



Valerie Barber PR

Accession and ascension

The 18th “George Enescu” International Festival and Competition Bucharest, 1st – 23rd September 2007

With the recent accession of Romania to the European Union, this year’s “**George Enescu**” **International Festival and Competition** – embracing over 100 events and involving over 3,000 performers – acquires a particular cultural importance. Launched in 1958, the festival continues to draw its inspiration from the eponymous composer, who died in 1955 but remains an icon for his homeland. As the festival’s Artistic Director, **Ioan Hollender**, says: “When we speak of Romania’s musical personality, we think of Enescu. It was he who gave value to Romanian music. His music can be complex, but its beauty and charm are rooted in the country’s folk traditions.”

Hollender was born in Romania, but has long been resident in Austria and is currently Director of the Vienna State Opera. This places him at the centre of the expanded European community and at the heart of Europe’s tradition of classical music. Suitably enough, the festival programme strikes a balance between asserting Romanian pride and identity – not least in the form of many works by Enescu – and welcoming music and performers from around the world, including many of today’s leading names.

The opening gala, with the Orchestra of the Bucharest National Opera, features a number of Romanian singers with established and growing reputations in the world’s opera houses; they include **Nicoleta Ardelean**, **Roxana Briban** (a former winner of the Enescu Competition), **Doina Dimitru**, **Elena Mosuc**, **Adina Nitescu**, **Liliana Nikiteanu**, **Carmen Oprisanu** and **Alexandru Agache**. The gala is followed by several days of concerts in Bucharest – in venues including the ornate Romanian Atheneum, and the ‘Palace Hall’, a 4000 seater concert hall in the centre of Bucharest – and in other Romanian cities which emphasise Romanian musicians and modern Romanian music; among the performers are orchestras from Bucharest, Iasi and Cluj, the principal city of Transylvania. September 6th brings the first concert by a major visiting orchestra: **l’Orchestre de Paris** (Bucharest was, of course, known as the ‘Paris of the East’ between the Wars) under its music director, **Christoph Eschenbach** with **Steven Isserlis** as soloist. The programme comprises two works by Debussy and Enescu’s Symphony concertante for cello and orchestra. The following day the OdP and Eschenbach are joined by **Pinchas Zukerman** for a programme that includes Bruch Concerto No 1.

Visiting from neighbouring Hungary for just one concert is the **National Philharmonic Orchestra of Budapest** under **Zoltán Kocsis** – they bring a striking programme of Enescu, Janáček and Bartók – but all the other symphonic visitors to the festival are committed to two concerts. The **Oslo Philharmonic** under **Jukka-Pekka Saraste** plays Sibelius and Grieg (the piano concerto with **Boris Berezovsky**) and Debussy, Enescu, Bartók and Ravel. An international ensemble in the line of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, the Parma-based **Arturo Toscanini Philharmonic Orchestra** is conducted by **Lawrence Foster** and **Emmanuel Krivine** in Brahms and a pairing of symphonies by Enescu (No 3) and Beethoven (No 5). **Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos** conducts the **Dresdner Philharmoniker** in Mahler’s Symphony No 8 with a multinational line-up of solo singers, including several Romanians; this is followed by a concert performance of Falla’s opera *La vida breve* (cast to be confirmed), preceded by Enescu’s Suite No 1. The **Russian National Orchestra** visits with **Charles Dutoit** and **Marta Argerich** in a programme of Stravinsky, Beethoven (Piano concerto No 1) and Prokofiev – Argerich will also appear in recital at the festival with fellow-pianist **Nelson Freire**; the orchestra’s second programme, conducted by **Cristian Mandeal**, comprises a Russian take on French music (the *Carmen* Suite made by Rodion Shchedrin), a French arrangement of Russian music (Ravel’s version of Musorgsky’s *Pictures at an Exhibition*) and Liszt’s Piano concerto No 1 with **Polina Lischenko**. (Bucharest-trained Mandeal is Principal Conductor of the city’s “**George Enescu**” **Philharmonic Orchestra**; at

this year's festival he directs the orchestra's chamber formation in Bach scores arranged by the Romanian-born conductor Erich Bergel.) The inexhaustible **Valery Gergiev** visits with the **Rotterdam Philharmonic**, first performing Messiaen and Mahler and then Enescu, Sibelius (the Violin Concerto with one of its leading exponents, **Leonidas Kavakos**) and Wagner. **Katia and Marielle Labèque** are soloists in Mendelssohn with the **Basel Chamber Orchestra** – the concert also features Enescu and Beethoven – while the Swiss ensemble's second concert brings more Enescu and Beethoven, this time with the Romanian pianist **Viniciu Moroianu** as soloist. Two of the world's highest-profile soloists join the **London Symphony Orchestra**: **Maxim Vengerov** plays the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto, which is followed by Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique* – conductor **Horia Andreescu**, while **Yevgeny Kissin** is under the baton of **Sir Colin Davis** in an all-Beethoven programme. The final modern-instrument orchestra to appear at the festival is the **Münchener Philharmoniker**, which **Ion Marin** conducts in **Mahler** and **Strauss** and then, to close the festival, Enescu's Symphony No 1 and Orff's *Carmina Burana*, with its climactic address to Fortune.

A late-night series at the Athaneum brings a focus on historically-informed performance with **Europa Galante** and **Fabio Biondi** (who also travel to Cluj and Timisoara), **La Capella Reial de Catalunya** and **Hespèrion XXI** under **Jordi Savall**, and the **Freiburger Barockorchester** under **Gottfried von der Goltz**.

Among the other groups and instrumentalists appearing over the course of the festival are **Ensemble Contemporain** with **Susanna Malkki**, the **Beaux Arts Trio**, **Zukerman Chamber Players**, **Camerata Lysy**, **Murray Perahia**, Lebanese pianist **Abdel-Rahman El Bacha** (who takes on a demanding programme of Prokofiev, Ravel, Enescu and Balakirev), **Viktoria Mullova** and cellist **Han-Na Chang**.

Singers in recital include **Michael Schade** and **Camilla Tilling**, while the operatic programme, presented in conjunction with the **Romanian National Opera** at Bucharest's National Opera House, brings: *Carmen* with **Hadar Halevy** and **José Cura**; *La traviata* with **Stefania Bonfadelli** (whose appearances as Violetta include a Zeffirelli production in the Verdi's birthplace, Busseto), and *Tosca* with mezzo-turned-soprano **Nadja Michael**. Dance is represented with an evening of three sumptuously-scored ballets – *Le Sacre du printemps*, *Boléro* and *L'Oiseau de feu*, performed by the **Béjart Ballet Company**.

New talent will be nurtured and discovered by the "**George Enescu**" **International Competition**, which offers prizes for piano, violin and composition and which gives rise to several gala concerts over the course of the festival. As Mihai Constantinescu – manager of 'Artexim' which organises the festival – says: "We are concerned to promote new names in music, as in previous editions. The first prize winners in this year's competition will perform in special concerts across Romania during this year's festival, and they will also be invited for return performances in 2009.

"It is important that we also continue to promote Romanian musicians and Romanian music – in particular that of our most celebrated composer, George Enescu, but also the music of composers living and working in Romania today. We invite the most distinguished artists and ensembles from abroad to discover and perform Romanian music, and in so doing, we are able to offer our audience the opportunity to hear and experience performances from the world's leading musicians. With the special support of the media – **CNN**, **Euronews**, **Mezzo** and **Radio France Internationale** – we hope and expect this edition of the "George Enescu" International Festival and Competition to have a significant impact on Romanian cultural life."

For press enquiries, please contact:

Valerie Barber PR, Suite 2, 9a St John's Wood High Street, London NW8 7NG

Tel: 020 7586 8560 / Fax: 020 7586 9246 / Email: info@vbpr.co.uk

For further information about the Festival and Competition, and for full programme details, please visit:

www.festivalenescu.ro