

BABEȘ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY CLUJ NAPOCA
FACULTY OF HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY

**ROMANIAN ART MUSIC: ITS ROLE IN BUILDING THE NATIONAL IDENTITY
OF THE ROMANIANS FROM TRANSILVANIA AND BANAT (1870-1940)**

**PHD THESIS
SUMMARY**

Scientific advisor,

Prof. Univ. Dr. SIMONA NICOARĂ

Phd Student,

BADEA OTILIA MARIA (married CONSTANTINIU)

CLUJ NAPOCA

2015

Contents

ARGUMENT	4
I. BUILDING NATIONAL IDENTITY THROUGH CULTURE	11
I.1. Conceptual background and theoretical considerations	11
I.2. Music and nationalism in contemporary debates	24
I.2.1. Music and nationalism in international musicology.....	25
I.2.2. Years between 1870-1940 in Romanian music history.....	44
I.3. Musical culture in Transylvania until 1870	63
II. THE CONCEPT OF „NATIONAL MUSIC” IN THE DISCOURSE OF ROMANIAN COMPOSERS FROM TRANSILVANIA AND BANAT (1870-1940).....	79
II.1. Explanations on „national music”	79
II.2. The necessity of creating a Romanian „national music” (1870-1914).....	83
II. 2.1. Folk music – the „national principle” in music.....	86
II. 2.2. National music vs. absolute music	90
II. 2.3. Individual genius and national genius.....	93
II. 2.4. „Art with a tendency” – national music’s role as mobilizer	96
II. 2.5. The national character of music in regional particularities.....	98
II.3. Questioning the characteristics of national music (1914-1929)	101
II. 3.1. Sources and influences – an issue in the search for musical or national authenticity?	101
II. 3.2. The inquiry in the journal „Muzica” (1920)	104
II.4. Contours of „national music” in modernism (1920-1940)	108
II.5. „National music” in sketching a history of Romanian music	110
III. MUSICAL ASSOCIATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS IN TRANSILVANIA AND BANAT (1870-1940)	116
III.1. The cultural salon. Elitism and dilettantism (1870-1918).....	116
III.2. The professionalization of music and the change in status of the musician during the Romantic period	125
III. 3. Musical societies, associations and reunions (1870-1918).....	138
III. 3.1. The reunions of music and song	140
III. 3.2. Fanfares and musical nationalism.....	163
III. 3.4. Philharmonic societies and concert life	165
III. 3.5. From musical associations to state institutions (1919-1940).....	169
III.4. Musical state institutions and national propaganda (1920-1940).....	172
III.4.1. The Romanian Opera: a national fortress	172

III.4.2. The conservatoires: national institutions	176
III.4.3. The Society of Romanian Composers	181
IV. CELEBRATING THE NATION: FESTIVE OCCASIONS AND MUSIC (1870-1940)	186
IV.1. Music – an indicator of the ceremonial character in the political ritual.....	186
IV.2. The ritual of the concert – a form of national celebration.....	188
IV.3. The music festival – national pilgrimage and staging tradition	193
IV.4. The composer’s anniversary and commemoration.....	200
IV.5. The composer as founder – a cult for the national composer.....	209
V. FOLK MUSIC COLLECTION AS A FORM OF KNOWLEDGE AND LEGITIMATION OF THE NATION.....	217
V.1. Conceptual postulations in the study of folk music.....	217
V.2. „National music” as a central idea in the interest for folk music	221
V.3. Folk music collection in nineteenth-century Transylvania, between scientific interest and creative process	225
V.4. The role of folk music collection in the identitary representation (first half of the twentieth century).....	229
V.4.1. The Romanian folk music collections of Béla Bartók – an occasion for nationalistic manifestations	229
V.4.2. The Folk music collections of Tiberiu Brediceanu.....	233
V.4.3. Sabin Dăgoi and the collection „303 Colinde”	238
VI. ROMANIAN NATIONAL MYTHOLOGY AND ITS REPRESENTATION IN THE MUSICAL CREATION OF THE ROMANIAN COMPOSERS FROM TRANSYLVANIA AND BANAT (1870-1940)	243
VI.1. Historical myths and Romanian music (1870-1940).....	246
VI.2. History, myth and musical narrative – musical language in expressing history	262
VI.2.1. Musical myths vs. musical archaeologies	262
VI.2.2. The musical ballad – a specific genre in Romanian musical Romanticism.....	264
VI.2.3. The battle as a form of musical narrativity in ballads	265
VII. NATURE AS AN EXPRESSION OF THE NATIONAL SENTIMENT IN THE MUSIC OF THE ROMANIAN COMPOSERS FROM TRANSYLVANIA AND BANAT (1870- 1940).....	272
VII.1. Territory as delimited and delimiting national space: hymns and borders (1870- 1918).....	273
VII.2. Geographical localization of the nation in folk dances (1870-1940).....	276

VII.3. Landscape as a national symbol.....	282
VII.3.1. Landmarks of the natural landscape – symbols of Romanian national space (1870-1918)	285
VII.3.2. The landscape in Romanian program music (1920-1940)	296
VIII. OPERA AS A COMPLEX TOOL IN THE REPRESENTATION OF THE NATION – THE OPERA WORKS OF THE ROMANIAN COMPOSERS FROM TRANSYLVANIA AND BANAT (1920-1940)	304
VIII.1. The premises of national opera: the musical-theatrical movement in Transylvania and Banat until the establishing of the National Opera from Cluj	307
VIII.2. The openings of the Romanian operas and their reception (1920-1940)	312
VIII.3. National musical language in establishing the Romanian opera (1920-1940)	325
VIII. 3.1. Traditionalism and the apology of folk music	329
VIII. 3.2. A „moderate modernity”	331
CONCLUSIONS	337
BIBLIOGRAPHY	347
ANNEXES	365

KEY WORDS: nationalism, culture, music, identity, Romanians, composers, Transylvania, Romanticism, Modernism.

In recent Romanian historiography the national identity was often considered as a giving, a distinct feeling which Romanians had since medieval times (or even from the Dacians, if we consider the propagandistic exaggerations). The idea of a national conscience couldn't have appeared before the political-administrative construct that was the nation-state, itself a product of the modern times. The apparition of the nation-state supposed new ways of adhesion to this new model of political organization, a model that inherited the idea of centralized power and of social intervention (mass education and disciplinary measures) from the absolutist state to which it added, as a corollary, the ethnical criterion.

For the Romanians from Transylvania, a distinct ethnical group included in the larger borders of a multinational empire, the national ideal had complex and specific forms of manifestation. Beginning with the modern period and until 1918, we can reduce the political desiderates of the Romanians from Transylvania and Banat to the two following initiatives:

initially, political battles were oriented for obtaining an increased autonomy in the Austrian-Hungarian Empire; subsequently the efforts were oriented for the unification with Romanian Kingdom. The strategy of the national culture before 1918 assumed the affirmation of the national culture by creating an organized system of cultural-artistically institutions oriented to support the autochthonous musical life and creation. The strategy of cultural policies after 1918 aimed to cement the unity of the Romanian society under a cultural and economical framework. However the finalities, accomplishing the society's unity was connected mainly with the building of a convincing national identity in which Romanians could recognize themselves and which they would fight for. The German model of nation prevailed in the process of building the Romanian national identity because, like the Germans that were divided in many state districts and had to build a cultural unity to compensate for the lack of a political one, Romanians were situated in an ethno-political conglomerate that made almost impossible territorial independency, but could tolerate cultural autonomy. Thus, the emphasis that Germans put on the cultural dimension of the nation (that *Kulturnation*) was easily adapted by the Romanian intellectually in their discourse concerning the shaping of a specific Romanian national identity.

Music, an activity that involve different participants – from composers, conductors, musical players, up to teachers, various institutions, critics and a public more or less numerous – could mobilize a numerous and diverse public, from all social categories, its efficiency being that of having the capacity of transmitting a message (encrypted in a symbolical form) to an heterogeneous audience that could hardly be imagined establishing a consensus outside the musical context. The musical creation of the Romanian composers from Transylvania and Banat, between the 19th midcentury and the First World War, was the bearer of a political message that resonated with the national ideal of the Romanians from the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, a message expressed explicitly through other cultural ways or by political positions. Part of the nationalist discourse that promoted Romanian cultural uniqueness and organicity (peasant and also scientific), music and its related manifestations succeeded to put itself in the service of this ideal through many forms that could be classified as: the musical creation, the musical thinking expressed through composers' discourse (expressed in the press, memoires, speeches) and the musical life with its manifestation forms.

The process of establishing a modern Romanian musical school developed around the idea of defining national music, a concept that acted in the same time as an ideal to be accomplished, but also as a standard against which all musical products were related to. The signification of national music constantly oscillated in this period between traditional, peasant

music and the art music composed by a national composer and was based on folk music. Therefore, national music was supposed to be as the nation itself, a whole of unity that had to include at the same time the authentic tradition and cultural innovation in an organic and particular Romanian product. The musical works that neglected the folk music or the ones that treated it inadequate (although there were never precise criteria of processing folk music but emotional or intuitive appreciations addressed to it) were never considered to be representative to national music and its aspirations. An authentic national music did not suppose to have exclusive aesthetic finalities, but to transmit a certain political message, to be, as some composers expressed it, an *art with a tendency*. This tendency that art music had to have was one of political and cultural emancipation for the Romanians from Transylvania and Banat.

However, more than a simple plea to traditional music, the creations that were meant to be considered national succeeded to create an imaginary space endowed with its own historical and geographical coordinates. Although music lacks the capacity to express ideas explicitly, nevertheless it succeeded to recreate (by means of titles, music programs or by suggesting it through the musical language) key moments or emblematical figures of national history's key moments or emblematical heroes, or to propose a musical description of the specific landscape inhabited by the Romanians. These two aspects (historical and geographical) had a crucial importance in building national identity: the process of idealizing nature and history lasted all over twentieth century and covered not only the musical field but also arts, poetry, literature, history and archaeology. More than having an educative purpose, the music that suggested these identity reference points aspired to create images of a powerful emotional charge, capable to stir the listeners' interest, characteristic images of the nation that the listener was expected to appropriate through a subjective filter. The musical genre with the largest capacity to generate and represent these reference points of identity was the opera, which was regarded as a successful genre of the musical school of the Transylvanians. The Opera (created in Cluj after the Union of Romanians from 1918) and all the resources that this institution benefited from, facilitated the scenic display of frames and scenes that could give a convincing representation of the historical past, of the peasant world and of the actual nation's configuration. Because of the different levels of expression and representation that opera has, a lot of debates, concerning the autochthonous opera creation, animated the interwar period. In the same time, emphasizing the socio-historical context of the operistic creation reveals an interpretation of national music as a cultural codification for domination and legitimacy in Transylvania and Banat.

Another vehicle of disseminating ideological underpinnings through Romanian music in Transylvania and Banat was the institutional dimension by which different musical activities were organized. If the nineteenth century music was known to have had a wider spread in the private and familial mediums, especially bourgeois (coming to be associated with that specific bourgeois' subjectivity and to the musical mass consumption phenomenon), music was intensively used in wider, collective environments of public concerts, festivals, commemorations, besides literary and musical salons. Not having the conditions to form institutions that could assure the emancipation of the national culture, Romanians from Transylvania organized themselves, until 1918, in cultural associations and reunions, formal and informal groups where they could encourage and promote autochthonous cultural values. Of smaller or larger dimensions, these Romanian organizations perpetuated a nationalist discourse which, in such contexts, could easily be masked by artistic preoccupations. In the settings of these cultural saloons and different concerts organized by the Romanian associations took place the auditions of the first Romanian musical creations, works that related to a Romanian identity and which exhibited the principal coordinates of the *people's spirit*. After 1918, when Transylvania became part of the Romanian nation state, the foundation of the National Theatre and Opera and of the conservatoire facilitated both a proper musical education and the existence of special places designed for scenic performances, spaces that could support autochthonous musical works, national ones, in front of a large public that could identify in them an imaginary construction of the nation. Because of the importance and indispensability that music had always had in different types of ceremony, being more than a simple ornament, music was treated as a necessary vehicle in articulating secular rituals of the modern nation. Different hypostasis of artistic manifestations, from the festive frame of the saloons to the rural feasts and national exhibitions, offers the context to a critical analyze of the nationalistic projections.

Besides the musical creation, the opportunities and spaces where its performance took place, a major role in disseminating the music's ideological potential had the composers' discourse. Expressed in different ways (press articles, essays, memoires, public speeches, musical chronicles) this discourse was present in all musical moments from composition to performance and public reception. Composers (and also different intellectuals with or without musical instruction) expressed themselves actively in problems regarding music or the progress of art. Iacob Mureșianu, one of the first Romanian composers, was also the initiator of the first Romanian musical periodical *Musa Română* that, besides publishing short musical pieces, represented a public platform for opinions concerning the fate of the Romanian music.

Although without a very wide dissemination, the musicians' discourse (or, generally, the discourse on music) influenced the musical life through polemics concerning different conceptual notions (the case of *national music* being the most eloquent) or theoretical notions, most of them coming from ethnomusicology. Being considered as the foundation of the national music school, folk music was expected to be the study object of a science that acquired stakes that go beyond its professional frame, coming to reflect the political debates of the époque, disputed in a nationalistic key.

Through their attitudes and positions in the intellectual-artistic field, composers made themselves the bearers of a message that was not strictly of a musical nature, the issues that they discussed (musical life status and its deficiencies, theoretical subjects or critical evaluations of new music) being closely related to political matters such as the situation and the rights of the Romanian societies in the Austrian-Hungarian empire, the autonomy of this society and its possibility to develop an independent and representative culture, the national ideal or the maintaining of the nation's territorial and spiritual integrity. If music was supposed to be an art with tendency, the more this speech that legitimates this art must had to offer stronger arguments for the direction on which art products must be placed on. Either there were works with scientific character (music history, musicology or ethnomusicology), or simple press interventions, public speeches, most of the time composers made the connection between the aesthetic content of music and the nation's condition, the latest being embodied in the peoples' spirit or character. Conscious or unconscious, explicit or implicit, the language that musicians used to spread their ideas brought closer, up to indistinguishing, the musical problems and the nationalistic ideology.

This cohabitation of music with the politics was doubled by the similitude between the developmental model adapted by the Romanian school of composition and the building of the Romanian modern nation. Situated in the intersectional point of three empires (Ottoman, Czarist, Habsburg), the Romanian provinces adhered to the national project with the purpose of political individualization in regard to these neighboring empires. In search of particularity and of uniqueness that could justify the national unity and independence, Romanian provinces intended to create a state that could represent the profound and timeless characteristics of Romanian national spirit, but, in practice, the construction of the Romanian national state followed an occidental model, a model adopted with few critics from the Romanian intellectuals and applied in all dimensions, either political, social, administrative or cultural. The same tension, the same dichotomy between foreign state and autochthonous specificity that must be expressed in its own forms is to be found in the formation and consolidation of

the Romanian composition school in Transylvania and Banat at the end of nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. Convinced by the folk music's uniqueness and value and considering the lack of an art music tradition, Romanian musicians intended to create a music that could represent this specificity which also should generate the national and international success of the Romanian musical production based on folk music. The debates around *national music* emphasized a special resource that was the folk music and, at the same time, the necessity of integrating it in the most intimate resorts of savant music composition, Romanian composers adapting it in the musical forms and genres of the western canon and creating even new forms (the instrumental miniatures based on popular dances: hora, ardeleana, hațegana; the choral-orchestral as the ballad) which could better highlight this valuable resource. The imitation of western models was completed by the request of artistic individualization, the national spirit and Europe's musical tradition combining into a common expression in the musical works of the Romanian composers.

We could affirm that the development of the Romanian music composition school from Transylvania and Banat was a major agent in creating the national identity for the Romanians in these provinces, having its well defined role in the national edification process, the course of this music school being synchronic with the nation formation itself.