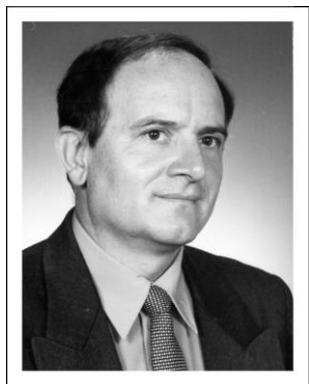


CONDUCTOR GEORGE PAVEL AND THE PRESENCE OF THE MUSICIANS FROM CLUJ IN BANAT AFTER THE VIENNA DIKTAT

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throughout our entire country as well as abroad", and of his birth town, Bocșa, "for special merits in enhancing the prestige and reputation of our town". In 2009, Constantin-Tufan STAN won the historiography Award from the Union of Composers and Musicologists of Romania.

ABSTRACT

By integrating and contextualizing information taken from the local press of Timișoara and Lugoj of the time, this paper recalls several significant moments of the dramatic exile of two major art institutions of Cluj in Banat, after the Vienna Diktat: the Academy of Music and Dramatic Art and the Romanian Opera House. In Timișoara, as well as in other places in the Banat region, the representatives of the two institutions were engaged, under the grim spectre of the Second World War, in an extensive concert activity, which contributed to the maintenance of an elevated cultural climate in a multicultural and multilingual space, marked by the arabesques of obvious Baroque inflections. The interferences with the academic music institutions of Timișoara (the George Enescu Philharmonic Society, under the patronage of the Music Friends Society, and the Municipal Conservatory of Music, placed under the professional and administrative tutelage of Sabin Drăgoi – who later took over the directorship of the Cluj institutions) created a strong spirit of emulation with memorable performances. These performances gave a decisive boost, through the exceptional contribution of the musicians from Cluj, to the efforts for the foundation, in 1946 and 1947, of two institutions of major importance for Timișoara's cultural destiny: the State Opera House and the Banatul Philharmonic.

This period of unprecedented cultural "transhumance" was represented by an entire pleiad of lyrical artists (Marius Nicolescu, Jean Rânzescu, Augustin Almășan, Maria Stroescu-Evițch etc.), musicians (Ana Voileanu-Nicoară, George Ciolac, Titi Fotino-Negru, Robert Cionca, Sigismund Toduță) and conductors from Cluj (George Pavel, Mircea Popa, Eugen Lazăr, Maximilian Săveanu), who were joined, in different forms and artistic projects, by their fellows from Banat, brilliant graduates of the Cluj Conservatory, an elite of the Romanian higher education (Vasile Ijac – the father of symphonism in Banat –, Zeno Vancea – multiple winner of the George Enescu National Composition Award –, Alma Cornea-Ionescu), future teachers of the Transylvanian institution (Magda Kardos, member of a prominent chamber ensemble from Timișoara, *Collegium Musicum* and Max Eisikovits, György Kurtág's first professor of composition) or conductors who performed on the lyrical stages of Cluj (Ernő Földvári from Lugoj, who had a highly acclaimed presence on the podium of the Hungarian Opera of Cluj).

The personality around whom I have woven the account of the trials and tribulations of the artists from Cluj is conductor George Pavel from Lugoj – first conductor of the Romanian Opera House of Cluj since 1940, after a teaching practice period at the Transylvanian Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts. George Pavel, a charismatic figure with a complex musical personality (dedicated to both composition and violin teaching, after brilliant studies completed in the capital of the waltz, at the *Akademie für Musik und darstellende Kunst*) enhanced the axiological dimension of the odyssey of the artists from Cluj.

Keywords: George Pavel, Cluj, Academy of Music and Dramatic Art, Romanian Opera House, Vienna Diktat, Banat

In a letter sent by Zeno Vancea to his friend Iosif Popescu (old and devoted chorister of the Romanian Reunion of Songs and Music in Lugoj), in which he was recalling the personality of pianist Liviu Tempea from Lugoj (1860-1946), a leading professor of the Conservatory of Music and Dramatic Art of Cluj, almost three decades after his disappearance (the letter was dated May 23, 1972 and is preserved in the Archive of the History and Ethnography Museum in Lugoj), the author of the pantomime-ballet *Priculiciul* was expressing his desolation over the destiny of certain musicians after their death (comparing music history with a great cemetery), when the inexorable passage of time accelerates their unjust fall into the oblivion of their complacent contemporaries and ungrateful followers. This was also the fate of conductor George Pavel, a musician with an exceptional career, whose artistic path is nevertheless hard to reconstruct today, with only a few reviews, notes and brief and disparate biographical elements available, scattered in the columns of some publications of the time, or among the pages of some memoir books.

George Pavel was born in 1888 in Lugoj, where he graduated from the Orthodox Confessional Primary School, from the class of Ion Vidu, "the *doina* singer of Banat". According to the (partial and inconclusive) information we have at hand, he was the grandson of priest-composer and teacher Aurel Popovici-Racovița (1879, Racovița, Timiș – 1942, Arad), the first person from Banat to have won the George Enescu National Composition Prize at the very first edition, in 1913. He had two sisters, who embraced the musical career (one was a cellist, the other one, a lyrical artist), and both of whom moved to Berlin after marriage. After moving to Bucharest (where his mother was a violin teacher), he attended, concomitantly, the courses of the Michael the Brave High School and of the Conservatory of Music and Declamation, where he was a disciple of D. G. Kiriac (music theory) and Alfonso Castaldi (harmony). He graduated in violin (1st prize) from the class of Professor Rudolf Malcher, acclaimed musician who later served as concertmaster of the *Wiener Symphonie Orchester*. He earned his degree in violin pedagogy and chamber music at

the *Akademie für Musik und darstellende Kunst* in Vienna (where he was on a Romanian State scholarship), having also attended composition courses in Professor Franz Schrecker's class. He furthered his musical training with master classes in violin interpretation with František Ondříček, which enabled him to earn, through competition, the position of first violinist of the *Wiener Tonkünstler Orchester*. Concomitantly, he also studied conducting with Oskar Nedbal, while pursuing at the same time one of his greatest passions, chamber music, as a member of the famous *Urania Streichquartett*. After World War I he set up a chamber orchestra in the capital of the waltz, with which he gave numerous concerts in many European cultural centres.

In 1924 he was invited to the Chernivtsi State Conservatory as professor of violin, chamber music and orchestra, but in the same year, through the efforts of George Enescu, Alfonso Castaldi (general inspector of music education) and Alexandru Zirra (rector of the Iași Conservatory), he was transferred to the Conservatory of Music and Dramatic Arts in Iași. In 1926, after Zirra's retreat, he was entrusted the directorship of the institution, and the following year he was granted a scholarship by the Ministry of Arts, to attend classes in Berlin with Dr. Ernst Kunwald and Bernardino Molinari, which he successfully finished with a Maestro diploma, as first in class. He returned to Chernivtsi, where he taught violin at the Conservatory and at the Military High School, as a colleague of Paul Jelescu, Silvia Căpățână, Alexandru Garabet, Nicolae Papazoglu and Zorella Petrovici and where he founded a symphony orchestra. In 1932, after the withdrawal of the state subsidy granted by the State Conservatory of Chernivtsi (which became a private institution), he was transferred to Bucharest for a short while. Among the soloists he collaborated with was George Enescu, who unreservedly expressed his admiration for George Pavel's conducting art in few lines inserted in an album (unidentified so far): "George Pavel has an inborn talent for conducting" [19, p. 2]

Radu T. Constantinescu, in his memoirs (Constantinescu 1986, 61 [2]), related a few episodes from the time spent in the company of George Enescu, in the capital of Bukovina: "Around December [1930], Enescu had arrived in Chernivtsi to give two concerts at Musikverein. After the first concert, Hristache Popescu, whom Enescu had admired since the wartime days, together with Alexandru Garabet, George Pavel and me, went with Maestro Enescu to Geffner's, right across from the concert hall, where we

knew they served good steak and wine. We sat ourselves down in a small room in the back and left maestro Enescu (whose after-concert habits we were already acquainted with) to eat in peace. After he finished, he turned to us, sipped at his wine and said, with a waggish smile:

– Where on earth do you find these places with such dainty dishes?

To which George Pavel answered:

– Dear Maestro, we may be good musicians, but when it comes to finding such places, we are the best.

To which Enescu laughed wholeheartedly". [18, p. 28]

In 1935, two years before Pavel's arrival in Timișoara, the author of some informative notes (signed with the pseudonym 'Eusebius' and inserted in the columns of the weekly magazine "Fruncea" published in Timișoara (II, 18, 1935, p 3)) was bemoaning his unjust fate after the withdrawal of the subsidy granted by the Chernivtsi Conservatory and Philharmonic: "Conductor George Pavel from Lugoj, much acclaimed in Vienna and Berlin, is currently splitting his time between the Chernivtsi Conservatory and Philharmonic Orchestra, where, deprived of the subsidies pumped by the City Hall, he works as a conductor, violinist and teacher, to the pride of the people from Banat, as well as from the entire Romania". [4, p. 3]

His presence in Timișoara was merely episodic, in the autumn of 1937, when he was invited as guest professor at the Violin Department of the Municipal Conservatory, to fill a vacancy after Béla Tomm's retirement (a musician who ennobled Timișoara's cultural life during the interwar period, by the obstinacy and dedication with which he promoted chamber music), as well as at the Orchestra Department, from where however he resigned in the winter of the same year (getting transferred to the Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts in Cluj). The orchestra department was taken over by Vasile Ijac, who was appointed teacher at the Timișoara Conservatory in the autumn of 1936, following a competition. [5, p. 3]

He started his fruitful collaboration with the Romanian Opera of Cluj, at the conductor's desk, in the 1937-1938 season (when he conducted only one symphonic concert), and continued it in the 1938-1939 season, when he conducted another symphonic concert, but also the premieres of the operas *Kir Ianulea* by Sabin Dragoi and *Rigoletto* by Verdi. His transfer to the Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts of Cluj and his debut at the

conductor's desk of the Romanian Opera House were also recorded in the local media, which was quite interested in the artistic evolution of the conductor from Banat: Professor George Pavel, the distinguished musician from Banat, who was transferred by the Ministry of National Education to the Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts of Cluj, as chamber music and orchestra course coordinator, conducted a concert in Cluj and Iași and a school audition with the Cluj Academy orchestra, standing out, according to the Cluj newspapers, as the foremost conductor of Transylvania. Following his grandiose success with the Symphony Orchestra of Cluj, he was appointed conductor of the Romanian Opera House. [6, p. 6] He served as first conductor of the lyrical institution of Cluj since the 1940-1941 season, along with the beginning of the sad episode of the Transylvanian artists' exile to Timișoara (after the Vienna Diktat), where he had Mircea Popa, Leontin Anca, Eugen Lazăr, dr. Maximilian Săveanu and, for a short while, Zeno Vancea, as colleagues. During the nine seasons spent at the conductor's desk of the Romanian Opera House of Cluj, as collaborator or appointed conductor (while also serving as professor of violin at the Conservatoire of Cluj-Timișoara), G. Pavel conducted the performances of the oratorio *Omul (The Man)*, by Filaret Barbu, and the pantomime *Ivan Turbincă* by Vasile Ijac (premiere), *Rigoletto*, *Aida*, *Il Trovatore*, *La Traviata*, *Faust*, *Tosca*, *Un ballo in maschera*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Martha*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Fidelio*, *Eugene Onegin*, *Die Fledermaus (The Bat)*, *The Plague*, as well as a suite of symphonic concerts, over the course of seven seasons (cf. [24]).

In a symphonic concert conducted in 1942 on the stage of the Communal Theatre, at the desk of the orchestra of the Romanian Opera House of Cluj-Timișoara, G. Pavel confirmed the success of his performances by conducting a diverse repertoire (with a first audition in Timișoara – one of Johann Christian Bach's symphonies), while also promoting several leading musicians of the Cluj ensemble: Gr. Hoca, V. Boar, N. Pop and I. Suciuc – an excellent graphic artist, to whom we owe a portrait of George Enescu, made after the 1936 recital and published in one of the weekly issues of "Fruncea" –, in the *Concerto for Four Violins* by Ludwig Wilhelm Maurer. After a few miniatures that completed the first part of the concert (*Gavotte* by Fr. Gossec, in an arrangement probably by G. Pavel, a master of orchestration, *Fairy Tales*, by K. Komzák and *Peasant*

Dance by C. Dimitrescu), at the end of the second part, the orchestra played the poem *Vltava* by Smetana (with an accurate intervention of the conductor, who offered the audience explanations on the literary substratum of the poem), and the *Overture* to the opera *William Tell* by Rossini. An anonymous review [2, p. 2] presented a list of hallmarks that defined G. Pavel as a consummate master of the art of conducting (able to impress Ioan Holender, in his adolescent years spent in Timișoara, who years later would remember the former as a great conductor who, along with other artists from Cluj, had played a major role in his growth as a musician – cf. Holender 2005 [5]): "Prof. George Pavel's presence [...] is the sure guarantee that the musical performance will go well beyond the success of an ordinary performance or concert. This man, whom nature has endowed with exceptional qualities in this art, also possesses a vast musical culture. Thanks to these qualities, he does not beat the time because he is a conductor, he beats the time because he makes music. When he conducts, one can immediately see that that he actually lives that musical passage. He does not confuse measure with style. He understands equally well the deepness of Beethoven's music, and the grace and piquancy of Haydn's or Mozart's music. The audience feels the magic of his wand through the fluid created from the very first measures, and knows that at the desk, or rather at the head of the orchestra (for Pavel always conducts the symphonic concerts by heart), stands a great conductor". [23, p. 71] Alma Cornea-Ionescu wrote another review of this concert, boosting the image of the master conductor from Lugoj: "As a conductor, Pavel may not have the most tumultuous nature, but his interpretations are tasteful thanks to his musical education. The hallmark of his conducting style is precision, par excellence, as well as a strong rhythmic vivacity. We, who know well Mr. Pavel's musical performances and versatility, are able to cherish two rare gifts that he brings to Romanian music: industriousness and skill. He is a serious musician in the full sense of the word". [20, p. 4]

At the end of 1942, in an analysis on the evolution of the Cluj Academy over the few years since the dramatic "transhumance" in the cultural landscape of Timișoara, Alma Cornea-Ionescu made a review of the faculty members' teaching performance. First she passed a few judgments on the teachers in the departments of singing (Marius Nicolescu, Jean Rânzescu), piano (Ana Voileanu-Nicoară, George Ciolac, Titi Fotino-

Negru a.o.), violin (Robert Cionca – brother of pianist Aurelia Cionca – and the "hyperactive George Pavel, the acclaimed conductor who splits his time and soul between the Opera, the Academy and the Military High School"), cello (Flor Breviman) and winds. Then, the pianist and composer from Timișoara focused her attention (after a few apologetic considerations on maestros Martian Negrea and Augustin Bena – recently retired) on the work of the teachers in the theoretical departments, highlighting the contributions of Vasile Ijac (brilliant graduate of the Cluj Conservatory, Martian Negrea's class of composition) and of Professor Vulpescu, both of whom "work with praiseworthy disinterestedness and rare warmth for the initiation of the young into the various branches of musicology and music pedagogy. The former is a composer of merit, while the latter, Mr. Vulpescu, is the author of an elementary music treatise and [of other] very interesting works". [21, p. 2]

During his activity as a conductor in Timișoara, G. Pavel also collaborated with the Moldova Philharmonic of Iași, conducting a few performances under the dome of the National Theatre of the Moldavian capital: on September 26, 1943 (the 3rd concert of the second season – 1943-1944); October 17, 1943 (the 6th concert of the season); November 7, 1943 (the 9th concert of the season), in which G. Pavel presented a lied of his own, with orchestral accompaniment (*Mother*, set to verses by Reimer, soloist: Gogu Simionescu), and, in first audition, the symphonic poem *Babacai* by Filaret Barbu; December 5, 1943 (the 13th concert of the season); February 20, 1944 (the 22nd concert of the season), with the first audition of *Symphony* by Mircea Popa, which earned the young composer, originally from the Serbian Banat, an honourable First Mention in 1940, at the George Enescu Award. In a text inserted in the concert program brochure, Prof. Constantin Georgescu highlighted some of the qualities of the lied *Mother* ("expression of the Romanian spirit [...] and the refined orchestral texture"), as follows: "Tender lyricism, drama; and, technically, a command of the melody that creates a perfect match between poetry and music. Simplicity and common sense, the aesthetic" (other references on the collaboration with the Iași Philharmonic, in Drăgulescu 1943, 2 [4]).⁹⁰

⁹⁰ More details about his collaboration with the Iași Philharmonic in Dorel Drăgulescu, *De vorbă cu Gh. Pavel, dirijor la Opera Română, despre concertele simfonice de la Iași*, [22]).

After the unfortunate episode brought about by the Vienna Diktat, with the dramatic moments of the transfer of the institutions of Cluj to Timișoara, Zeno Vancea (who, after his teaching experience in Târgu Mureș, had joined the artists of Cluj, being for a brief period a colleague of G. Pavel, at the desk of the Transylvanian lyrical institution), remained captive to a slight resentment (possibly due to his failure as a conductor), to which he gave vent later in an interview, by making some gratuitous and unfair remarks about his fellow from Lugoj: *"This Gheorghe Pavel was in fact an amateur in conducting. Until then he had performed in a Viennese café, where he also had a kind of salon «cappella». When he found out that Sabin Drăgoi had been appointed director of the Opera – and having known him for a long time – he struggled to be hired as a conductor, although his experience in the field was rather limited"* [25, pp. 107-108]. His short-lived experience as a conductor (he led the orchestra of the Cluj-Timișoara Opera in just a few performances, including *Orpheus and Eurydice* by Gluck) was interrupted, according to his own confession, after some backstage schemes initiated by George Pavel, who "was envious and afraid that I might be more successful than him", and so he was eventually forced to resign. Some faint echoes of Zeno Vancea's antipathy for his colleague's conducting profile, albeit expressed in a more nuanced manner, are found in a review of *Il Trovatore*: "Friday's performance was prepared and conducted by Gh. Pavel. Undoubtedly, Mr. Pavel has nerve, sensitivity and enthusiasm, and therefore the opera genre agrees with his temper much more than the symphonic one. He is not a conductor of great stature, as the ones this Opera used to have in the past, of the likes of Egisto Tango, Schuller, Dubravsky, De Vecchi, Bobescu etc. Mr. Pavel came to this Opera House later and after a big detour, at an age when cementing a conductor's personality is no longer a simple matter, especially as up to that point in his life, as a teacher in Chernivtsi, his activity as a conductor could not have been too intense. [...] Or, Mr. Pavel intends to give the orchestra an equal role to that of the vocal element, which is an error of style, even when the orchestra and the singers play the same melody simultaneously. [...] We do not deny that these moments of dramatic tension, when the orchestra had its own role, were well conducted by Mr. Pavel". [24, p. 46]

He continued to collaborate with the Moldova Philharmonic of Iași, which had taken refuge near Lugoj, in the commune of Făget, along with other important educational and cultural institutions like the Royal Academy of Music and Dramatic Art, the Belle Arts Academy and the National College (following the evacuation order issued on March 10, 1944 and implemented on March 21⁹¹ – see Stan 2008 [8]). A few days later, i.e. on March 25, the Moldavian orchestra was evacuated to Făget, after a last symphonic concert in Iași, held on March 19, 1944 (the 26th concert of the then-current season). Some of the faculty members of the Chernivtsi Conservatory, including Liviu Rusu, also established themselves temporarily in Timișoara. Given that not all the members of the orchestra had taken refuge in Făget, the orchestra was completed with local players. The institution was headed by Radu T. Constantinescu, as Mircea Bârsan, who had been appointed director, had not yet arrived in the townlet of Banat. The Făget season (the continuation of the second current season of the Philharmonic) began with the symphonic concert of April 23, 1944, held in the Dacia Hall in Făget, under the baton of Antonin Ciolan, with a repertoire consisting of the *Overture to the Oberon* opera, by Weber, the *Seventh Symphony* by Beethoven and the *Romanian Poem* by George Enescu. The 35th concert of the second season (June 18, 1944) was conducted by George Pavel, who presented his own composition (*Divertisment bănățean*), along with, among others, *Hora staccato* by Grigoraș Dinicu, and an orchestral version of the two dances for piano by Sabin Dragoi, *Hodoroaga* and *Zdrângănița*. The third season (1944-1945) opened with the concert of August 26, 1944, conducted by George Pavel (the *Third Symphony*, "Eroica" by Beethoven, the *Romanian Poem* by Enescu and the *Overture to the opera Tannhäuser* by R. Wagner).

A complex personality, the conductor from Lugoj also devoted himself to composition, some of his works being performed by the artists from Cluj before the audience of Timișoara. On the occasion of a recital of ballet (starring Adelina Stegărescu) and singing (with the participation of mezzo-soprano Maria Stroescu-Evițchi), held on the stage of the Cultural Palace on January 31, 1943, tenor Augustine Almășan performed one of Pavel's vocal miniatures, the lied *Why?*, accompanied by Margot

⁹¹ See: Constantin-Tufan Stan, *Titus Olariu. Artistul și epoca sa* [26].

Alexandrescu. [3, p. 2] An *Our Father* was offered to churchgoers on the occasion of the religious concert of the Chorale from Banat, conducted by Sava Golumba in the new Orthodox Cathedral, on April 14, 1946⁹².

At the beginning of March 1946, the *Collegium Musicum* chamber ensemble (the so-called Association for the Cultivation of Chamber Music, set up by Liviu Rusu), being under the aegis of the George Enescu Philharmonic Society, presented its inaugural concert, with the participation of pianist Ana Voileanu-Nicoară (pages from *Das Wohltemperierte Klavier*), cellist Al. Boroș, soprano Silvia-Secoșan-Humiță, violinist Ioan Suciuc and pianist Ernest Földvári from Lugoj, under the baton of Titus Tarnavski. [10, p. 4] Neither the gradual and implacable communization of the Romanian society under the pressure of the Soviet troops, nor the establishment of certain subservient political institutions, could obscure the suite of musical events held regularly in the concert halls of Timișoara, even though organized by cover-up institutions (*Apărarea Națională*, *ARLUS*) or held under the generic sounds of the *Soviet Anthem*, which were grotesquely joined with the harmonies of the *Romanian Royal Anthem*. On March 9, 1946, the Hebrew Democratic Committee organized a concert dedicated to the works of composer Max Eisikovits, with the participation of prestigious musicians (L. Oesterreicher – *Hebrew Rhapsody* for violin –, Magda Kardos, Viorica Kállai-Markovitsné – lieder set to poems by József Attila and Ady Endre –, Augustza Herskovits – *Sonatina for Piano*, in French style –, Al. Boroș – *Elegy on Hebrew Themes* for cello – and E. Földvári – the "*Transilvania*" Suite for piano), presented by C. Givulescu. [11] The series of concerts continued with the so-called concert of the Patriotic Defense, held in June, 1946, with accompaniment by the "gifted pianist George Kurtág", the coryphaeus of today's avant-garde music, [12] after which the music lovers of Timișoara were offered the opportunity to explore the world of jazz music (a genre Enescu viewed with such reluctance!), in a concert held with the participation of George Pavel's daughter, Ileana (*Rhapsody in Blue* by Gershwin), "a versatile talent who gave a rousing rendition of the choruses of the jazz pieces". [13] Ileana Pavel had demonstrated her vocal abilities in a concert held on February

⁹² See "Banatul", Timișoara, April 16, 1946, p. 5; cf. "Luptătorul bănățean", Timișoara, III, 436, 1946, and "Voința bănățeană", Timișoara, I, 2nd series, 36, 1946.

22, 1944 in Lugoj, her father's birth town, on the stage of the "Traian Grozăvescu" theatre, together with tenor Octavian Hrabal (originally from Lugoj) and with accompaniment by Sigismund Toduță from the Romanian Opera of Cluj-Timișoara. [16, p. 2]

After the issuance of the decrees for the foundation of the Opera House (1946) and Philharmonic (1947) in Timișoara (there was only one orchestra in Timișoara at that time, performing alternatively under the auspices of the two institutions), George Pavel became heavily involved in the local artistic life, as a member of the *Collegium Musicum* (which, one year after the reorganization, performed under the aegis of the Music Conservatory of Timișoara), along with pianist and conductor (Ernő) Ernest Földvári from Lugoj (accompanying pianist – since 1949 – and, the following year, conductor of the orchestra of the Hungarian Opera of Cluj until 1958, when he emigrated to Switzerland, where he took on the name of Ernest Paldi), Liviu Rusu (director) and Magda Kardos, future teacher and head of the piano department at the Cluj Conservatory of Music. [14, p. 4]

On April 27, 1947, a few months before he died (after innumerable concert appearances over a long conducting career, with successful performances in Germany, Poland, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Austria), G. Pavel (appointed first conductor of the newly established "Banat" Orchestra of Timișoara) conducted, on the stage of the Communal Theatre, the festive concert dedicated to the inauguration of the institution from Banat. It was a small-scale, symbolic performance – *Dance and Song* from *Rustic Entertainment* by Sabin Drăgoi, *8 Russian Songs* by Liadov, and *Overture* to the opera *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg* by Richard Wagner –, followed, on the same stage and on the same night, by the performance of *Aida*, which marked the inauguration of the lyrical institution of Timișoara, in the presence of political leaders from Bucharest, led by Dr. Petru Groza. The concert held at the end of May 1947 was going to be his swansong. Upon his last appearance at the desk of the Banat State Philharmonic Orchestra, he conducted works by Johann Strauss, Sabin Drăgoi (*Two Folk Dances*, in his own orchestral arrangement) and Siegfried Ochs, which he preceded with a presentation of the program, according to his old custom. In his concluding remark, the chronicler [17, p. 801] offered a plastic description of some of the hallmarks of G. Pavel's personality: "He

prepared the orchestra with great care and conducted the entire performance with much enthusiasm". In late July, shortly before his death after an incurable disease, the members of the Philharmonic Orchestra and Opera House of Timișoara paid him a final tribute in a concert held for his benefit, organized by the Artists' Union (*The Banat Rhapsody* by G. Pavel, and the *Fourth Symphony* by Ludwig van Beethoven), under the baton of Prof. Brunaru. [15, p. 4] After a brilliant national and international career as teacher, violinist and conductor, the musician from Lugoj never arrived to reap the benefits of his life's work at the head of the symphonic orchestra of Timișoara, in his native Banat, because he died in the summer of 1947.

George Pavel was fully involved in the activity of other institutions too, as active member (the Prince Carol Royal Foundations and the Pedagogical Institute of Vienna) or through the honorary positions he held: vice president of the Teachers' Association and honorary president of the Artists' Union of Romania. He was one of the most complex and refined musicians of the Banat region – conductor, violinist, teacher, composer, orchestra arranger –, with a prodigious activity on major European concert stages. Perhaps it is only his excessive modesty that accounts for the inexplicable absence of some detailed information on his biography, career and artistic development, leaving us with elements generally taken from secondary, disparate and often contradictory sources. His evolution on the stage of the Opera House of Cluj, and later of Timișoara and Iași, during the refuge of the musical institutions of Cluj, after the Vienna Diktat, enhanced the prestige and value of a golden generation of the lyrical and instrumental art in the Transylvanian metropolis, and at the same time imposed him as an undisputable master of the art of conducting, widely acknowledged at the time and equally successful, over time, on major European concert stages.

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