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**PLACING GENIUS
The Case of George Enescu**

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Placing genius: the case of George Enescu

Argument and Approach

The music of Enescu is the closest thing to a canonic repertory to have emerged from South East Europe. In attempting to account for this, the essay probes the historical nature of creative genius as a perceived category. It works towards an understanding of genius as a convergence between talent of a rare and truly exceptional kind with the kind of significant project (uniquely defining of both its time and its place) enabled by what Peter Bürger has called an institution of art. All three components---the talent, the project, the institution---are necessary constituents. In applying this to Enescu, it is argued that his ‘significant project’ was to delve deeply into the transition between a highly diversified indigenous culture, strongly marked by its Byzantine and Ottoman inheritance, and a European symphonic culture. Like all significant composers, he brought to full realization what lay latent in the musical material, understanding musical material in Adorno’s sense; i.e. as a category so heavily mediated that it can provide a remarkably authentic snapshot of both its time and its place.

The essay approaches this conclusion in discrete stages. It is structured in four sections, which juxtapose compositional and contextual analyses. By setting up a superficially attractive comparison with the Polish composer Karol Szymanowski (section 1), the author demonstrates that at a deeper level the respective projects of these composers were entirely different, and indeed could only have been entirely different, given their contrasted backgrounds in Poland and Romania. This in turn allows for a deconstruction of conventional understandings of an east European musical ‘renaissance’ in the early twentieth century, and at the same time contextualises Enescu’s investment in transition by invoking wider discourses of balkanism (section 2). Section 3 offers a sustained analytical commentary on Enescu’s music from the early 1920s onwards, identifying three distinct idioms through which he composed out his project of transition, while section 4 develops the understanding of creative genius articulated above.

A tempting comparison

In 1940 George Enescu completed his *Impressions d'Enfance*, Op. 28, a suite for violin and piano. Fittingly it was dedicated to his old teacher Eduard Caudella, Director of the Iași Conservatoire in Enescu's homeland of Moldavia.¹ One of the *Impressions* is 'The little stream at the bottom of the Garden', and to achieve what he described in the score as 'una sonorità acquatica' Enescu enlisted a little help. There is an unmistakable allusion here to Szymanowski's 'The fountain of Arethusa', also for violin and piano: not a quotation exactly, but an explicit reference to one of the most imaginative of those musical *scènes d'eau* we might loosely describe as impressionist. 'Arethusa' was the first of Szymanowski's cycle of *Mythes*, which had been in Enescu's concert repertoire since back in 1927, and the allusion to it in *Impressions d'Enfance* was a tribute to a work he particularly admired. It remains the only real point of contact between these two composers. They seem not to have met, and while we know that Enescu thought highly of at least some of Szymanowski's music, we have no idea if this admiration was reciprocated; nor even if the Polish composer was at all familiar with the music of his Romanian contemporary.² All the same, I have reasons to consider them in tandem.

In the years just before, during and after World War I the two composers followed very similar paths, and precisely because they were such different musicians these surface parallels can be revealing of wider issues. I will use the comparison as a way in to the music of Enescu, and to the ecology that made this music possible. Consider, to begin with, their second symphonies, Szymanowski's composed during 1909-11, Enescu's

¹ Caudella's own *Moldavian Overture* (1913) makes for an interestingly contrasted evocation of Enescu's homeland, its images bold and historical, where Enescu's are domestic and picturesque.

² The single reference to Enescu in Szymanowski's correspondence comes in a letter to the composer from Zofia Kochańska (wife of the violinist Paweł Kochański), who refers to Enescu in glowing terms following a meeting in New York on 17 February 1925. See *Karol Szymanowski Korespondencja*, ed. Teresa Chylińska, vol. 2 (Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1994), p. 266.

during 1912-14. It would be misleading to describe these as formative works; both are immensely assured and powerful. But in each case they pre-date the arrival of a truly distinctive voice, a clearly recognisable idio-style. If you hear these symphonies with an innocent ear you will be hard pressed to identify either composer. In earlier years both men had explored a range of different stylistic options, not exactly trying them on for size, but moving easily enough---so it seems---from one model to the next.

Unsurprisingly, then, the youthful works of the two composers have relatively little in common. With their two second symphonies, however, there is a moment of convergence. They are very different symphonies, but both look in the same direction, adopting the rhetoric, the gestures and the technical devices associated with an Austro-German post-Wagnerian orchestral style. Richard Strauss in particular rides high in both works, and especially in their first movements.³

Following this moment of stylistic convergence the paths of the two composers ran in parallel for a bit. Their third symphonies were both products of the war years, Szymanowski's composed during 1914-1916, Enescu's during 1916-18. And again the parallels between the two works are striking. For a start, the Straussian tone of their predecessors has been decisively rejected; these symphonies look in a quite different direction. Both are works *in extremis*, not least in their extravagant, lavish scoring; the orchestral forces are indeed very similar, including a raft of pitched percussion (bells, tamtam, celesta, glockenspiel, *et al*) together with piano, organ, harps and wordless chorus.⁴ And there are just so many matching gestures along the way: the openings with their chromatically sinuous string melodies over insistent throbbing timpani, the dissolution of full-blooded climaxes into delicate, evanescent sonorities clearly influenced by modern French music, the mystical ambience associated especially with the

³ The neo-classical variations of Szymanowski's second movement also find an echo in some of Enescu's earlier music, though I suspect Enescu would have thoroughly disapproved the Regerian fugue in which the Szymanowski work culminates.

⁴ The outer sections of the Szymanowski work use a text from Djālal al-Dīn Rūmī, but in the middle section the chorus is wordless.

wordless chorus, and of course that whiff of the east. Surface parallels abound, then, even if the underlying ethos of the two symphonies is rather different. In particular, the hedonism of Szymanowski's score, especially apparent in the big oriental-sounding tableaux of its middle section, finds no echo in Enescu; characteristically, the tone of quiet, radiant ecstasy in the third movement of his symphony has to be hard won in its earlier movements. And that difference tells us much about what will follow.

The immediate post-war years saw both composers immersed in the two great operas that lie right at the centre of their respective oeuvres, *Król Roger* [King Roger] and *Oedipe*, reworkings of Euripides and Sophocles respectively. Here they struggled with issues that might be termed metaphysical, but also with concrete issues of musical style; not that the two can be cleanly separated. In *Król Roger* Szymanowski presented us with a Nietzschean refashioning of *The Bacchae* (albeit set in twelfth-century Sicily), significantly adapting the ending of Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz's libretto to portray a man who has recognised and overcome the Dionysian within, and can thus emerge 'strong enough for freedom'. The message is clear enough, not least through the music: the intoxicating hedonism of the Third Symphony should not be rejected but rather accommodated, 'overcome'. Enescu too was dissatisfied with the first version of Edmond Fleg's libretto for *Oedipe*. But here the changes concerned the beginning rather than the end. In its final version, Fleg's libretto reaches back chronologically to offer an account of Oedipus's earlier life, fleshing out events that are given only a cursory mention in Sophocles. Only in acts 3 and 4 does it align itself directly to the relevant Theban plays.⁵ Not only does this depiction of the entire life cycle of Oedipus humanise the work, allowing us to identify directly with the hero's beliefs and aspirations, which become in effect those of Everyman; it further allows for a moral victory, let Destiny do its worst. This, too, is a form of 'overcoming', and again it is clearly spelt out by the music,

⁵ I refer here to the two Oedipus plays, *Oedipus Tyrannus* and *Oedipus at Colonus*.

especially in the final monologue (compare Roger's 'hymn to the sun' in the Szymanowski).⁶

These two models of humanism had a distinct bearing on the parallel folkloristic turn taken by both composers in the 1920s, even as they continued to work on their operas. For Szymanowski the nationalist turn amounted to what he himself called 'a new period of my creative life', during which he turned to the remarkable traditional music of the Tatra mountains, and to a lesser extent of the Kurpie districts of Poland, as a major source of inspiration. This represented the final stage of what might almost be described as a kind of archetype of the evolution of national styles in east-central Europe (compare Bartók): three relatively discrete stages taking us from hostile imitation of a status quo (German late Romanticism),⁷ through a quest for alternatives (modern French music), to the discovery of 'one's own jewels', to use Szymanowski's language.⁸ We should note, though, that the jewels in question served a double function for Szymanowski: as a symbol of the nation perhaps, but---and probably more importantly---as an alternative exoticism; alternative, that is, to the web of symbols and images associated with his inter-war music, including the Third Symphony. The brightly coloured music of the Tatrás was, in short, both home-grown and an exotic other; the jewels are one's own, but they are 'jewels'. For Szymanowski, the exotic was a prerequisite of creativity,⁹ and the real achievement of his later music was to accommodate it, harnessing it to formal and tonal

⁶ This is encoded in the intervallic structure of the leitmotiven of *Oedipe*, notably the symbolic meanings attributed to tritone, minor third and major third.

⁷ This corresponds to the category 'imitative but hostile' in Ernest Gellner's typology of nationalisms; see his *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 1983).

⁸ 'My Splendid Isolation', first published in *KurierPolski* on 26 November 1922. The title is in English in the original.

⁹ His loss of faith in the exotic following the war years amounted to something of a creative crisis for Szymanowski; 'Can you believe? I cannot compose now....'. Hence the liberating effect of the music of the Tatrás.

frameworks of neo-classical lucidity. His folklorism, then, was a project perfectly in tune with the Nietzschean humanism of *Król Roger*. In truth it had less to do with nationalism than with a necessary conquest of the exotic.

The case of Enescu is less straightforward. In the first place his music cannot be so easily periodised in relation to German, French and indigenous (Romanian) influences. Rather it advanced through a shift in the balance of these elements, all of which were present more-or-less from the start. The folklorism of the 1920s, then, was not a new departure, but the consolidation and enhancement of certain earlier tendencies and the suppression of others. In some later works the idiom of traditional music was imaginatively recreated to establish a new 'Romanian' sound world; in others it became a discreet presence in an impressionist landscape; in yet others it receded to the background, influencing processive aspects of the music rather more than melodic substance. And as this highly personal idio-style took shape in the 1920s, Enescu decisively parted company with Szymanowski. It is not just that the traditional music of Romania has little in common with that of the Polish Tatra. Nor that Enescu treated it in a manner that is entirely *sui generis*, whereas the debts to Bartók and Stravinsky are transparent in Szymanowski's later works. More crucially, the role played by this music in Enescu's later compositions had nothing whatever to do with exoticism, and everything to do with the humanism represented by *Oedipe*. In this respect Enescu bought into some of the familiar symbolic values associated with traditional (folk) music, in particular its identification with a collective 'natural' community. But it was no longer a national community which was evoked, as had been the case, for example, in his early Romanian Rhapsodies. His project was closer to Bartók's in its ambition to span the gulf between an ahistorical natural community, where the individual might be thought to speak for the community as a whole (Oedipus as Everyman), and the contemporary world of Western modernity, where the individual is deemed to be alienated, his/her sense of the social whole partial and fragmented.

Even that formulation does not entirely cover it, however. Bartók's attempted synthesis of traditional musics and contemporary art musics may indeed have forged a new and

integrated musical language, but in doing so it did not conceal, nor seek to conceal, that the constituents of that language were fractured (in Adornian terms, we might say that the unrationalised peasant idioms served to critique the used-up forms of an increasingly fragmented art music tradition). In short, the modernist credentials of Bartók's music are never in doubt. Enescu, on the other hand, was engaged in a more traditionally Humanist enterprise, in which there was little trace of modernist alienation. From the 1920s he forged one of the most original and uncompromising musical languages (and 'language' is probably the *mot juste*) of any early twentieth-century composer. In doing so he drew upon the immensely rich reserves of Romanian, and more generally Balkan, traditional musics, allowing them to reshape existing syntax in an astonishingly radical way, yet without any real sense of discontinuity with the past. I will return to this later. For now, it is enough to note that the mature Enescu drew not just on the melodic and rhythmic substance of traditional music---the music of Everyman---but also on its improvisatory manner, where an expressive imperative---expressive more often than not of lament or tragedy---implicitly challenges the authority of those collective (i.e. socialising) forms which make the improvisation possible in the first place. The epic quality of Enescu's later music lies precisely in its duplication of this tension. What is overcome is not the seductive attraction of Dionysian life forces, but the impulse to individuation inherent in, and always threatening to destabilize, collective forms.

Wider issues

The achievements of Szymanowski and Enescu might well be understood in relation to a conventional narrative of east-European musical renaissance. The narrative would run something like this. Social modernisation and cultural renewal in the eastern half of Europe during the nineteenth century were primarily responses to ideas and practices from Western Europe which stimulated and then fused with a slowly developing nationalist commitment. Because of this response mode, there was initially an element of

‘forms without substance’ about this process.¹⁰ Thus, the professionalisation of musical life associated with the shift from court to city took longer in eastern than in western Europe, just as the underlying ideologies of liberalism and nationalism were given rather different expression. In particular, liberalism¹¹ was foregrounded in the west and nationalism in the east, a distinction that found musical expression in the manipulation of two ‘innocent’ musics. The music of Bach and the so-called ‘Viennese’ Classics---music from a different era---served the interests of a dominant social class (a liberal bourgeoisie) in the cities of western Europe, a development associated in particular with the consolidation of a standard concert repertory, and also, paradoxically, of an avant-garde. In contrast, traditional (folk) music---music from a different social group---was pressed into the service of a dominant political ideology in eastern Europe. Hence the rise of nationalist music associated with this region, finding its ‘historical moment’ in the late nineteenth century, first in Russia and the Czech lands, then in Hungary, Poland and Romania. When the conditions were right, the significant composers, including Szymanowski and Enescu, appeared on cue.

This narrative is in need of some revision. We are reminded by Larry Wolff that the division of Europe into ‘West’ and ‘East’ was in large measure a retrospective one.¹² In parts of ‘eastern Europe’ the dynastic presence was integral to western culture, and played an enabling role long before it became a focus for ethnic and nationalist

¹⁰ The phrase was used by Tito Maiorescu in ‘Against Today’s Direction in Romanian Culture’. Quoted in Lucian Boia, *Romania: Borderland of Europe*, trans. James Christian Brown (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), p. 86.

¹¹ I am thinking here especially of the contractual liberalism that followed the 1848 revolutions, dependent on political concepts of consensus and the social contract.

¹² Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994). Wolff dates the beginnings of a discourse of East-West divide to the writings of eighteenth-century philosophes, but the divide was formalised, and institutionalised, very much later.

discontent. To push the point to an extreme, it would hardly be useful to link Prague, a leading Habsburg capital and culturally close to Vienna, with Skopje, which remained part of the Ottoman empire throughout the entire nineteenth century. Alternative, arguably more realistic, divisions of Europe in the nineteenth century might proceed along dynastic or religious lines. Thus, we might propose a cultural division between territories governed by the Habsburgs, Hohenzollerns and even Romanovs on one hand, and Ottoman-ruled territories on the other. This division in no way corresponds neatly to 'West' and 'East', especially when we superimpose onto it further divisions between Catholic and Orthodox, or for that matter Christian, Muslim and Jewish, communities. The moral is that identifying 'centres' and 'peripheries' is by no means as straightforward as our narrative suggests. Nor does the narrative hold up at all well in its reading of cultural nationalism, which was every bit as integral to France and Germany as to Poland and Hungary, and was expressed by broadly similar means. The balance between heritage-gathering and symbolic folklorism did indeed shift from place to place, but again it would be unrealistic to relate this cleanly to a division of West and East.

Poland and Romania, then, were not on one side of a single divide as they entered the nineteenth century. Poland was a deeply Catholic country, politically shared out between Austrian, Prussian and Russian dynasties. It was firmly rooted in western culture, though from 1830 that culture was subject to severe, politically motivated curtailment of a kind familiar enough, though more extreme than, in other European (including west European) territories. Not unnaturally, Polish cultural historians have made much of these constraints, which often amounted to policies of attempted de-nationalisation. Romania, on the other hand, was Orthodox, still struggling to free itself from Ottoman domination and influenced profoundly by a history of Balkan (including Greek) affiliations.¹³ For all the familiar rhetoric about an 'island of Latinity', it was remote from western culture at the beginning of the century (aside that is from Transylvania, where the ruling elite and

¹³ Known as principalities rather than kingdoms, Wallachia and Moldavia gradually came under Ottoman control and entered the Ottoman political, military and economic system. By the eighteenth century, the princes, essentially Ottoman administrators, were more often Phanariot Greeks than Romanians.

institutions were Hungarian, and which became part of Greater Romania only after World War I). Greek was the language of high culture in Wallachia and Moldavia, the Romanian language was written in Cyrillic, and the urban landscape---as also the dress and mores of the boyars---was oriental. The swerve towards the west was remarkably abrupt (again the key date is around 1830), and again it was politically motivated; contrary to conventional wisdom, there was little previous history of Romanian-French cultural exchange, for example. Astonishingly, within a generation the surface transformation from 'East' to 'West' was all but complete. And that included the infrastructure of musical life in Iași, the Moldavian capital, and in Bucharest.

How does all this bear on music historiography? It suggests that we still have to work at correcting some of the imbalances bequeathed by the politics of the cold war, to say nothing of the chauvinism inherited from pedigreed readings of music history. Thus, an adequate account of Polish music history would place it centrally within 'the rise of European music', even if documentation and demonstrable continuities have often been victims of Poland's troubled political history.¹⁴ Ironically, Polish musicologists have not been their own best advocates in this regard, either because they maintain they have always been at the centre of things anyway and feel no need to make the case, or because they have allowed competitive nationalisms to dictate a history that fetishises difference. In any case, in just about all spheres---the cultures of church, court and city---this was a European story from the start, which is not to say that Poland was always ahead of, or even abreast of, the game. And it was no less a European story when Polish composers turned to traditional music and appropriated it in the service of nationalism. Like their German and central European colleagues, they did not encounter any massive syntactical space separating that music from the art music of the day; indeed underlying archetypes were often the same. Moreover, this was as true for Szymanowski as it was for Chopin. Despite the novelties of the Góral (Tatra) idiom, this was a music that could easily be accommodated by a moderately-toned neo-classicism characteristic of the 1920s. Like

¹⁴ My reference is to Reinhard Strohm's *The Rise of European Music 1380-1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

the Mazovian elements in Chopin's mazurkas, it added a specific colouring, an inflection, to contemporary European styles. Indeed it was the neatest sleight-of-hand that enabled Szymanowski (in Op. 50) to 'modernise' the Chopin mazurka simply by turning to a different region of Poland.

The history of art music in the Romanian Principalities, on the other hand, began in earnest only with the westernising programmes of the early nineteenth century.¹⁵ Until that point non-Muslim Romanian musicians were active at the Ottoman court, and, conversely, a secular component of Classical Ottoman music was found among urban Greeks in Bucharest and Iași, and among the guilds of non-Muslim professionals more generally. This represented, of course, a rather specialised, elitist musical culture. Naturally there were other, quite different repertoires: the music of the Orthodox Church, related to post-Byzantine Greek traditions; urban popular music, often played by professional *lăutari* (usually Roma) and ranging widely stylistically from Turkish-influenced café music to free adaptations of native folksong; and of course much older layers of rural traditional music, some highly region-specific, others interfacing with traditional musics elsewhere in the Balkans, and across the eastern Mediterranean. Needless-to-say, these different repertoires were not supplanted by European art music in the nineteenth century, but carried on a parallel existence alongside it, and remained in certain important respects quite unrelated to it. As elsewhere there were projects of appropriation, not least in some of Enescu's own early music. But the space separating European art music from just about everything else was a considerable one, and certainly much greater than in western and central Europe.¹⁶

¹⁵ At this point Romanian musical culture went rapidly and inevitably into response mode; indeed it is fitting that the term 'forms without substance' should have been coined by a Romanian critic. See footnote 10.

¹⁶ This was also true of Turkey itself, where European art music made significant incursions to Turkey in the nineteenth century.

What that space signifies is the factor that most decisively undermines any attempt to embrace Romania within a territorial grouping labeled ‘Eastern Europe’: in a word, its relationship to the Balkans. A glance at the map immediately indicates the ambivalence here. Romania is in the Balkans or out, depending on whether we take the Carpathians or the Danube as defining the peninsula’s north-eastern border. A socio-cultural definition--one which equates the Balkans to those areas of south-east Europe in which there was a significant and sustained Ottoman presence---is no less ambivalent, in that Romania was never overtly conquered by the Turks, but rather came gradually under Ottoman control.¹⁷ Adrian Cioroianu has constructed a kind of psycho-historical narrative around this ambivalence, characterising successive key stages in Romanian history as failed attempts to escape the Balkans, and allowing this to suggest elements of a collective *mentalité*.¹⁸ The idea of the Balkans, so it is argued, looms unusually large in negotiations of Romanian identity, and this can entail either exaggeratedly positive or exaggeratedly negative readings of what has become widely known as *Balkanism*. On Cioroianu’s reading, Romania, especially since independence, has constantly sought detachment from its geographic condition, while at the same time trying to claim the best things from the Balkans, which is a way of saying that Romanians want to look west and east at the same time. And as always in constructions of collective identity, there is a complicated synergy here between assigned and accepted attributes of the Balkans.

All this has, I believe, some explanatory value when we try to make sense of Enescu’s achievement, which is Romanian not just because it turns to indigenous sources for its inspiration, but also perhaps in Cioroianu’s sense of simultaneously valuing and denying balkanism. Of course Enescu is more than just a ‘Romanian’ composer, or for that matter a ‘Balkan’ one. But it is surely significant that his music---the closest thing to a canonic

¹⁷ The one region that is in the Balkans on either definition is Dobrogea to the south east. More radically symbolic definitions have also been proposed, notably by Slavoj Žižek.

¹⁸ Adrian Cioroianu, ‘The Impossible Escape: Romania and the Balkans’, in Dušan I. Bjelić and Obrad Savić (eds.), *Balkan as Metaphor: Between Globalization and Fragmentation* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 2002).

repertory to have emerged from south east Europe---is marked by its articulation of precisely that quality of transition that distinguishes balkanism from orientalism.¹⁹ It is conventional to think of the Balkans as transitional between something that is an ‘essentially’ European culture and something else, whatever that something else may be. This is what Todorova meant when she wrote of perceptions of the Balkans in terms of an ‘incomplete self[hood]’, describing the region as a bridge between East and West.²⁰ At the same time she was careful to insist that the Balkans cannot be adequately understood as a kind of peripheral adjunct to essentialised cultures of East and West (any more than as a series of discrete ethnonational histories). The challenge implicitly posed by Todorova is that we re-assess the qualities of periphery and transition: that we give them their due.²¹

It is evident that the later music of Enescu avoided the kinds of appropriations associated with orientalism in European music, as conventionally understood and deconstructed in a whole range of Said-inspired studies. Rather his project was to explore transition. Specifically, it was to delve deeply into the transition (I am wary of committing to the term ‘synthesis’) between a highly diversified indigenous culture, strongly marked by its Byzantine and Ottoman inheritance, and a European symphonic culture. However, we would do him an injustice if we tried to represent this project exclusively in terms of intersecting cultural spheres, even if we were prepared to live with an inadequate characterisation of these as standing for ‘East’ and ‘West’. At this point I borrow again Todorova’s point about transition, this time directing it specifically to Enescu. In order to give transitional states their due, we need to view them not just as sites of theoretical transformation which contain elements of two systems, but as invitations to locate a third

¹⁹ The distinction is drawn by Maria Todorova in her *Imagining the Balkans* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 18. Todorova distinguishes here between an ‘incomplete self’ and a constructed alterity.

²¹ On transitional states, see Nathan Schwartz-Salant and Murray Stein (eds.), *Liminality and Transitional Phenomena* (Wilmette, Ill.: Chiron Publications, 1993). This is part of a wider literature whose orientation is psycho-analytical, but whose findings create interesting resonances for cultural history.

system.²² This, it seems to me, has analytical implications in relation to Enescu's music that have been relatively little explored in the relevant literature. Nor will it be possible to explore them here, in what is no more than an introductory essay. All the same I will offer a few indicative remarks.

Closing in

Oedipe is a work apart. Indebted to the earlier symphonies and foreshadowing the later chamber music, its sound world remains somehow entirely distinct from both. Yet there can be no doubt that in rising to the challenge of its composition, Enescu worked through issues of musical style that enabled him to set a clear compass reading for his later development as a composer. It was above all in *Oedipe* that he reined in the eclecticism so characteristic of his earlier works. He pared down the big romantic gestures of the symphonies in favour of taut, economical gestures, and he processed rather than simply appropriating those elements of other styles that continued to feed his music. These included indigenous Romanian elements, which in his earlier music were either strongly foregrounded, or entirely absent. Such elements do not yet assume the importance they will have in other works from the 1920s onwards. But Enescu himself claimed to have written an opera 'with Eastern elements', and musical features drawn from Romanian liturgical music do play a part in *Oedipe*, notably scale types that correspond to the *octoechos* of Byzantine chant, with some of their associated microtonal structures.²³ Likewise much of the vocal writing in the opera (not just that associated with the shepherds) has affinities with Romanian traditional music, including some of the passages using unorthodox vocal techniques.

²² An interesting model of the possibilities here is found in Elliott Antokoletz, *The Music of Béla Bartók* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1984); see especially pp. 51-66.

²³ See Adriana Şirli, 'Modale structuren in Annäherung zur orientalischen Kirchenmusik im "Oedip" von George Enescu', in *Enesciana II-III: George Enescu, Musicien Complexe* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1981), pp. 125-32. Coincidentally, Byzantine elements also find their way into the choral music of Szymanowski's *Król Roger*.

The important point is that these influences from indigenous musics worked together with the discreet yet all-pervasive leitmotivic structure Enescu imposed on the work to transform his approach to thematicism. It is through the remarkable density of its motivic information, where germinal cells and their constitutive intervals permeate every layer of the score and where more extended melodic statements are products of (rather than sources for) motivic working, that *Oedipe* lifts Enescu clear of a late-Romantic inheritance. This also has a bearing on the contrapuntal writing that had always been central to his music. In particular, the contrapuntal combination of independently established themes took on a new significance in *Oedipe*; it was less about synthesising oppositions, as in earlier cyclic compositions, and more about revealing hidden affinities, a telling, and prophetic, change of orientation. And one final point. The constantly evolving melos that grows out of, yet at the same time cuts across or floats above, this densely compacted motivic structure has every appearance of a spontaneous, fantasia-like sequence. Yet, as Octavian Cosma has pointed out, this apparent freedom is underpinned by carefully designed, though discreetly articulated, formal patterns; again this is prophetic of the later music.²⁴ The end product of all these transformations is a score of astonishing originality, in which conventional gestures and devices have been all but eliminated.

In the musical language that began to take shape in other works from the 1920s onwards Enescu intensified and refined the folkloristic element, but he did so in the light of the transformations already effected by *Oedipe*. Most importantly, these works aspire towards a unity of musical substance. This, of course, was hardly a novel aspiration in music of the 1920s. Indeed, a surface description of Enescu's practice would suggest commonalities with many of his contemporaries. The musical idea is embodied in a germinal theme or motive, often present at the outset; that theme or motive acts in turn on the character of subsequent material, either through techniques of developing variation or in the form of connected antitheses, and this process continues throughout the work (i.e.

²⁴ Octavian Lazăr Cosma, 'Oedipus', in *Romanian Review*, 8 (1981), pp. 34-43.

across individual movements); constitutive intervals take on an independent structural role; and finally the motivic shapes permeate all layers of the texture, eliminating as far as possible elements of thematic redundancy. In other words, this music aspires towards a kind of ‘total thematism’. It is the realisation of this ideal that sets Enescu apart, however. At the heart of it lies a dialectic between improvisation and composition, operating on several different levels: between open and closed forms; between elaborately ornamented and motivically focused melody; between heterophony and strict counterpoint; between *rubato-parlando* and *giusto-silabico* rhythm; between equal-voiced and melody-accompaniment textures. The resulting sound world is entirely unique in twentieth-century music, establishing a stable reference point from which Enescu could glance backwards to late-Romantic styles, or alternatively across to modernist (neo-Baroque) idioms without for a moment losing his own individuality. Equally, from this vantage point he could glance towards the west or towards the east.

I will profile here three distinguishable idioms constitutive of this new sound world. They might well be understood as refinements of the three major influences at work in his earlier music, and in that sense they represent continuities between early and late Enescu. But they also carry some significance as to spectral positioning, east and west. The first, glancing westwards we might say, foregrounds motivic working, and is the culminating expression of Enescu’s indebtedness to German symphonism. The influence of traditional music is by no means obvious on the melodic surface here, but operates rather on procedural and processive levels. The second is a kind of impressionism, where elements of traditional music contribute to a musical evocation of nation and landscape; here the French influence is foregrounded, but Romanian elements are present as well. And the third, glancing eastwards, is a more explicit recreation of traditional music, though viewed through modern lens; this, self-evidently, is the highest expression of the Romanian element in Enescu’s work. This taxonomy is not meant to suggest that the categories are mutually exclusive nor to imply that they in some sense ‘cover’ the later period (there are several works, notably *Vox Maris*, that will not fit easily with any of the categories, not least because of the immensely complicated chronology of Enescu’s music).

That said, the first two idioms are already distinguishable in the outer movements of the first work to be completed following Enescu's initial period of work on *Oedipe*, the First Piano Sonata, Op. 24 No. 1 (1924).²⁵ The first movement explores---in a manner highly characteristic of the later Enescu---a middle ground between clear formal and thematic definition on one hand and freely-evolving, incremental transformations of the same motivic substance on the other. A sonata-form archetype underlies the movement, albeit in the unorthodox form of an exposition with conflated response. But the sequence of events (and moods) is a proverbial stream of consciousness, a fluid, improvisatory narrative in which individuated motivic elements appear to follow their own inclinations. The overall effect is rather like allowing an expressionistic fantasia and a strict sonata to unfold simultaneously on different levels, so that the ear can move from one to the other. As to the fantasia, Ștefan Niculescu has reminded us that Enescu liked to refer to the dream state as integral to his creativity and then to compare this with the creative process at work in traditional (folk) music.²⁶ This is a suggestive analogy. On an initial hearing, the logic governing the unfolding of motives in this movement is by no means easy to follow, let alone predict. Subsidiary motives arise from existing ones and are combined with the originals in free counterpoint, creating a maze of interweaving lines, where new material is subtly insinuated just as the old is fragmentarily echoed, and where the differentiation between primary and secondary material (between theme, motive and figure) is by no means clear-cut. The resulting textures are often better described as heterophonic, suggestive of traditional Balkan musics, rather than as contrapuntal.

²⁵ The second movement of this sonata is also of considerable interest, not least because, like similar movements in later works (notably the second movement of the Second Cello Sonata, Op. 26 No. 2), it steers a course somewhere between a neo-Baroque toccata, of a kind familiar enough in early Enescu, and a futurist celebration of mechanism not unlike certain movements in Prokofiev from around the same time (e.g. the second movement of his Fifth Piano Concerto). But the outer movements are more relevant to my argument here.

²⁶ Ștefan Niculescu, 'George Enescu and 20th-Century Music', in *Romanian Review*, 8 (1981), pp. 3-9.

This kind of writing undoubtedly resists conventional modes of analysis, and not just in relation to its formal and thematic processes. The harmonic language allows a myriad of constantly shifting tonal implications to arise from the bar-by-bar unfolding of the music in what is essentially a non-diatonic and often highly dissonant idiom. Sometimes this is an outcome of polymodal chromaticism derived from the interplay of motives, but more often it is unsystematic, resulting from momentary tonal connections between different components of the texture, as a kind of inner hierarchy is established amidst diverse intervallic contexts. Then, to add to the mix, some of the more climactic moments allow brief vestigial traces of an earlier late-Romantic harmonic practice to surface momentarily. All of this, along with piano textures of uncanny originality and fluid rhythms that resist easy assimilation by conventional metric schemata, adds up to a movement that is tough and uncompromising, and at the same time powerfully expressive. And towards the end lies a moment of revelation, a gesture whose simplicity makes sense of surrounding peaks of rhythmic and harmonic complexity. A recognisably folk-like, stanzaic melody emerges from the dark embryo, subtly prepared in advance, and crystallising in a moment of clarity and comprehensibility a Romanian melos to which earlier motivic working held a more oblique relation. Following it, the germinal motive of the sonata returns as a kind of apotheosis.

As in *Oedipe*, this dialectic between improvisatory freedom and a unity of musical substance has some symbolic potency, and especially to the extent that it generalises aspects of traditional music. It finds an echo in several later compositions, including the Piano Quintet, Op. 29 (1940) and Second Piano Quartet, Op. 30 (1944). But in two of the very last works to be completed (at least in their final form), the String Quartet No. 2, Op. 22 No. 2 (1951-2) and the Chamber Symphony, Op. 33 (1954), the motivic-symphonic topic in Enescu's late music takes a more severe, classical turn, and it is in these works that his indebtedness to German symphonic thought is at its most explicit.²⁷ The quartet retains the complex polyphonic-heterophonic textures of Op. 24 No. 1, but not its processive discontinuities and abrupt changes of affect. Here a rigorous, closely unified

²⁷ Both these works, but especially the quartet, had a long and complicated compositional history.

motivic process in the first movement opens out in several directions in subsequent movements, some of them intensely subjective (the *parlando* manner of individual voices in the slow movement, at times redolent of Janáček), others celebrating collectivities (the folk-dance manner in parts of the finale). The emphasis is on continuities, both bar-to-bar and movement-to-movement, but this does not disguise the improvisatory quality so characteristic of Enescu, such that the twists and turns of particular motives seem to pursue a life of their own, even if in the end they have to submit to the collective will. As to the single-movement Chamber Symphony, it is as though Enescu distilled the world of the quartet, including its internal tensions, to produce a yet more concentrated thematic essence. This is an austere, initially unyielding composition, given neither to overt expressivity nor to folklorism. It is not without sensuous surfaces and moments of climactic intensity, but in both cases these are products of, and subordinated to, the logic of the thematic process. Rigour and economy rule in this work. It repays repeated hearings.

I will pass fairly briefly over the second distinguishable idiom in late Enescu, associated especially with musical portraits of his homeland. This is well exemplified by the third movement of the piano sonata. It is a species of impressionism, and as such it evokes a sense of place; indeed the composer later described it as a depiction in sound of the Romanian plains. Many of the stylistic elements of this music are familiar ingredients of impressionist tone painting from Liszt onwards, with obvious affinities to Debussy and Ravel: static platforms of sound comprising either pedal points or ostinato patterns; quietly dissonant chords in stratified textures; washes of tonal colour from which bell-like notes emerge; modal, at times oriental-sounding, fragments of melody; and wandering through all of this a constantly repeated folk-like motive derived from the Second Romanian Rhapsody. There is a group of late works which are likewise inspired by thoughts of Romania, evoking its landscape and some of the associations it held for Enescu. Both the Third Orchestral Suite (*Suite Villageoise*), Op. 27 (1938) and the *Impressions d'Enfance*, Op. 28, with which I began this essay, fall into this category, and both add onomatopaeic reference to the more generalised impressionism with which specific scenes are depicted in music: the children's games and shepherd's pipe in the

Suite, for example, or the caged bird, cuckoo clock and cricket in the violin piece. The third and fourth movements of the Suite, depicting respectively the ‘The Old Childhood Home’, and the ‘River in the Moonlight’, offer a kind of orchestral counterpart to the pianistic impressionism of the last movement of Op. 24 No. 2.²⁸ Enescu spent a great deal of time outside his native Romania, and nothing evokes place more effectively than displacement.

Romania is a more musically specific presence in my third category, referring to a group of movements or works in which the composer set out to write in the character of Romanian traditional music, avoiding quotation, but recreating through the most sophisticated control of rhythm, ornamentation and sonority something of the characteristic sound and ambience of this music. This is particularly true of the Third Violin Sonata, Op. 25 (1926), parts of the Third Piano Sonata, Op. 24 No 3 and Second Cello Sonata, Op. 26 No. 2 (both 1935) and the *Ouverture de Concert sur des Thèmes dans le Caractère Populaire Roumain* (1948). The Third Violin Sonata ‘in the Romanian Popular Character’ presents this idiom at its most explicit. As in the first movement of the First Piano Sonata, there is a creative tension between the improvisatory manner and the sonata-based structure of the first movement, but here the musical material is more obviously related to popular idioms, to the *hore boierești* [boyar’s horas] of Upper Moldavia, and especially to the rhapsodic flourishes and exuberant virtuosity of professional *lăutari* from all over the region. To achieve this, Enescu devised radically new approaches to idiomatic writing for both instruments. In the violin part he combined a calculated imprecision of pitch and rhythm (achieved through profuse ornamentation, microtonal inflection, portamento, glissando, and *parlando-rubato* rhythm) with a remarkable diversity of colours, including ‘flute-like’ bowing on the fingerboard and a range of different vibratos. The piano in turn adopts multiple roles, ranging from cimbalom-like accompaniments to a heavily ornamented heterophonic-bourdon

²⁸ The incomplete orchestral work *Voix de la Nature* (of which only part of one movement is extant) also belongs somewhat within this category.

technique, often strategically out-of-phase with the violin in what sounds almost like an aleatory texture.

It is beyond my present competence to discuss in any detail the extent to which the traditional music of Moldavia and (especially) the popular music of professional *lăutari* have affinities with Middle Eastern traditions, beyond remarking that this may have been understated in the past due to the nationalist and communist agendas adopted by, or imposed on, Romanian ethnomusicologists. However, it is worth noting that the theoretical concepts used to discuss Turkish classical and popular repertoires have some explanatory value in relation to music such as Enescu's sonata. What are usually described as 'variable modes', for example, are often related to Turkish *makamlar*, and some of the melodic and gestural formulae associated with these are also found in the Enescu (it should be stressed, however, that to the extent that makam is present it is a trace element and not a system).²⁹ Likewise, the rhythmically free, improvisatory flow of parts of the music, incorporating endless repetitions and variations of tiny cellular motives that circle around key scale steps, recalls the improvised *taksim* in Turkish music, just as the fluctuating tone colours and vibrati of the violin part remind us of the type of wide vibrato singing known as *titrek* in Turkey. This should not seem in any way surprising. There are commonalities of practice in a wide range of popular and traditional musics from the Levant to the Balkans. To examine the intersections between a makam system and diatonic space would represent one way of thinking theoretically about such

²⁹ This is a complicated issue, since there are different ways of understanding makam as a system. In Turkey today, it is analysed in the main by way of trichordal, tetrachordal and pentachordal genera (the so-called Arel-Ezgi theory), but this is in many ways a *post hoc* rationalisation. For a discussion of earlier theory, see Walter Feldman, *Music of the Ottoman Court* (Berlin: Verlag für Wissenschaft und Bildung, 1996), pp. 195-299; also Karl Signell, *Makam: Modal Practice in Turkish Art Music* (Seattle: Asian Music Publications, 1977). While I have used Turkish maklamar as a reference point here, it should be noted that there are related models in post-Byzantine *echos*, and in the modes of synagogue songs.

repertories (Bosnian *sevdalinka* and Greek *smyrneika*, for example),³⁰ and I suggest, tentatively, that it may also have some relevance to Enescu's music 'in the Romanian style'. That said, I return to an earlier point. An adequate representation of this music would be one that gave transition its due, and that would include allowing it to generate its own analytical terms.

Romanian musicologists have written at length about the 'folk' models for Enescu's later music. In particular Speranta Rădalescu has pinpointed specific affinities with traditional repertories in her discussion of the Violin Sonata.³¹ But even when the models are exuberant folk dances, as in the finale of the Violin Sonata, the finale 'à la roumain' of the Second Cello Sonata and much of the *Ouverture de Concert*, they are hybridised, generalised, and ultimately sublimated through their dialogue with modern European art music. And this is especially true of Enescu's stylisations of the *doina*, by far the most characteristic of his folk models, and one that is immediately apparent in the melos of the Violin Sonata (especially its first two movements). The structure and manner of the 'doina proper' were first described by Bartók and later by Constantin Brăiliou,³² and many of the elements of those descriptions---the introductory formulae, ornamental

³⁰ The 'translation' of Eastern devices into Western syntax has interesting consequences. In some instances, equal temperament results in a compensatory accentuation of makam features (for example, the sharper differentiation of ascending and descending forms of the makam) in an attempt to translate microtonal space into diatonic space. This is especially so when instruments such as saz are replaced by bouzouki or accordion. The application of chordal harmony to makam melodies also results in several shades of transition between East and West.

³¹ Speranta Rădalescu, 'La connotation "populaire" dans la "III^e Sonate pour piano et violon" de George Enescu', in *Enesciana II-III: George Enescu, Musicien Complexe* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1981), pp. 95-104.

³² Béla Bartók, *Volksmusik der Rumänen von Maramureş* (Munich: Drei Masken Verlag, 1923); Constantin Brăiloiu, *Le vers populaire roumain chanté*, in *Problèmes d'Ethnomusicologie*, ed. Gilbert Rouget (Geneva: Minkoff Reprint, 1973. Orig. edn., Paris 1956).

improvisations around the augmented second between the third and fourth scale steps, rapidly repeated melodic turns circling around and highlighting particular notes of the mode or makam, internal cadence figures (alternating fourths), and closing formulae---are found in the Enescu work.³³ Moreover, it has to be said that these same elements, together with associated affects of sorrow and lament, are once again strongly suggestive of familiar devices from Middle Eastern repertoires.

Much the same model operates in the slow movement of the Third Piano Sonata, where an ornamental melody is joined by other voices in free rhythm to create a kaleidoscopic texture that slides easily from heterophony to free counterpoint, and from there to wisps of astringently harmonised melody. And it operates again in the first movement of the remarkable Second Cello Sonata. Here, as in the Violin Sonata, the piano alternates between providing a cimbalom-like accompaniment, weaving motivic fragments around the unfolding arcs of cello melody, and itself taking over, and heavily ornamenting, the principal melodic line, or, more accurately, the multiply-layered melodic lines. Taken together, all this music makes a statement that is quite unlike anything else in early twentieth-century music. It is concerned neither with appropriation nor confrontation but with transition. It succeeds, as no other music really does in my view, in making great art out of the transition between ‘West’ and ‘East’, a transition that is symbolically represented by the journey through my three idioms, but in reality penetrates deeper and more uniformly into the substance of the later music. If we follow Adorno in assuming that music analysis exists to show to us how significant composers can bring to full realization what lies latent in musical material (and for Adorno musical material is so heavily mediated that it can provide a remarkably authentic snapshot of its historical moment), then the analytical challenge posed by Enescu is an important one, and one that has yet to be adequately addressed.

³³ For a fuller discussion of the doina, see Tiberiu Alexandru, *Romanian Folk Music* (Bucharest: Musical Publishing House, 1980), pp. 49-55.

Wider again

In the early years of the twentieth century, coincident with the triumph of political and cultural nationalisms, significant music emerged all around the edges of Europe, music that attained and has sustained widespread international recognition. If we ask ourselves why Enescu was the only truly audible Balkan voice in this chorus, we might try out a number of possible answers. Perhaps his fame as a violinist was simply transferred to his compositions; their recognition, in other words, was vicarious. But this will not take us far. Why, for instance, has the music of his compatriot Dinu Lipatti failed to make headway? Then again, networking and promotion mechanisms are far from well oiled in south east Europe, so that there was, and is, a battle to be fought to get music from this region through to more charismatic, high-prestige cultural centres. At least Enescu had the right kinds of connections, we might argue. Yet the truth is that, despite the worldwide respect in which he was held, Enescu suffered more than most at the hands of publishers and agents, and continues to do so posthumously (his major significance is widely recognised, but he receives precious few performances). Compare him with Manolis Kalomiris in Greece, genuinely gifted as a composer and infinitely more skilled in self-publicity than Enescu, yet somehow unable to secure a place in the pantheon. Or perhaps we should really be addressing our own chauvinism, the wider tendency of enlightened Europe to construct the Balkans as a marginalised cultural other to its own educated, sophisticated, and well-bred circles. Does our ignorance of distinguished composers such as Josip Slavenski, and of Yugoslav *Moderna* in general, reduce in the end to questions of cultural politics?

It is almost a matter of definition that cultural traditions, together with their associated values, are shaped, supported and promoted through symbiotic processes of marginalisation and canon formation, both of which are mutually dependent. There can be no centre without a periphery. However, the transition from empires to nation states changed the map in this respect, as some of the old centres of European culture lost status and new centres (with their own peripheries) emerged. There was a ripple of concentric

circles moving outwards from centre to peripheries.³⁴ Or perhaps they were not quite concentric. Crudely, the effect of competitive cultural nationalisms was to draw some territories from around the edge of Europe closer to its cultural centre, while at the same time pushing other territories, and above all the Balkans, yet further away. This, of course, is the bird's eye view. Closer in, we can see much greater variation in the cultural dialogue between central Europe and the Balkans, but the generalisation stands. And external perceptions of the region have undoubtedly rendered it peculiarly susceptible to this characterisation as a last frontier. As Michael Herzfeld remarked in his foreword to one of the most challenging recent books on the region, the perceived fragmentation, diversity and general fractiousness of the Balkans are recognisably 'the other side of a familiar coin: the Western self-characterisation in terms of individual genius'.³⁵

In recent years scholars have been anxious to submit precisely this kind of self-characterisation to critical scrutiny, and not least in music. They have sought, in other words, to contextualise the idea of genius, even to deconstruct it. Tia de Nora has examined the contingencies of genius in relation to Beethoven, for example, and Dana Gooley has attempted something similar with Liszt, usefully switching the emphasis from composition to performance.³⁶ Both artists, we learn, knew how to construct their image, how to survive in the patronal and mercantile cultures of their times, and how to turn the

³⁴ Actually, it might prove far from easy to deconstruct the centric nature of our music historiography, beyond of course trying to recognise chauvinism for what it is. Thinkers such as Levinas have argued convincingly that at the heart of a Western mind set lies a philosophy of the centre, where truth is disseminated to the peripheries, and that voices from the peripheries effectively end up adopting a language of the centre.

³⁵ Dušan I. Bjelić and Obrad Savić (eds.), *Balkan as Metaphor: Between Globalization and Fragmentation* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 2002), p. ix.

³⁶ Tia DeNora, *Beethoven and the Construction of Genius: Musical Politics in Vienna, 1792-1803* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1995); Dana Gooley, *The Virtuoso Liszt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

conditions of those cultures to their own best advantage. Exceptional talent was there, of course, but it was nurtured by a particular ecology and enabled by particular agencies.³⁷ This takes us a long way, and we may add to it the self-confirming nature of a canon, once established. But one might supply counter examples that foreground the talent rather than the contingency: the ‘discovered’ genius; or, conversely, the ‘meteoric’ (but ephemeral) success. My own sense is that the really key contingencies are of a rather different order, and on a different level. Given that exceptional talent is ever present, we are bound to probe the historical nature of creative genius as a perceived category, from its rise in Early Modern Europe, through its flowering in the age of Romanticism and culmination in the Modernism of the early twentieth century, to its decline in our own age. In this story, creative genius is not just the successful projection of an exceptionally strong creative personality. Nor is it contingent on a particular ecology or set of agencies. It is contingent rather on the gradual formation of an institution of art, and of course on the parallel formation of a musical work concept where sounds are deposited in print.³⁸

This still leaves open questions about the distribution of genius, questions that invoke geography as well as history. They are the kinds of questions raised by Harry Lime’s celebrated reference to the Swiss and the cuckoo clock. Just why do great composers appear where and when they do? Why do we find clusters and vacuums? There are no easy answers to this, and some of the obvious ones (to do with political stability, a

³⁷ Psychological literature is wary of the a priorism suggested by term ‘talent’. However, the argument of this paper is not influenced by competing theories about the causes of differentials in human skills. That the differentials are there is self-evident.

³⁸ I borrow the term ‘institution of art’ from Peter Bürger, with reference to an aesthetics of autonomy that gradually developed in early modern Europe and reached its culmination in the nineteenth century. Essentially it refers to the disengagement of art from other social institutions and the subsequent and consequent development of its own institution. Of its nature, an institution of art will promote those qualities that refuse to yield to contingent explanation. See Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. M. Shaw (Manchester and Mineapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

consolidated bourgeois class, a well-developed institutional infrastructure, and so forth) founder on closer inspection; the exceptions to the rule are just too numerous. But we can at least set out a reductive framework of history, before hinting at tentative applications from geography. The formation of an institution of art brought with it a newly privileged status for the artwork, and that status in turn resulted in ideal conditions for the flourishing of creative genius. This was a gradual process. Thus, the affirmative or celebratory function of music in churches and courts was increasingly subject to individuation (Bach or Mozart composing ‘against the grain’).³⁹ Later, in the public arena, such affirmation equated either with a developing canon (as a middle-class badge of identity), with *Kunstreligion* (where art itself becomes a kind of belief system), or with developing ideas of the nation. In parallel with this, and in the context of a developing culture industry, the same process of individuation allowed each of these categories either to provoke or to become a model of dissent: an avant-garde. Creative genius, then, could be harnessed by any one, or indeed any combination, of these several options, each of which may be understood as the ground for a significant art. *Pace* Roland Barthes, the ‘myth’ of the Great Artist is not exclusively a nationalist myth.

This is an historical narrative, and of course it will be shaded in all sorts of ways when we map it onto particular places. In practice history and geography are constantly in dialogue in our discussions of musical culture. However, until recently history has tended to have the upper hand, providing musicologists with the basic conceptual models, as well as many of the specific tools, of their trade. There are signs, though, that this may be changing. Musicologists seem to be turning increasingly towards cultural geography in an attempt to harness the power of place, for example as a structure within which and in relation to which subjectivities can be established. This is not a line I will pursue here, except indicatively. If we were to start with geography rather than history, for example, we might decide to read the several options I outline above (together with their constitutive projects) as the striated lines that mark out what Deleuze and Guattari have

³⁹ On this, see Laurence Dreyfus, *Bach and the Patterns of Invention* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996).

called ‘sedimentary’ as distinct from ‘nomad’ space.⁴⁰ This could be one of several frameworks within which interferences between history and geography might be registered, but from a perspective that prioritises place rather than time, and with the striated lines effectively standing for historical events. We might learn something about the decline of instrumental music in Italy from this approach, for example; or about the emergence of a symphonic ideal in Germany; or about the long (apparent) silences in England and Spain; or, to come to our subject, about the musical awakenings around the peripheries of Europe at the end of the nineteenth century.

I will leave such proposals in the realm of suggestive possibility. More informally, it seems that those peripheral awakenings took two rather distinct, place-determined forms: a second growth of the symphony, and a modernism born of the equation of nationalism (or its legacy) and realism. In the former case a music of affirmation, associated with a revitalisation of Beethoven’s ‘heroic’ style, was enabled on the periphery even as it was problematised at the centre. The periphery in such instances, and I think especially of Russia and the Nordic lands, staked its claim to a place in the sun. In the latter case affirmation and critique were enmeshed. An affirmation of the nation, or wished-for nation, implicitly critical of the status quo, tended increasingly towards modernist critique and negation. Within small nations or would-be nations, and I think especially of east central Europe, significant composers made their mark by taking a step to the side of their immediate musical environment, initially colluding with so-called mainstreams, but in the end favouring a ground-clearing critique, where traditional (peasant) music served as both critical tool and regenerative medium. What distinguished such composers was not that they were representative of their national music, but rather that they were *un*representative of it. This, incidentally, also partly explains their singularity within their own national contexts (they seldom came in pairs), though politics played a part here, as

⁴⁰ See, notably, Deleuze & Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, tran. Brian Massumi (London: Athlone Press, 1987). As Deleuze & Guattari point out, nomads have no history; they only have geography.

did the familiar ‘focus and fade’ mechanism of canon formation, the tendency for the significant to obscure the only marginally less significant.

I have suggested that the category of creative genius emerged from an intersection of truly exceptional talent and a significant, we might say definitive, project: definitive, that is, of a particular historical moment and a particular place. I would want to include Enescu in this category, though it has been my argument throughout this paper that his project was very different from that of other ‘East European’ composers. His investment in transition was not just uniquely attuned to Balkan history and geography, but may indeed have been the *only* viable project for this region. He was, of course, far from alone among Balkan composers in attempting a project of transition between ‘East’ and ‘West’. Indeed the two principal contenders have been mentioned already: Manolis Kalomiris in Greece and Josip Slavenski in Croatia-Serbia. And the jury may still be out on whether his (modest) success has been at their expense, on the ‘focus and fade’ principle mentioned earlier. Whatever the truth of that, an analytical approach that is properly attuned to Enescu’s project will have no difficulty in revealing his exceptional talent, even his ‘greatness’, in something close to Leonard B. Meyer’s use of that term.⁴¹ The key part of this is the attunement, however, and it is the part that differentiates my own position from Meyer’s, for Meyer appears to allow for little if any element of historical contingency in his attempt to define the attributes of greatness.

Indeed my claim for Enescu’s music rests very largely on my reading of creative genius as a convergence between talent of a rare and truly exceptional kind and the sort of significant project (uniquely defining of its time and place) enabled by an institution of art. All three components---the talent, the project, the institution---are necessary constituents. This is not the place to embark on a detailed discussion of such matters, but at least if we subscribe to this reading we will avoid the mystification and reification of genius associated especially with critics such as George Steiner and Harold Bloom

⁴¹ Leonard B. Meyer, ‘On Value and Greatness in Music’, in *Music, the Arts and Ideas* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1967), pp. 22-41.

(indeed we might plausibly argue that the very idea of genius has outlived its usefulness in today's world).⁴² At the same time we will be encouraged to resist the no less tempting tendency to explain away (rather than to explain) creative genius, to understand it exclusively as a category of reception. Nothing is easier than the deconstruction of genius. The contingencies need relatively little excavation. Yet the capacity of a relatively small corpus of great European music to enchant or re-enchant the world, to create a symbolically dense, clearly marked, privileged place, will not reduce quite so transparently to the conditions of its production, nor to the ideologies that have undoubtedly shaped its reception.⁴³ That corpus is not immutable. It is subject to revision, and the more so now that our historical narratives are increasingly freeing themselves from a utopian modernist bias.⁴⁴ I suspect, all the same, that the corpus will remain small. Enescu should be fully a part of it.

⁴² George Steiner, *Real Presences* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989); Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon : The Books and School of the Ages* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994).

⁴³ Mircea Eliade refers to a break in space revealing a new centre for orientation, detaching a territory, making it qualitatively different and thus allowing for regeneration. See *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harcourt Inc., 1959), pp. 20-26.

⁴⁴ See Daniel Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999) for an 'alternative history' of twentieth-century culture, one which includes just such a revision of the musical canon. However we view Albright's revisionism, it is rather clear that due to the winnowing effect of canon formation the status of twentieth-century composers is bound to be more contested than that of their nineteenth-century counterparts.

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