

GEORGE ENESCU IN CORRESPONDENCE PAGES

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ABSTRACT

This study presents several ideas derived from the research of some correspondence pages kept in the GENM archive in Bucharest – letters, telegrams sent to the Maestro by three senders (two scientists and a musician): Grigore Eugeniu Neculcea (1876-1954, politician, physicist, mathematician), Constantin Motăș (1891-1981, zoologist, biologist) and Fernand Halphen (1872-1917, composer). These pages have led to dissertations that reveal details about the musician's biography as well as information about the personalities appearing on his correspondence list. Scientists, scholars and musicians alike appreciated George Enescu's human and professional qualities, confessing their admiration in congratulatory messages, or in friendly or official letters. Preserved by the composer and then by the museum that nowadays bears his name, the research of these correspondence pages confirms already known facts, or reveals others less known about George Enescu.

Keywords: *George Enescu, Eugeniu Grigore Neculcea, Constantin Motăș, Fernand Halphen, correspondence*

Archives are real treasures. Sometimes they reveal forgotten things, revive memories, confirm or refute facts. A simple document therefore acquires an inestimable value. The archive of the "George Enescu" National Museum (GENM)

contains a valuable collection of documents including, among others, musical manuscripts, concert programs, posters, diplomas, photographs, telegrams, postcards, letters etc., many of which have already been subject to expertise and included in the list of cultural goods – the *treasure* and *fund* categories. Most of them naturally refer to George Enescu's life or career and are the subject of unique publications and thematic exhibitions of the museum.

While investigating the correspondence sent to the musician based on the documents kept in the archives of the institution, we have discovered the importance of the *secondary*, adjacent information sneaked in by the senders through the standard greeting formulas of the time, more or less personalized praises, requests, invitations etc. Thus, we will highlight some of them, more precisely – correspondence pages (letters and telegrams) addressed to George Enescu that reconstruct fragments from the musician's biography, confirming already known aspects or shedding a ray of light on other less known ones.

George Enescu and Eugeniu Grigore Neculcea



Fig. 1. Photo Eugeniu Grigore Neculcea

Over time, the destinies of these two men of culture intersected; the former – a renowned musician, the latter – a Doctor of Physical-Mathematical Sciences at the Sorbonne, Professor at the University of Iași, who worked in the Ministry of Finance, serving among others as Minister Plenipotentiary of Romania and Diplomatic Agent of the Romanian State, and also, after the First World War, as a member of the Romanian delegation to the Paris Peace Conference.¹ Thanks to the fact that their meetings were recorded in a signed, dated, but also preserved document, we can now enjoy the special atmosphere evoked therein, with George Enescu at the centre.

¹ Cf. Marcela Sălăgean, "Chestiunea reparațiilor. Ce s-a făcut. Ce ar fi trebuit să se mai facă" [The Matter of Reparations. What Has Been Done. What Else Should Have Been Done], published online, <https://ziarulfacia.ro/a/1/chestiunea-reparatiilor-ce-s-a-facut-ce-ar-fi-trebui-sa-se-mai-faca/>, accessed August 2, 2020.



Fig. 2. Letter. Eugeniu Neculcea to George Enescu, p. 1 (GENM Archive)

Through his words written in 1931, Eugeniu Grigore Neculcea (1876-1954) recalls events from long before, experiences shared with George Enescu over the course of their lives, evidently filtered through the subjective memories of the addressee. In 1931, the musician, already an established and distinguished personality of the Romanian and international musical life, was turning 50. On this occasion, he received congratulatory messages from several representatives of the European arts and culture, among whom Eugeniu Gr. Neculcea. From his letter we find out various facts: that he met George Enescu in Slănic, that their parents were acquaintances and, finally, that after hearing the little musician playing the violin in his parents' house, he also wanted to study this instrument. We know that in 1888 Enescu started his studies at the Vienna

Conservatory, and that a year later, having returned to Romania on vacation, he went with his parents to Slănic, where he gave his first public performance as a violinist. It is therefore possible that the two met on that occasion. According to his own confessions, Neculcea was impressed by little Enescu's beautiful performance, which probably explains why his parents asked Professor Eduard Caudella to guide little Neculcea's first steps in the study of the violin, just as Costache and Maria Enescu had done a while before.

The friendship of the two young men endured over time, as it appears from the same recollections, which place them both in Paris. The author of the letter evokes George Enescu's recitals which he almost always attended, as well as a special event that took place at 14 Brussels Street (the musician's residence since 1904). Here, he performed the *Sonata for Piano and Violin in A Major* by César Franck, in the presence of Montoriol-Tarrés.



Fig. 3. Enrique Montoriol-Tarrés (Drawing, ca. 1900-1906 © Hermenegildo Anglada i Camarasa)

We note that Enrique Juan Montoriol-Tarrés (1876-1951) was a Spanish pianist, close to composer Enrique Granados (1867-1916), to whom the latter dedicated several scores such as *El Pelele* from the Piano Suite entitled *Goyescas*. Established in Paris, he made Granados' creations known to the public of the French capital, and also wrote an article about the Spanish composer, published in the Parisian journal *La Revue Musicale*, in January 1913.

So, here is a unique moment in George Enescu's biography, sneaked in among the memories of a compatriot, undated, but most likely written around the years 1913-1914, when the Spanish pianist persuaded the *Société Musicale Indépendante* from Paris to organise a concert fully devoted to Enrique



Fig. 4. George Enescu, violinist (GENM Archive)

Granados (on April 4, 1914), with the help of the French critic Emille Vuillermoz. It is important to point out that both the founders of the society – Gabriel Fauré, Maurice Ravel, Charles Koechlin, Florent Schmitt, and the critic mentioned above were George Enescu's teachers and colleagues. As to César Frank's *Sonata*, performed in the presence of pianist Montoriol-Tarrés, it was composed in 1886 as a wedding gift to violinist Eugène Ysaÿe and was one of the *pièces de résistance* of George Enescu's repertoire. As far as we know, he used to perform it in Princess Bibescu's salon in Paris long before the meeting evoked above, but the first official recitals confirming its performance were those held in Paris, alongside pianist Paul Goldschmidt (April 15 and 19, 1913) and in Bilbao – Spain, with Maurice Dumesnil at the piano (January 12, 1914).²

Another memory recounted in the letter is related to the concerts held during the Great War, when Neculcea and Enescu met again in Bucharest and Iași, "in my house in Carol street, where the representatives of the French military mission used to come to admire you, with Marioara Ventura, Barozzi..." (Neculcea) [our translation]. The concerts given by George Enescu in the company of the Romanian musicians during the tough times of the First World War are well known, and as can be seen, considered memorable by one of their witnesses himself.

Last but not least, it is worth noting the admiration and attention shown by the Royal House of Romania towards George Enescu, mentioned at the very beginning of the letter. Queen Marie's article about the Romanian musician

² Cf. Mircea Voicana, in *George Enescu*, Editura Muzicală a SCR [Music Publishing House of the Romanian Composers' Society], Bucharest, 1964, pp. 168, 170.

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completing 50 springs of his life had been read by Eugeniu Neculcea, on which occasion he also considered it opportune to send him "a few small common memories of our youth"... (Neculcea) [our translation].

We are glad he took this initiative because it is, on the one hand, a new proof of the connection between two important people of culture, and on the other, a reason to scrutinize more closely certain aspects of the musician's life. Dated "Paris, October 22", the congratulatory letter was written 90 years ago, in French, evoking "a friendship which, in my case, is doubled by a boundless admiration [sic]." (Neculcea) [our translation].

Enescu-Motăș

George Enescu's 65th birthday which occurred in 1946 triggered numerous congratulatory messages, most of them sent by telegraph by close friends, distant acquaintances, former students or collaborators, politicians, representatives of musical associations, personalities from the country and from abroad. Among them was Constantin Motăș, Doctor of Biological Sciences, university professor, systematist and taxonomist of international prestige, considered the founder of phreatobiology.³

Born on July 8, 1891, in Vaslui, he was among those who greeted the musician on the occasion of his birthday on August 19, 1946, sending him the following wishes by telegram, in Sinaia: "Many and fruitful years for the eternal glory of Romanian music. Professor Motăș and family".



Fig. 5. Constantin Motăș

³ S. Cărăușu, D. Cărăușu and V. Ghenciu, *Scrieri asupra vieții și operei profesorului Constantin Motăș* [Writings About the Life and Work of Professor Constantin Motăș], in *Studii și comunicări* [Studies and Communications], Muzeul de Științele Naturii, Bacău, 1976, 207-223. Accessible online at <http://www.studiisicomunicaribacau.ro/pdfs/09-1976-1/21.%20Carasu%20S.%2C%20Carasu%20D.%2C%20Ghenciu%20V.%20-%20Scrieri%20asupra%20vietii%20si%20operei%20profesorului%20Constantin%20Motas.pdf>, accessed August 2, 2020.



Fig. 6. Telegram sent to George Enescu by C. Motăș and family, August 19, 1946 (GENM Archive)

We thus learn that in George Enescu's entourage there was also a Romanian scholar with extensive studies in Romania and France, who earned a bachelor's degree from the Grenoble Institute of Fisheries and Hydrobiology in 1926 and, two years later, a doctorate in Biological Sciences from the University of the same city. Returning to Romania in 1937, Constantin Motăș became a full professor at the Faculty of Sciences of the University of Iași, then at the Faculty of Sciences of the University of Bucharest, later holding various other management positions at the Museum of Natural Sciences in Iași, Marine Zoological Resort in Agiea-Constanța, the Zoological Resort in Sinaia and the "Grigore Antipa" Natural History Museum in Bucharest.⁴ After several tough years in prison (1949-1956) – unjustly dictated by the political leadership of the time, Constantin Motăș was rehabilitated, being appointed Director of the "Emil Racoviță" Institute of Speleology in Bucharest. In 1948, he was awarded the title of full member of the Romanian Academy,⁵ and until his death (January 1980, Bucharest) he presented his research before numerous national and international scientific societies of hydrobiology, limnology, phreatobiology, speleology, ecology, etc.

⁴ Cf. <https://familiamotas.ro/academician-motas/>, accessed August 2, 2020.

⁵ Cf. <https://acad.ro/bdar/armembriLit.php?vidT=M>, accessed August 2, 2020.

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The common point of the two personalities of the Romanian culture and science, Enescu – Motăș, seems to have been Sinaia. The “Luminiș” villa – the house built by the musician at the foot of the Carpathians – is also the place where a work of art signed by Constantin Motăș and dated 1944 is preserved. An avid painting aficionado, he painted a portrait of the composer, which can still be admired on one of the living room walls in his villa. It is an expressive composition, in charcoal, which immortalizes George Enescu at the age of 63. Acting as director of the Sinaia Zoological Research Station since 1940, Constantin Motăș appears to have been George Enescu’s guest at the “Luminiș” Villa during all this time, leaving as a memory a portrait completed two years prior to the Maestro’s final departure from Romania.



Fig. 7. Charcoal portrait signed C. Motăș, 1944 (GENM Archive)

In the absence of other testimonies, a 1944 portrait and a 1946 telegram – both cultural assets of the GENM collection – attest to the friendship of two important academics, Enescu-Motăș, linking their name to the town of Sinaia, while creating a bridge between the representatives of the Romanian music and science.

Fernand Halphen to George Enescu

The GENM Archive stores two letters signed by Halphen and addressed to the Romanian musician. We know that George Enescu was a colleague of Fernand Halphen during his four years at the Paris Conservatory (1895-1899). A French composer born in 1872, who became a friend of George Enescu despite their age difference, Fernand Halphen remains the sender of short letters from which today we can learn not only the feelings of camaraderie that bound the two, but even some interesting adjacent information.

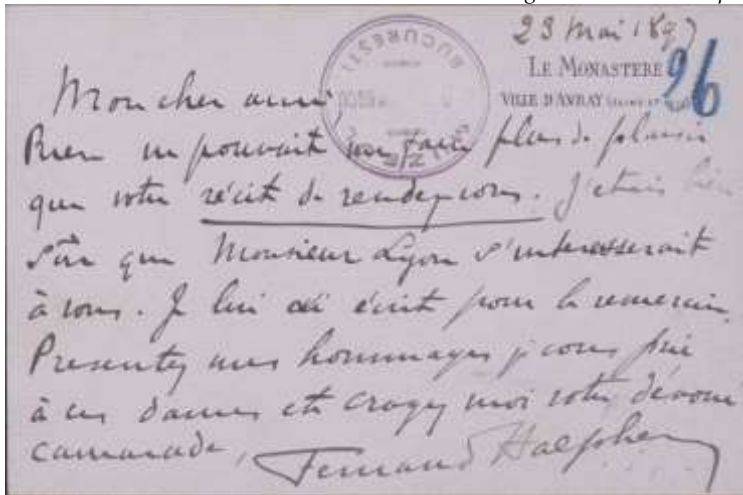


Fig. 8. Fernand Halphen, letter, May 23, 1897 (GENM Archive)

Such is the case of the meeting of the young Romanian musician with Gustave Lyon (1857-1936), director of the Pleyel instrument manufacturing company in Paris, a renowned acoustician and instrument maker. It was probably in his capacity as mediator of one of these meetings that Fernand Halphen wrote to George Enescu on May 23, 1897: "My dear friend, nothing could please me more than the story of your meeting. I was convinced that you would arouse Mr. Lyon's interest. I wrote him a thankful letter." The interest was probably mutual, given that later, George Enescu dedicated to Gustave Lyon his work *Allegro de Concert for Chromatic Harp*, composed in 1904 as a competition piece for the Paris Conservatory and that the musician owned a Pleyel piano – now a heritage object which is on display at the GENM in Bucharest.

Five years later, in 1909, Fernand sent George Enescu an invitation to lunch, set to notes.



Fig. 9. Fernand Halphen, letter, February 17, 1909 (GENM Archive)

A joke between two musician friends, fondly kept by its recipient. The two composers remained in touch despite their busy schedules and George Enescu's intensive concert life, as can be seen in some of the situations recorded in the 1910 press articles:⁶ On April 1, George Enescu, as a violinist, accompanied by his colleague on piano, performed the *Sonata for Violin and Piano* by Fernand Halphen, in a private matinee organized by Mrs. Willy Blumenthal. In answer, on May 8th, the *Geloso* and *Chailley* Quartets performed Enescu's *Octet* nowhere else but in the Paris salon of the Halphens.



Fig. 10. Fernand Halphen conducting a military marching band during World War I, photo, @BnFGallica

⁶ Florinela Popa and Camelia Anca Sârbu, *Articole de presă despre George Enescu. Documente din arhiva MNGE* [Press Articles about George Enescu. Documents from the GENM Archive], vol. II, Editura Muzicală, Bucharest, 2009.

Despite being nine years older and coming from a family with a solid financial background (which is why the *Orsay* Museum in Paris still preserves a portrait of little Fernand, commissioned to Auguste Renoir by his parents, in 1880), the two musicians shared the same teachers and colleagues at the Paris Conservatory, but especially their passion for music, which was evident even in tragic times. Like George Enescu, Fernand Halphen tried to alleviate the impact of front life during World War I by appealing to amateur musicians whom he organized in an orchestra with which he performed in France, between 1914 and 1917.

Dedicated to the service of his country, Fernand Halphen's life came to an abrupt end in 1917, at the age of 45.⁷ The documents kept in the GENM archive preserving the proof of the friendship between the two musicians therefore seem even more valuable and deserve to be brought to the attention of the general public.

In conclusion, we would like to emphasize that through these correspondence pages kept in the institution's archive, we still manage today to reveal lesser known aspects of the musician's life. Thus, the image of the *man* becomes more nuanced, sketched by the very people who were close to him for a while. The three authors of the aforementioned letters established themselves as outstanding personalities in their respective fields of activity, therefore their testimonies are most eloquent to us. They are proof of the musician's entourage, of the fact that he was appreciated not only by his colleagues, but also by scientists, politicians and renowned scientists. They all noticed George Enescu's human and professional qualities, highlighting them in the messages that have been preserved to this day.

As brief as they may appear to be, the clues contained in these correspondence pages are significant, creating a possible basis for further syncretic dissertations. They reveal *senders* that have fallen into oblivion – *names* from various areas of the Romanian or international culture or science, along with less known *facts* from the *recipient's* biography. These, as well as many other details derived from the research of the Maestro's correspondence, contribute to maintaining a living interest in George Enescu's life and oeuvre, bringing him *closer* to the music lovers and specialists of today.

DOCUMENTARY FUND

Documents from the GENM Archive, Bucharest:

Letter. Eugeniu Neculcea to George Enescu, October 22, 1931, 4 p.

Telegram. Constantin Motăș and family to George Enescu, August 19, 1946.

Letter. Fernand Halphen to George Enescu, May 23, 1897, 1 p.

Letter. Fernand Halphen to George Enescu, February 17, 1909, 1 p.

⁷ Cf. Fernand Halphen, "killed in action", viewed online at <https://www.rncm.ac.uk/paris-manchester-1918/musicians-front-musicians-home-front/fernand-halphen/>, accessed August 2, 2020.

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