

Lucian Ban & John Hébert

enescos
re imagined

PAGE ONE



George Enescu (georges enesco) 1881–1955

Born in 1881, in Liveni, a small village in the north east of Romania, Enesco was a child prodigy, who begun studying piano at 4, took violin lesson with a gypsy fiddler at around the same age and started composing music already at 5. He entered the Vienna Conservatoire at seven, to study the violin, graduated when he was 13, and met Brahms, whose influence is clearly apparent in Enesco's early works.

Two years later Enesco arrived in Paris with the primary aim of studying composition at the Paris Conservatoire. He presented his portfolio and his letters of recommendation to Jules Massenet. A cursory look through the manuscripts was all that was required for the great composer to have the young Enesco accepted into his course. He continued studying in Paris with Gabriel Faure, Andre Gedalge and developed lasting friendships with fellow composers, Jean Roger-Ducasse, Florent Schmitt and Maurice Ravel.

Menuhin recalls being with Enesco in the mid-1920s and witnessing Ravel burst through the door with the singular reason of having his Romanian friend play through his freshly composed Violin Sonata. He kindly read through the score once, and then with Ravel at the piano played the work from memory. By his early twenties he was already a stunning and prolific composer, writing pieces like the Romanian Poem, Piano Suites or the monumental Octet for Strings in C Major.

Even though he considered concert violinists to be convicts condemned to hard labor and this may be why he did not compose a violin concerto, Enesco was nevertheless one of the great violin virtuosos of the 20th century and he made impressive debuts in Berlin in 1902, in London in 1903 and in Russia in 1910, the year in which he performed all the Beethoven violin sonatas with Edouard Risler in Paris.

His first visit to America was in 1923 as violinist, composer (he conducted one of his symphonies) and conductor with the Philadelphia Orchestra. He also played in San Francisco to the delight of seven-year-old Yehudi Menuhin and three years later the ten-year-old went to Paris to study with him. In the United States he was warmly welcomed, and Enesco enjoyed his trips to the new world because he found he was accepted as both a composer and a performer-conductor. American audiences were aware of his orchestral music due to the promotional efforts of conductors Gustav Mahler, Walter Damrosch and Frederick Stock. During the 1920s Enesco directed the Philadelphia, Cleveland, Boston and Cincinnati Orchestras. In 1936 he was short-listed to replace Arturo Toscanini as the permanent conductor of the New York Philharmonic and lead the famed orchestra between the years 1937 – 1938. He would return to America almost yearly till 1949.

(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

about george enesco



Enesco's published output extends to only 33 opus numbers, though several of these are very large-scale works (the three symphonies and *Opera Oedipe*). The demands of a busy career as a performer were not the only reason for this comparative paucity of finished output. Enesco was also an obsessive perfectionist: many of his published works were repeatedly redrafted before their first performances, and revised several times thereafter. Moreover, as recent research has made increasingly clear, the works which he did allow to be published were merely the tip of a huge submerged mass of manuscript work-in-progress (the bulk of which is held by the Enesco Museum, Bucharest). Traditional accounts of Enesco's musical development place great emphasis on the elements of Romanian folk music which appear in his works at an early stage – above all, in the *Poème Roumain* (1897) and the two Romanian Rhapsodies (1901). Later in his life he bitterly resented the way they had dominated and narrowed his reputation as a composer.

The real significance of his Romanian folk-heritage would emerge later in the growth of Enesco's musical language, as he searched for new ways of developing, and combining, pure melodic lines. Particularly influential

here was the *doina*, a type of meditative song, frequently melancholic, with an extended and flexible line in which melody and ornamentation merge into one. (This was the type of song for which Béla Bartók had coined the phrase *parlando rubato*.) In his mature works, however, Enesco made increasing use of the less mechanically contrapuntal, more organic technique of heterophony – a form of loose melodic superimposition which was also rooted in Romanian folk music.

Some elements of Enesco's mature style began to emerge at the end of World War I, with the completion of the *Third Symphony* (1918) and the *First String Quartet* (1920). Both works display an organic style of development, in which germinal themes, intervals and note-patterns are constantly adapted and recombined. As Enesco worked on his opera *Oedipe* during the 1920s, this method lent itself naturally to the elaboration of leitmotifs.

Another feature of the opera is the minutely detailed orchestration, which frequently makes use of solo instruments within the orchestral texture. This concentration on individual voices may help to explain why the output of his final decades is dominated by chamber music. Only two major orchestral works were completed after *Oedipe*: the *Third Orchestral Suite* (1938) and the symphonic poem *Vox Maris* (1954).

The great series of chamber works which crowns Enesco's output begins with the *Third Violin Sonata* (1926), and includes the *Piano Quintet* (1940), *Second Piano Quartet* (1944), *Second String Quartet* (1951) and *Chamber Symphony* (1954).

Enesco stays within the bounds of late-Romantic tonality and classical forms but transmutes both into a very personal idiom; ceaseless motivic development is woven into elaborate adaptations of sonata form, variation-sequences and cyclical re-combinations. Romanian folk elements are also present, sometimes in the form of percussive Bartók-like dances, but the most characteristic use of folk music here involves the meditative *doina*. In several works (the *Third Orchestral Suite*, the *Impressions d'enfance* for violin and piano (1940) and the *Third Violin Sonata*) the use of such folk elements was linked to the theme of childhood reminiscence: what Enesco aimed at was not the alienating effect of quasi-primitivism which modernists sought in folk music (Stravinsky, for example), but, on the contrary, a childlike sense of immediacy and intimacy. That, indeed, is the special character of many of his finest works.

George Enesco

menuhin and enesco



The cellist Pablo Casals claimed that Enesco was, in the depth and range of his gifts, the “greatest musical phenomenon since Mozart”. A prodigious memory enabled him to recall by heart most of the major works of Bach, Beethoven and Wagner. His brilliance as an all round musician was noted by the Romanian aristocracy, and he was a familiar figure in the musical soirees at court. For his seventeenth birthday Queen Elizabeth, wife of King Carol I of Romania, gave Enesco the completed issues of the Bach-Gesellschaft edition of Johann Sebastian Bach’s works. In 1898, Enesco’s gift to the queen was a song-cycle, *Der Blaser*, based on her poetry. Throughout the turbulent first half of the twentieth century, Enesco’s loyalty and devotion to the royal family never waned.

Although he made frequent trips to Romania, he made his home in Paris. The First World War had devastated the Romanian economy, and Enesco’s savings were whittled away. Furthermore, the peasant land reforms initiated by King Ferdinand saw much of his father’s estates being expropriated, and thus Enesco’s future nest egg disappeared by royal decree. This financial situation was to occur again after the Second World War when the communists confiscated the property Enesco had accumulated in the 1920s and 1930s, and disallowed his hard-earned funds to be transferred out of the country.

After the communist takeover, Enesco and his wife left their homeland to settle in Paris. With their assets confiscated by the new regime Enesco was forced back into the spotlight as either a soloist or a conductor. But by the early 1950s, heart trouble, hearing problems and a degenerative spinal condition made such work impossible to carry out. With the lack of an income, the Enescos sank into poverty and they resided in two dingy basement rooms with one luxury, a piano. The world showed no interest in him. He died in Paris on 4 May, 1955. He was 74.

The great Leopold Stokowski says about him “I have known very many great musicians, and very few geniuses. Enesco was a genius”. He is one of the great violin virtuosos of the 20th century, he played piano in a way that made Arthur Rubinstein somewhat envious, played viola and cello as well and possessed a phenomenal memory. He was a conductor of stunning clarity and was a great teacher and lecturer. His generosity and affability were legendary and Yehudi Menuhin describes him as being the “most generous and selfless of hearts”. But above all Georges Enesco is one of the greatest composers of the 20th century, one whose time has finally arrived ■

september 20th 2009
live performance
in bucharest

enesco arrives in new york city




I have come to truly discover and fall in love with Enesco's music long after I moved from Romania to New York City to pursue my passion for jazz and I've found that many of Enesco's works, some of which are lesser known, have a structure and a feeling resembling that of jazz. This was the starting point for wanting to present his music in a new light, together with an ensemble featuring some of my favorite musicians working today, artists who are actively pushing the music forward. I asked John Hebert, an old collaborator and one of the greatest bassists around to work with me on this and re-orchestrate some of Enesco's music. I remember vividly going to Jersey City to John's place in spring of 2009 with a map of Enesco's scores and how stunned we were at realizing the depth and richness of Enesco's music. I mean his music was so open to be re-interpreted from a "jazz" sensibility. For such a project you really needed the right musicians and I'm elated to have on board people like Tony Malaby, Ralph Alessi, Mat Maneri, Albrecht Maurer from Koln, Germany or Joyce Hammann (who did a series of rehearsals

and the premiere concert in New York at Merkin Hall in October 2009), Taylor Ho Bynum, Gerald Cleaver or Nasheet Waits handling the drum chair, the great Badal Roy on tablas, or the young Curtis Stewart on violin. Without them this music would not have been possible and I want to thank them for their extraordinary musicianship and dedication to the project.

I've deliberately wanted to "re-imagine" some of Enesco's less known works and not opuses like the Romanian Rhapsodies or the Romanian Poeme because I'm convinced these other works of him are some of the greatest music written in the 20th century. It is my hope that they will enter the world performance circuit as they rightly deserve. Some of the pieces present here on the CD – like the unfinished 4th Symphony, the Ballad for Violin & Orchestra Op 4A (arranged by John) or the little jewel Aria et Scherzino for violin, viola, cello, bass and piano – I've discovered them in the vaults of the Enesco Museum in Bucharest and special thanks go to them for their great support and access.

The Octet for Strings Opus 7 written when Enesco was barely 19 years old is an extraordinary composition with a monumental form and massive contrapuntal modal themes. All wrapped in an unusual intensity this is the piece where I first heard in my head Badal's tablas playing underneath all of the themes and melodies.

Aria et Scherzino for violin, viola, cello, bass and piano written in 1909 and never published in Enesco's life is a little piece of stunning melodic beauty. The main melody carried by the violin was written by Enesco to feature every open string of the violin ascending along with the melody. At one rehearsal we decided on the spot to start directly with a tenor sax solo



tony malaby (top)
badal roy (center)
albrecht maurer (bottom)

3rd Sonata for Violin & Piano in A minor Op 25 "In the Romanian Folk Character" written in 1926 is one of his more known works and is a perfect example of Enesco's genius as both a virtuoso violinist and a stunning composer. Heavily influenced by the Romanian gypsy fiddler virtuosos, this is, in a way, Enesco at its most "jazz" feel as I'm convinced he was able to improvise for hours on this music.

The end result, the full Sonata, is a masterpiece of the 20th century music.

The great French classical pianist Alfred Cortot describes this piece as "an evocation in sound of the mysterious feeling of summer nights in Romania: below, the silent, endless, deserted plain; above, constellations leading off into infinity . . .

"We perform here (with some serious re-orchestration from me) material from the 1st part – Malincolico, and 2nd part – Misterioso.

4th Symphony (unfinished), Marziale –in 1928 Enesco began to sketch a Fourth Symphony, which he would often return to but never complete. The original manuscript it's in Enesco's Museum archives in Bucharest. Especially in Marziale, the 2nd movement we 'attacked' the themes and lines seemed to me almost lifted from the best of an Ellington or Mingus orchestral charts. John's bass line is literally the one Enesco wrote down in his score and I heard immediately the melodies played with our ensemble. Shifting moods & tempos, big band themes along with byzantine like melodies, groove and open solos . . . it's all in there.

Writing these notes and knowing that the ensemble will tour in the following years, I feel blessed to be part of this music and very proud to spread the "gospel" of Enesco in the world. ■

ralph alessi (top)
 lucian ban (center)
 john hebert (center)
 mat maneri (bottom)

To be honest, I had not been well versed in any of Enescu's music until Lucian asked me to be a part of this project. We got together one afternoon and checked out some of Enescu's pieces as we were deciding which ones to "re-imagine". It was a really great thing for me to actually have some of the scores in Enescu's own pen and actually see how he wrote and then decide how to put this music in the context of a smaller ensemble of jazz proportions.

The first thing I thought of when starting to rearrange some of this music was who were the musicians playing these new arrangements. Once I knew that I was able to write for these great artists and allow them to be individuals while still honoring what Enescu originally wrote.

The second idea for me was not to write too much. I always prefer to let the musicians just "go for it" on the bandstand. This can be very daunting but again it came down to me trusting the musicians involved and knowing their ability to take what little direction I give them and make something out of it.

The beautiful thing about Enescu's music and something that I am always drawn to is melody. The pieces that I opted to arrange have such strong melodies that it was just a matter of figuring who would play these melodies and how can I support this with the instrumentation that I was given. What I mean is that we did not have a full orchestra so I needed to orchestrate for a much smaller group but still retain the core of Enescu's original ideas.

For the Piano Suite, "dans le style acien", I needed to flesh out the piano part into the horns and rhythm section. I was only dealing with the adagio section so I took the melody in the right hand and put that into the horns and piano. I also added some typical Western harmony for the rhythm section to play. For the strings I actually wrote some new music that was not in the original score. My idea was for the strings to be the ones improvising over this "looping" melody providing this juxtaposition of a really lovely melody against some dissonant colors. Also note how the melody moves more rhythmically against the sustaining textures provided by the Mat and Albrecht. What you hear at the beginning and end of the piece is actually Enescu's voice & piano playing of the same Adagio, lightly manipulated by Lucian. They were taken from Bernard's Gavoty 1951 Interviews with Enescu in Paris.

In Prelude from Enescu's Orchestra Suite I was dealing with the beginning section in which the melody is all in unison in the strings. The obvious thing for me was to keep this idea of unison but then allow for more rhythmic development from the drums and tablas. I took six notes from the melody and put that in the bass. This provided the harmony and 6/8 feel. On top of that this unison melody can be heard. This continues throughout the piece giving it rhythmic momentum.

For Ballade, the idea was to keep to the actual melody and have the violin playing it pretty straight while adding harmony in the bass and piano. As the tune cycles it sort of grows out of itself upon each repeat adding more parts until we reach a section that evolves into more of a "groove" from Badal, in this "Phrygian" mode. Out of that we return to the melody and it just follows the tune out, ending how it started with strings and rhythm section.

I have to thank all of the musicians involved in this project. Their dedication and musicianship is greatly appreciated. A special thanks goes to Lucian for introducing me to Enescu's music and giving me the opportunity to express myself through this great master. And last but not least, George Enescu himself, for his music and inspiration. ■

gerald cleaver (left)
lucian ban (center)
albrecht maurer (right top)

The Romanian Cultural Institute (RCI) is a public body that promotes interest in Romanian culture abroad through programmes and active cultural dialogue. RCI seeks to establish cooperation and sustainable relations with cultural entities in other countries, while presenting compelling Romanian culture to wide international audiences.

RCI functions as a global channel of communication through the network of 17 Romanian Cultural Institutes abroad in Berlin, Brussels, Budapest, Istanbul, Kiev, Lisbon, London, Madrid, New York, Paris, Prague, Rome, Stockholm, Tel Aviv, Venice, Vienna and Warsaw. Music, film, literature, plastic and performing arts are constantly on the RCI agenda, as is the permanent exchange of ideas between Romanian and foreign artists and cultural media.

Romanian music and musicians – from folklore, traditional and world music to classical, jazz, contemporary and fringe – are particularly promoted by supporting the presence of Romanian artists at prestigious venues and in important festivals all over the world. Supporting the cooperation between Romanian and international artists and encouraging the inclusion of Romanian music in international repertoires form an important aspect of the RCI mission.

For more information please see the following website: www.icr.ro

© 2010 SUNNYSIDE
COMMUNICATIONS, INC.
SSC 1259 MADE IN USA Sunnyside



romanian atheneum,
bucharest