

## **MAESTRO ILARION IONESCU-GALAȚI, 80 YEARS OF LIFE AND 60 YEARS OF MUSICAL CAREER**

**PETRUȚA-MARIA COROIU<sup>1</sup>**

The Romanian public (including the one in Brașov) will celebrate the maestro's double anniversary. Currently residing in Brașov, the maestro sets off every week in projects which do not show his age.



Maestro Ilarion Ionescu-Galați was born on 17 September 1937 in Iași, and is one of the greatest Romanian violinists, conductors and teachers, a major artist with a deep understanding of the ample and complex musical phenomenon. Maestro Ilarion Ionescu-Galați chose to share his gifts, both at the personal and the professional level, with the complete discretion, grace and modesty specific to the elites.

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After he started studying the violin when he was 4 years old under his father's guidance, at 12 he became the student of the famous teacher George Manoliu at the Music High School in Bucharest. In 1954 he made his debut as a soloist of the Radio Orchestra in Bucharest conducted by Iosif Conta, with a concert by Wieniawski. He continued his university training with the great maestro between 1955 and 1960, in Bucharest. He won the "George Enescu" scholarship for exceptional merits in his training, but also the trophy at the contest with the same name, in 1961, being recognized as an elite artist among the young Romanian musicians. Conducted by Emanuel Elenescu, he presented, in a concert organized by the Romanian Radio Broadcasting Company, for the first time in Romania, the Concert by Shostakovich – a recording which is part of the musical interpretation history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

As a student he began his soloist career with national orchestras, as well as international ones (from Russia, China, Mongolia, France and Spain), subsequently becoming member of the Symphonic Orchestra of the "George Enescu" Philharmonic. After intense training with Mircea Basarab and Emanuel Elenescu in the art of conducting, he made his debut as orchestra conductor in 1963. In 1965 he became the disciple of Pierre Dervaux and Charles Munch at the École normale supérieure in Paris, through a scholarship granted by the French government. From 1965 to 1999, he occupied the position of head conductor of the Philharmonic Orchestra of Braşov.

In 1970 he was able to attend master classes in the USA (with Leopold Stokowski in New York, and with Eugene Ormandy in Philadelphia), expanding his training to the American continent as well. He was invited to conduct symphonic orchestras in many countries, such as Switzerland, Russia, Sweden, Greece, Turkey, Cuba, Japan, the Philippines, Singapore, China, Italy, Spain, France, Germany, Poland, Belgium, but also to teach at American universities (Michigan State University, Kent State University - Ohio) or Turkish ones. He also was the permanent conductor of the Philharmonic Orchestra in Istanbul, as well as of the Orchestra in Ankara (Turkey), Gävle and Uppsala (Sweden).

Among the soloists he directed, there are Ion Voicu, Igor Bezrodnâi, Ruggiero Ricci, Viktor Pikaizen, Igor Oistrach, Rudolf Kerer, Magda Tagliaferro, Li Min-Chan, Viktor Tretiakov, Daniil Şafran, Lola Bobescu, Vladimir Orlov, Radu Aldulescu, Radu Lupu, Valentin Gheorghiu, Lazar Berman, Igor Oistrach, Fazil Say, Ion Voicu, Radu Aldulescu, Rudolf Kerrer, Felicia Filip, Ştefan Ruha, Dan Grigore, Valery Oistrach, Pavel Berman, Ayla Erduran, Mihaela Martin, Mihaela Ursuleasa, Costas Cotsiolis, Theodore Kerkezos, Sabine Meyer, Vladimir Orlov, Silvia Marcovici, Idil Biret,

Alexander Toradze, Nelly Miricioiu. Maestro Ilarion Ionescu-Galați has many records issued by prestigious record labels (Philips, Electrecord, Sipario Dischi), as well as the Radio Broadcasting Companies in Stockholm, Madrid, Istanbul, Tokyo, Bucharest.

Between 1971 and 1987 he was the director of the Philharmonic Orchestra in Brașov, in 1970 he initiated the International Chamber Music Festival (whose director he remains). He was the president of the jury of the "Dinu Niculescu" International Competition for Conductors (first contest of this type in Romania, held annually in Brașov until 1999). Maestro Ilarion Ionescu-Galați is an honorary member of the Suzuki Academy in Japan, and Professor at the Faculty of Music of Transilvania University of Brașov. His activity was internationally acknowledged (in 1992 he received the Honorary Title of the Ministry of Culture in Turkey), as well as nationally (in 2004 he was decorated with the Cultural Merit Order "Grand Officer").

Maestro Ilarion Ionescu-Galați learnt from his mentor George Georgescu that the orchestra is the only musical instrument with a soul, that instrumentalists have their own inner world and personality, that conductors must be emphatic and kind towards those working with them, that there must be an emotional relationship between the conductor and the orchestra (besides authority and respect). You can learn to be a conductor, but you have to be born with it: a conductor's qualities must be innate (musical instinct, intuition, initiative, specific talent for conducting, knowing the orchestra, knowing how each instrument sounds, being well liked by the orchestra, being able to instil discipline).

Another problem which preoccupied the maestro is the education of the young generation: they need to learn how to play music (because music is not written on notes, the notes only indicate what you have to play), to cultivate their desire to become part of the competition in the field, to acquire very solid (multilateral) musical training. The Maestro criticised the social and political situation which influences the musical and artistic phenomenon: The Minister of Culture blamed the local town halls run by unskilled people with no interest in music, instead of giving the professionals the chance to take the initiative in the field of musical education which should be taught in schools and, more specifically, practiced in concert halls.

Maestro Ilarion Ionescu-Galați was rewarded for special merits with the First Prize of the Musical Critics Union in 2000, and is a honorary citizen of Brașov, Ploiești and Târgu-Mureș. However, he is, above all, a musician with a remarkable and implacable hearing, a skilled teacher, a passionate artist, exacting yet flexible (in order to obtain the wanted results), a tireless worker, a spiritual man; he is I. Ionescu-Galați.

PETRUȚA-MARIA COROIU

Founder of an illustrious violin school, maestro Ilarion Ionescu-Galați also gave the Romanian musical world his son, violinist Florin Ionescu-Galați (soloist of the Philharmonic Orchestra of Brașov), bringing a decisive contribution to the career of many young talented artists acknowledged abroad. His generosity in sharing with the young artists the secrets of his interpretative art makes him a great violin teacher, as well as a warm artist, always willing to offer advice to the younger generation in search of their path in the sonorous art, and to create a spiritual universe for them. In 2008 the pianist Ioana Maria Lupașcu dedicated a novel ("Prințul baghetei" – The Prince of the Wand) to him, whose main character he is.