sup> Composer Marțian Negrea (1893-1973), trained in Sibiu and Vienna, taught at the Cluj (1921-1941) and Bucharest (1941-1963) conservatories. He is known both for his oeuvre and for a series of treatises: on harmony, orchestration, musical forms, counterpoint and fugue, harmony.

<sup>6</sup> Complex musician, composer, theoretician, and teacher, Cuclin (1885-1978) graduated the Bucharest Conservatory and pursued further studies at the Conservatoire National de Musique and the Schola Cantorum in Paris. He taught in Bucharest even from the interwar period (history of music, aesthetics, musical forms and analyses, harmony, counterpoint and composition).

<sup>7</sup> The argument is recorded in the UNMB Archives, minute no. 50 from December 10th, 1941. The episode is also reported in Cosma 2008: 499-501.

<sup>8</sup> Mihail Jora (1891-1971) taught (1930-1948, 1954-1961) and was rector (1941-1947) of the Royal Academy of Music in Bucharest (as the Conservatory was then called). As a composition teacher, he trained several generations of Romanian composers. He was, among others, director of musical programs with the Romanian Radio in Bucharest since the inception of this modern institution as well as founding member and vice-president of the Society of Romanian Composers.

<sup>9</sup> Fragment from the opening speech of the 1941-1942 academic year, cited in Cosma 2008: 485.

Upon the request of the Communist Party, teachers are again checked up on and are to be subjected to a purging process. Dismembering and disuniting the “old” society by acting upon its very essence is now called “renewal”, and as a consequence some of the teaching staff, considered to be exponents of the old bourgeois-landlord rule, are suspended, forced to retire, accused and arrested. Many figures of the Conservatory, and later its students as well, underwent such “cleansing”. The University’s Human Resources Archives throw a light on this disastrous process founded on denunciation or deceit, pressure, threats or unimaginable subjection. Some cases can throw more light on the subject.

Mihail Jora’s file is a good example. After 1947, his music is heavily criticized, being considered decadent and therefore against the progressive ideology. In an informative note written on July 17th, 1954, entitled *Reference*, Professor George Breazul<sup>10</sup> gives Jora a brief description in accordance with the new moral and aesthetic criteria. He praises Jora’s character, dignity, and honesty, as well as that of his music which draws inspiration from “the life and work of the people, from its history and from the fair landscape of our homeland”. Conversely,

the grotesque scenes of our 1848-related past, of those who were discovering the hilarious side of minority groups cut off from the people and its ideals, thrashing the mores of those estranged of the people’s fight, would be used in composing . . . the ballets *At the Market* and *Maid Măriuța*.<sup>11</sup>

The December 1947 episode, when Jora had publicly proposed that a moment of silence be observed in the aftermath of King Michael I abdication and the abolition of monarchy, is softened in Professor’s Garabet Avachian<sup>12</sup> account (written years later, on July 1st, 1954), which reinterprets, in a personal manner and in conformity with the new era, an unwonted act of courage:

<sup>10</sup> Teacher, musicologist and folklorist, Breazul (1887-1961) worked at the Bucharest Conservatory, teaching, between 1926 and 1961, theory of music and solfege, encyclopaedia and music pedagogy, history of music. He founded the Phonogrammic Archives of the Ministry of Instruction, Religious Affairs and Arts.

<sup>11</sup> George Breazul, informative note from July 17th, 1954, in Jora’s file in the Human Resources Archives of the UNMB.

<sup>12</sup> Romanian violinist, Garabet Avachian (1908-1967), graduate of the Bucharest Conservatory, taught there several generations of great Romanian performers.

Upon hearing that he had requested a moment of silence after Mihai I's abdication, I asked him what drove him to it; his answer was: "I am no Don Quixote, as some misinterpreted, I thought I had to ask for a moment of silence for the withdrawal of the Conservatory's patron", . . . thus marking what has been and stepping on the new path that history lays before us.<sup>13</sup>

Still in 1954, Professor Gabriela Deleanu's<sup>14</sup> view, poles apart from her colleagues, perfectly fits the times' political requirements. Making venomous remarks, she says that "maestro Jora strongly criticized the accomplishments of our regime", being "a typical representative of feudal knight mentality". She also declares that Jora "defended the Jews when they were persecuted, . . . but manifested his displeasure with regard to the great number of Jews involved in art". In conclusion, writes Gabriela Deleanu, "I express my disbelief that he would teach our young people at the Conservatory in the spirit of a view on art (music) compatible to our ideas".<sup>15</sup>

The same Human Resources file also records the answer Mihail Jora gave to the Conservatoire's Head, Ioan D. Chirescu,<sup>16</sup> about his being notified as to his reintegration, on January 1st, 1954, as professor at the Composition Department. He denounces the illegal character of his removal from the classroom on February 1st, 1948 on grounds of "antidemocratic attitudes" and refuses the reintegration without a prior and complete exoneration: "it is natural that the reparation which I am given be fully made, and not only in the guise of a concession or pardon".<sup>17</sup>

Another interesting file is that of Constantin Silvestri,<sup>18</sup> world-renowned conductor, composer, pianist and teacher. His situation excites mixed feelings

<sup>13</sup> Garabet Avachian, informative note from July 1st, 1954, in Jora's file in the Human Resources Archives of the UNMB.

<sup>14</sup> Teaching history of music at the Bucharest Conservatory and zealous in applying the Communist Party's requirements in the academic activity.

<sup>15</sup> Gabriela Deleanu, informative note, in Jora's file in the Human Resources Archives of the UNMB.

<sup>16</sup> Ioan D. Chirescu (1889-1980), composer and choir conductor. He started at the Bucharest Conservatory and pursued further studies at the Schola Cantorum. Appreciated for his choral oeuvre in particular, he taught at the Bucharest Conservatory from 1927 and was its rector between 1950 and 1955.

<sup>17</sup> Mihail Jora, cited in Jora's file in the Human Resources Archives of the UNMB.

<sup>18</sup> In addition to his positions of music director of the Romanian Opera in Bucharest and director of the Bucharest Philharmonic, Silvestri (1913-1969) taught orchestral conducting at the Bucharest Conservatory (1948-1959). He immigrated to England in 1959, becoming principal conductor of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra.

about his behaviour towards the demands of the new regime and about the quality of his composition. The Human Resources note from October 10th, 1953, on the headed paper of the Committee for Art of the Council of Ministers, gives the usual information: origins – petite bourgeoisie; studies – the Music Academy and the Faculty of Law and Letters; political affiliation – without any such affiliation; without relatives living abroad; and other information on his family, wife, his wife’s family, wealth. The description goes on: “a valuable element”; “a conductor of exceptional qualities”;

He is the first Romanian conductor to conduct Tchaikovsky’s *Manfred Symphony*, to which he succeeded in giving a powerfully realist rendition. He also distinguished himself as a pianist and composer, but due to his formalism, his compositions lose some of their value. He greatly contributed to improving the performance of the Bucharest State Philharmonic Orchestra, but his accomplishments were checked by cosmopolite tendencies and he sometimes lacked the proper attitude as regards the promotion of new Romanian and foreign works. This lack he tried to eliminate, succeeding, lately, in expanding his Romanian and Russian repertoire. In the past he refrained from adhering to any political party or organisation. He is currently surrounded by a bourgeois reactionary environment, which thwarts his political and ideological development . . . We propose he be sent to the USSR and are his guarantors.

Signs of a recalcitrant or dishonest behaviour towards the official authorities appear in the denunciations by some of his students and colleagues alike:

He is self-conceited and has an attitude of disdain towards the most talented comrades in Romanian musical life. He plays the apolitical, but in reality he is impregnated by a bourgeois-idealistic mentality, which is reflected in his artistic position as well. He is politically dubious, perseveres in playing a double game by using some of the comrades’ indecision to slip in stinging comments on our regime. He is individualistic and formalist, which is a serious obstacle to his conversion as well as to his attempt to write some songs, which are successful only to a small extent.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> From an unsigned and undated copy of a report by the Human Resources Manager.

A *Control report* from May 16th, 1951 includes characterisations by some of the teachers at the Conservatory and some of Silvestri's colleagues from the Radio. Alfred Mendelsohn<sup>20</sup> describes him as an exceptional professional, highly intelligent, with a difficult temper which makes him “keep an enormous distance and a selfishness deftly hidden from popular democracy”. Hilda Jerea<sup>21</sup> recognises his musical talent but claims that he is

strongly influenced by the Western bourgeois ideology, he wrote formalist works, but lately he stopped writing, insinuating that he can no longer adapt to the spirit of a healthy music. Politically, he is an uncertain element, giving up all political work and responsibility.

Mauriciu Vesca<sup>22</sup> describes him as a promoter of “decadent and formalist” music.

He has an attitude of disdain towards the most talented comrades in Romanian musical life. . . . he aspires to have his talent confirmed by the West he worships. He is a highly talented conductor and we must make him useful by making him conduct. He must not be allowed to come in contact with foreigners and especially with those insufficiently oriented, because to them he portrays us in the most negative colours. He believes that if he were sent to the USSR the high level of the Soviet musical art could unsettle his

<sup>20</sup> Alfred Mendelsohn (1910-1966) studied composition with Franz Schmidt and Joseph Marx at the Akademie für Musik und darstellende Kunst in Vienna (1927-1931) and, with Mihail Jora, in Bucharest. After 1946 he taught counterpoint, composition and orchestration at the Bucharest Conservatory while being secretary and later vice-president of the Union of Composers. As he embraced the desiderata of the new communist regime, his oeuvre underwent a radical change, in keeping with the imposed socialist realist doctrine.

<sup>21</sup> Composer and pianist, Hilda Jerea (1916-1980) studied at the conservatories in Iași and Bucharest as well as in Paris and Budapest. An extremely active solo and chamber musician, she founded and led the chamber ensemble Musica Nova. She taught chamber music at the Bucharest Conservatory (1969-1972) and was secretary of the Union of Composers (1949-1952).

<sup>22</sup> Mauriciu Vesca (b. 1916) was a fervent supporter of communist politics as early as the inception of the popular power regime, as prove his positions in the top management teams of such music institutions as the Romanian Radio (director of musical programs, 1949-1951), the Romanian Opera in Bucharest (deputy director, 1951-1955) or the State Committee for Culture and Art (director of musical programs, 1959-1962), as well as his studies at the Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow (1957-1959).



hostile position. He has an attitude of deceit in order to mislead the authorities as to his true feelings.

Harry Brauner<sup>23</sup> declares he was acquainted with him since 1936, back when he was an exceptional talent, but his works presented an “ultra-modernist trait, characteristic of a sickly art divorced from the people”. He knew that Silvestri had performed in Hitler’s Germany, being an “admirer of the Western culture”, at the same times he admits that he was valuable and that he must “be gained over”. Matei Socor<sup>24</sup> describes him as a friend of the Italian and German legation even before the war. “He didn’t want to enrol in ARLUS<sup>25</sup> after August 23rd [1944], but later he did, but he quit, saying that people engage in politics”. The repertoire he fosters at the Philharmonic is “against our ideological lines”. His concerts are a “manifestation of the bourgeoisie”. “His best friends are Rogalski and Paul Constantinescu, reactionary, inveterate elements. Also Jora, Andricu and Alessandrescu”.<sup>26</sup>

The characterization of Cella Delavrancea (1952), well-known pianist and teacher at the Conservatory, by her fellow piano teacher Grete Miletineanu borders on the preposterous. The tone is rather of a denunciation, and much of the information is false:

Cella Delavrancea was a familiar figure of the higher circles of the bourgeois-landlord regime. She was married several times. . . . She was *intimate* with Queen Mary. She supported the Legionary Movement, I don’t know if she was an official member, but her statement then, that she would consider herself happy if she washed floors in a legionary canteen, is known. (I think she even

<sup>23</sup> Distinguished folklorist, Harry Brauner (1908-1988) was teacher and head of the Folklore Department at the Bucharest Conservatory (1948-1950) and director of the Folklore Institute in Bucharest (1949-1950). Arrested in 1950, he was sentenced to 15 years in prison (he would serve 12) and, rehabilitated after 1968, he returned at the Conservatory to head the first ethnomusicology laboratory.

<sup>24</sup> Matei Socor (1908-1980), composer, graduate of the Bucharest Conservatory, with further studies in Leipzig, was an advocate of the left even from the interwar period (he joined the Communist Party in 1934). After 1944, he would quickly accede to such important positions as conductor and director of the Romanian Radio (1945-1952) or president of the Union of Composers (1949-1954).

<sup>25</sup> Asociația Română pentru strângerea Legăturilor cu Uniunea Sovietică [the Romanian Association for Strengthening the Bonds with the Soviet Union].

<sup>26</sup> Alfred Mendelsohn, Hilda Jerea, Mauriciu Vescan, Harry Brauner, Matei Socor, informative notes in *Control report* from May 16th, 1951, in Silvestri’s file in the Human Resources Archives the UNMB.

wrote this in a newspaper article). . . . Even if C. Delavr. is highly intelligent and was a good pianist, I would deem her employment at the Conservatoire a great mistake . . . in addition to her being friend with all the ones reactionaries! in our teaching staff, Miss Muzicescu, Silvia Șerbescu<sup>27</sup> and others. Reinforcing reactionary thought in our school, it would be a blow to those striving to introduce our ideology in the music education.<sup>28</sup>

One last example, namely, composer Tiberiu Olah's<sup>29</sup> file, throws light on the control the Communist Party had over the students too. Enrolled in the Tchaikovsky State Conservatory in Moscow between 1949 and 1954, Olah is, like most of his colleagues studying abroad, under constant surveillance. One of the characterisations written by the class president Vintilă Gheorghită on behalf of the group of Romanian students at the Moscow Conservatory states that

his vocal and instrumental works (the cantata, the symphony, the quartet etc.), all reflect the progressive ideas of our times, demonstrate the skill, originality, traits characteristic to Olah the composer, demonstrate the possibility of beautiful perspectives in the future.

It is also mentioned that he was admired by the Soviet teachers and students and, finally, that he “is good at politics and ideology (he got an “exceptional” in all ideology exams, showing that he knows his way around matters of aesthetics and Marxism-Leninism)”.<sup>30</sup>

Despite the necessarily fragmented perspective induced by the study of the documents kept in the archives, a chain of events can be reconstructed, because, as shown, post-war history left sufficient marks illustrating the rhythm of the transition and of the time when communism was being firmly established in Romania, the doctrines, methods and instruments used in building the cultural revolutions which would be inflicted on the artistic field too.

<sup>27</sup> Florica Musicescu/Muzicescu (1887-1969) and Silvia Șerbescu (1903-1965) both taught at the Piano Department.

<sup>28</sup> Grete Miletianu, informative note from October 1952, in Delavrancea's file in the Human Resources Archives of the UNMB.

<sup>29</sup> Tiberiu Olah (1928-2002) studied at the Cluj (1946-1949) and Moscow conservatories and was one of the leading composers of 20th century Romania. From 1958 he taught composition and orchestration at the Bucharest Conservatory.

<sup>30</sup> Vintilă Gheorghită, informative note, in Olah's file in the Human Resources Archives of the UNMB.

They reflect in great measure the ensuing cycles, each with its tendencies to insularism or apparent liberalization.<sup>31</sup>

A number of documents from the first decade (1944-1954) and until Stalin's death are extant which downright prove the implementation of the Soviet model. The many changes caused by the convulsive reforms of education are revealing, as are the attempt to put into operation the various Soviet and Romanian resolutions in the field of music, or the new curricula and their ideologisation, the new repertorial strategy, the teachers' selection and assessment etc. A few examples are instructive.

In 1951, the list of subjects for the state exam (that is, the university final exam) included, among others, the following titles:<sup>32</sup>

1. Class conflict as reflected in music during the application of the slavery system;
2. The ascent of the bourgeoisie as reflected in the development of instrumental music from Frescobaldi down to Beethoven;
3. The development of the symphony in the light of social changes (from Haydn to serialism);
4. Russian opera – a revolutionary tribune;
5. Verdi's operas, expression of the Italian people's fight for freedom and the building of the nation state;
6. Musical nationalism, a reflection of the bourgeoisie's fight for the building of a nation state;
7. The importance of the Russian classical composers in the development of musical nationalism in other countries;
8. The importance of cultivating the tradition of Russian classical music for the composers in our country for the creation of an art socialist in its content and national in its form;
9. The development of Romanian music in the light of the ascent of the bourgeoisie;
10. The development of musical theatre in our country in the light of social changes;
11. The relationship between poetry and Romanian music in Romania from 1848 to this day: lied, choral music, romances, the stylistic changes determined by the changes in Romanian society;

<sup>31</sup> I employ here Valentina Sandu-Dediu's periodization from Sandu-Dediu 2002 and 2006.

<sup>32</sup> Minute folder 1950-1951, February 28th, 1951, in the UNMB Archives.

12. The battle tradition of our nation, from the revolutionary song to mass song, in our country;
13. The development of church music from the chant of Slavonic origin to the four-part choral singing;
14. The importance of assimilating the decree on music of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the other Party documents in the fight against bourgeois ideology, cosmopolitanism and formalism, for the musical output in Romanian People's Republic;
15. The history of music as a means of understanding changes in society;
16. The great figure of I.V. Stalin in the peoples' music;
17. The patriotic song, mobilising factor in the great war for defending the homeland in the USSR;
18. The fight for peace in the musical output of the USSR and of the democratic people's republics.

The concert programme on the opening of the 1950-1951 academic year included the following: the Romanian and Soviet national anthem, *Doing Housework* by Mircea Neagu, *Song about the City of Stalin* by Liviu Ionescu, *Song about Friends from Afar* by Dunaevsky, *Canzonetta* by Tchaikovsky, *Down in the Valley where the Springs Flow* by D. Gheciu, *Russia* by Novicov, *Romanian Folk Dances* by Bartók, *Dear Flower of my Heart* by Chirescu, *We Will Answer the Call* by Vieru, *March for the Partisans of Peace* by Radu Şerban, *Stalin is the light* by V. Popovici.

A report on the Composition Department drafted by Alfred Mendelsohn (May 17th, 1952) specifies the new regulations on music writing. It shows that turning more to folk music and cultivating melody as the “main means of expression” are the main channels of carrying out, as regards composition, the resolution on the development of music (he was referring not only to the Resolution of February 10th, 1948 of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, but also to the Romanian resolution formulated by Matei Socor – *On the Development of Music in the Romanian People's Republic* – and implemented, as we can see, through the zeal of the “priests of the Party's religion”).<sup>33</sup> The report also shows that by optimal re-evaluation of the problems of melody, acoustics, polyphony, orchestration etc., of their “historical materialist” essence, one would be able to fight

<sup>33</sup> As composer Dan Constantinescu labelled the teachers dutifully complying with the commands of the regime (Constantinescu 1992: 11).

“tendencies towards an idealist technicism characterized by a metaphysical appreciation of the issue of talent as an immutable category, as well as narrow, mechanistic deviations still present in the classroom”. Again, the “teachers of the department did their best in using the existing Soviet textbooks and in adapting them to our curricula, so that at the end of each given academic year students would have an overview of the subjects taught”. It is critical of the teachers’ low ideological level, the causes for this being

the insufficient preoccupation on the part of the department’s management, the bowing and scraping to the teachers’ artistic reputation, the mechanic applying of a pseudo-Marxist phraseology devoid of concrete, the under appreciation of individual practice and of other forms of practice, the bilateral lack of relations with the social departments and a sum of other “imponderables” which in fact are rectifiable subjective conditions.

It also argued for a more serious study of Marxism-Leninism.

The history of music itself is read differently, in order to match the criteria set by the Socialist realism doctrine. We find out for example that young Wagner is interested in the time’s ideals, reflected by the revolutions taking place in France and Germany. With the repression of the revolutionary élan, Wagner turned to the past. One can’t call into question the fact that his opera *Tristan und Isolde*, influenced by Schopenhauer’s philosophy, “hostile to life and to man”, is powerfully expressive, but the “pulverisation of tonality” is an indicator of a tendency towards decadent modernism. *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* is an important opera because “it sets foot on the path of realist art, one close to the people”, but *Parsifal* is “the final stage of his conversion to the mystical ideology of reactionary Catholicism”, is “antirealist”, “adverse to the people”, “a complete ideological decline”, “an obvious regress”. Naturalism in music, too, is seen as decadent, dangerous, because “it assumes the appearance of realism” while in fact ignoring class conflict. An equivalent of philosophical positivism, naturalism tends to “justify the perpetuity of the capitalist regime and the necessity to accept exploitation as an eternal, given law”. Debussy is being chided for his static music and his lack of logic (*Pelléas* being an example of a music “with decadent and antidemocratic tendencies”), Ravel, for his use of parody and for the “grotesque disfiguring” of folk music. Expressionist music shows “the rapid decline of bourgeois art in the era when the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution would strike a fatal blow to bourgeois world domination”, and “American bourgeois music displays one

of the most pitiful aspects of the cultural destitution reached by the capitalist world on the verge of complete dissolution”.<sup>34</sup>

Ideologisation and the Soviet mimetism would relax after 1953. But the Proletkult would still weigh down the Conservatory, albeit differently, as would the deliberately deceitful means of luring the new generations of musicians into the net of the omnipresent communist regime. These generations would though steadily improve their capacity to stand firm and to attain authentic value by talent and personal effort, thus resuming the thread of the natural evolution in international musical performance and composition.

English version by Maria Monica Bojin

## REFERENCES

### Constantinescu, Dan

1992 “Gînduri despre Mihail Jora” [Thoughts About Mihail Jora], *Muzica*, 3/1, 4-17.

### Cosma, Octavian Lazăr

2008 *Universitatea Națională de Muzică din București la 140 de ani. Volumul 2 (1904-1945)* [National University of Music Bucharest at 140 years. Volume 2 (1904-1945)] (Bucharest: Editura Universității Naționale de Muzică).

### Popa, Florinela

2009 *Mihail Jora, un modern european* [Mihail Jora, a Modern European] (Bucharest: Editura Muzicală).

### Sandu-Dediu, Valentina

2002 *Muzica românească între 1944-2000* [Romanian Music between 1944 and 2000] (Bucharest: Editura Muzicală). Republished in German in 2006, as *Rumänische Musik nach 1944* (Friedberg, Hesse: Pfau).

The Archives of National University of Music Bucharest.

The Human Resources Archives of National University of Music Bucharest.

<sup>34</sup> Alfred Mendelsohn, report from May 17th, 1952, File 9, vol. 2, in the UNMB Archives.