



Célmy Chailley-Richez & Georges Enesco, 1953

Georges Enesco (1881-1955)

Composer, conductor, outstanding violinist, pianist, cellist... George Enesco (Georges Enesco from 1937 onwards) was by any standards one of the truly great musicians of recent times. Born on August 19, 1881 in Liverni-Virnay, a small town in Roumania, Enesco remained always a Roumanian, supporting the arts in his country, drawing inspiration from its folk music. His "second life" in Paris connected him with the world of western European culture, a world in which he was loved and respected as a musician and a teacher.

He began to play the piano when he was four, took violin lessons with a Gypsy violinist, and was already composing at the age of five. At nine years of age he enrolled at the Vienna Conservatory, where he studied the violin, piano, counterpoint, composition and harmony, chamber music and music history, winning first prizes in Violin and Harmony in 1892. After his graduation in 1894 he entered the Paris Conservatory, where he also studied violin, harmony, counterpoint, composition with Fauré and Massenet, and early music, graduating in 1899 with the first prize for Violin. On June 11, 1897, he had already presented in Paris a concert of his works, and his Op. 1, *Poème roumain*, was published next year. His own compositions were to form an increasing part of his creative musical life.

Always retaining his contacts with his homeland, Enesco launched his conducting career in Bucharest in 1898. On March 8, 1903, he conducted the premiere of his two *Roumanian Rhapsodies* in Bucharest, the first of which was to become his most celebrated work. He was appointed Court Violinist to the Queen of Rumania, and became much sought-after in Bucharest and Paris social circles. After World War I, during which he remained in Roumania, he made major tours as a violinist and conductor; he also taught violin, including among his pupils Yehudi Menuhin, Arthur Grumiaux, and Christian Ferras. He made his U.S. debut in the triple role of conductor, violinist, and composer with the Philadelphia Orchestra in New York on Jan. 2, 1923. He returned to conduct the New York Philharmonic in 1937. Two years later, in December 1939, he married Princess Maria Cantacuzino, whom he had known, fairly intimately since 1907, and whose husband had been killed in a vehicle accident in 1928.

During World War II he lived in his Villa Luminis at Sinaia, near Bucharest, which had always been his favorite "hideaway". Here he had composed his *Roumanian Rhapsodies* (1901-1902) the Piano Quartet in D (1909-1911), his Piano Sonata in f-sharp minor (1924) and a major part of his opera *Œdipe*. Here he would also receive his friends. In 1927 Yehudi Menuhin arrived at Luminis to take his first violin lessons with Enesco, beginning what was to be a great friendship and artistic collaboration.

On January 21, 1950, during the 60th anniversary season of his debut as a violinist, he gave a concert with the New York Philharmonic in the multiple capacity of violinist, pianist, conductor and composer, in a program comprising Bach's Double Concerto (with Menuhin), a violin sonata (playing the piano part with Menuhin), and his first *Roumanian Rhapsody* (conducting the orchestra). This would be his crowning, as well as his farewell concert. For Enesco was now suffering increasing ill-health which virtually prevented him from playing the violin. In addition,

his roots with his beloved Roumania had been unceremoniously severed when in 1948 the Communist Regime confiscated his and his wife's Bucharest Residence (it has since been restored to its former glory as the National Enesco Museum).

Returning to Paris, it was perhaps his old friends who revived his spirits and encouraged him to new endeavors. Now no longer able to play the violin, he took up the baton for a series of recording sessions with the Orchestre des Concerts de Chambre de Paris. Encouraged no doubt by his long-time collaborator, the celebrated pianist Céliny Chailley-Richez, he embarked with her on the recording of Bach's Concertos for one, two, three and four pianos with orchestra, all of which are presented in this series, together with the Italian Concerto BWV 971 for Solo Piano. For the multiple-keyboard Concertos, Mme Chailley-Richez was joined by Jean-Jacques Painchaud, Professor of Piano at the American Conservatory at Fontainebleau, near Paris, and Françoise Le Godinec, multiple prize winner at the Paris *Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique* and pupil of Nadia Boulanger and Dinu Lipatti. With his violin student Christian Ferras, and the newly emerging flutist Jean-Pierre Rampal, he also recorded two Triple Concertos by Bach for Flute, Violin and Keyboard: the Fifth Brandenburg Concerto BWV 1050 and the Triple Concerto BWV 1044.

To these works Enesco brought his own very special approach and style. He wrote:

"I believe that tempi should reflect a steady medium; not so fast that one is unable to follow the detail of counterpoint and harmonic progression, nor so slow that a movement appears to drag. There should also be a relative equality in duration between the two outer fast movements, and the inner slow movement to ensure an overall balance in the work as a whole."

The resulting performances are pervaded by a sense of peace and tranquility, in which the detail of Bach's writing, in both the keyboard and orchestral parts, is clearly revealed.

In July 1954 Enesco suffered a stroke and died in Paris on May 4th, 1955. These recordings remain as a last testament to his musical insight, dedicated as "Homage to J S Bach":

"Perfection, which is the passion of so many people, does not interest me. What is important in art is to vibrate oneself and make others vibrate".

Céliny in her Salon de Musique, Maison de Martincamp-Bully, Normandy, in the late 1950's.

After a long, close and fruitful artistic collaboration in Paris, Georges Enesco and Céliny Chailley-Richez were separated by the Second World War, she remaining in France, while Enesco had retired to his Villa Lumini at Sinaia, Bucharest, which had long been his favorite "hideaway". After the War, Enesco returned to Paris, his roots with his beloved Roumania having been unceremoniously severed when in 1948 the Communist regime confiscated his and his wife's Bucharest Residence (though it has since been restored to its former glory as the National Enesco Museum). Céliny and Enesco were able to resume their concert activities, giving, for example, a Recital of Sonatas (Bach, Schumann, Enesco) on October 24, 1947, in the Salle Gaveau, Paris. In 1949 they also collaborated in a recording of Enesco's Sonata Number Three "*dans le caractère populaire roumain*"

