

FROM ORIGINAL DXD MASTER



GEORGE
ENESCU

SYMPHONY NO. 2
CHAMBER SYMPHONY

TAMPERE PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA
HANNU LINTU



ONDINE

GEORGE ENESCU (1881–1955)

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There is a pedigreed narrative about the emergence of canonic composers in the eastern half of Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Like social modernisation, cultural renewal during the nineteenth century was supposedly a response to ideas and practices from the charismatic cultural capitals of Western Europe: an appropriation and then a transformation of modalities developed elsewhere. And because of this response mode, so it is argued, there was initially an element of 'forms without substance' about the process. Then, as this response slowly fused with a developing nationalist commitment, music in these regions found its 'historical moment', initially in the Czech lands, and then in Hungary, Poland and Romania. When the conditions were right, significant composers, including Béla Bartók, Karol Szymanowski and George Enescu, appeared on cue.

This narrative is in need of some revision, but it is not too wide of the mark, and it accounts for our tendency to track the evolving styles of modernist composers from East-Central Europe in relation to three principal reference points. The first was Austro-German symphonism, which represented a status quo and a starting point. The second was modern French or Franco-Russian music, which marked the quest for alternative models. And the third was native traditional music, associated - at least initially - with the search for national identities, though in due course it transcended that association. In the case of Enescu, born in Moldavia (Romania's easternmost province) and a student at both the Vienna and the Paris conservatories, it is reasonable to think of these reference points as poles of attraction that acted upon his music in varying degrees throughout his creative life, achieving a measure of equilibrium, if not synthesis, in his great opera *Oedipe*.



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All that said, we need to be cautious about associating Enescu too closely with coeval composers such as Bartók. It is true that, like Bartók, Enescu forged a highly distinctive and uncompromising musical language (and 'language' is probably the mot juste), especially in the music he composed from 1920 onwards. And it is no less true that, again like Bartók, he engaged in a creative dialogue between unrationalised agrarian music (and in Enescu's case also post-Byzantine sacred music) and the sophisticated techniques of European art music. Yet there are key differences. Above all, Enescu was engaged in a much more traditionally Humanist enterprise than Bartók, an enterprise in which there was little trace of modernist alienation. There is no real sense in Enescu's music of any discontinuity with the past.

Of our three poles of attraction, it is Austro-German symphonism that is foregrounded in the two works presented here; indeed the genre titles already suggest as much. Yet the two works are quite different in tone and character, as befits their chronology. The **Second Symphony, Op. 17** was composed during the two years prior to the outbreak of World War I, at a time when Enescu was based in Paris, though traveling extensively as a concert violinist and regularly returning to Romania for relatively undisturbed spells of composition. In other words, this symphony immediately preceded the integration of elements that we associate with the distinctive idio-style he developed in the 1920s.

Conceived on a grand scale, the opening movement (Vivace ma non troppo) presents two extended subject groups within the framework of a classical sonata-form design. The first is distinctly Straussian in the cut of its themes and in the intricate orchestral polyphony of their subsequent development. The second, projected initially against a prolonged inverted pedal point, is more Russian-sounding, and marked by just the faintest whiff of the East. Between them, these two subject groups make up the entire thematic material of a movement whose dramaturgy seems to consist primarily in valiant but largely unsuccessful attempts to recover the buoyant, heroic tone of the



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opening. Even the reprise and coda are hauntingly evocative of those opening certainties rather than assertive of them.

The quiet, brooding intensity of the second movement (Andante giusto) is embodied in new thematic material, notably the long-breathed, 'endless' melody of the opening and the angular, oddly disjunct, second theme that is allowed in due course to generate an expressive climax of layered, interweaving lines. The overwhelming impression is of an overall unity of thematic substance, and this does not exclude veiled cross-references to the themes of the first movement.

This cyclic impulse is taken yet further in the finale, the most complex and densely textured movement of the three. Its slow introduction (III. Un poco lento, marziale), distinctly menacing in tone, already hints at transformations of the very opening of the symphony, and as the main body of the movement (IV. Allegro vivace, marziale) gets under way, it becomes clear that Enescu's ambition is to draw together the many threads of the work in ever more tightly-woven contrapuntal webs that culminate in a remarkable - one might even say an extravagant - apotheosis of earlier themes towards the end. Here indeed is the affirmation that was strategically held in check in that first movement. The finale is also the most fully scored movement in the symphony, with its battery of pitched and unpitched percussion pointing at times towards the intoxicating soundscape of the Third Symphony, composed just a couple of years later. Indeed the sheer density of information in this finale is truly astonishing (Romanian scholars like to speak of Enescu's 'heterophonic' technique), and this was no doubt one of the reasons that the work did not go down well with critics following its first performance in Bucharest in 1915, the only performance that took place during the composer's lifetime. Enescu himself expressed reservations about it, and always intended to embark on later revisions.

Compared to the *Second Symphony*, massive in every sense, the late **Chamber**



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Symphony, Op. 33, completed in 1954, is a model of restraint. Here, as in the *String Quartet No. 2, Op. 22/2* (1951-2), the motivic-symphonic topic in Enescu takes a much more severe, classical turn. It does make a certain sense to consider *Chamber Symphony* and *Second Quartet* together. It is not just that they were two of the very last works of Enescu to be completed (at least in their final form). They both have lengthy pre-histories, with sketches for the quartet reaching back to the 1920s and for the *Chamber Symphony* to pre-World War I years. In the quartet a rigorous, closely unified 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), others celebrating collectivities (the folk dance elements in the finale). In the *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. It is an austere, initially unyielding, composition, given neither to overt expressivity nor to any hint of the folklorism found in other late works. It is not without sensuous surfaces and moments of climactic intensity, but in both cases these are products of, and are subordinated to, the logic of the thematic process. Rigour and economy rule in this work, and partly for that reason it repays repeated hearings.

Taking its origins in the sketches for an early projected wind septet, and conceived at one point for string orchestra, the *Chamber Symphony* was finally scored for a mixed ensemble of twelve instruments: five winds, two brass, four strings and piano. Ostensibly in four movements, the work comes across more as an extended single-movement structure, somewhat akin to the 'double function' forms associated with Liszt and Schoenberg, whose own *First Chamber Symphony* shares its E-major tonality with the Enescu work. The opening movement (Poco moderato, un poco maestoso, and the 'poco' speaks eloquently here) is the most self-contained of the four, and under-statement is its most characteristic mode. It is a three-subject sonata movement, but obvious thematic definition is less crucial than a unified substance,



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which allows for hidden echoes and pre-echoes in the subsidiary voices, rather as though the principal melodic shapes were constantly casting fleeting and fragmentary shadows.

The scherzo-like second movement (Allegretto, molto moderato) has both a clearer thematic profile, and a more obvious formal design: a set of variations that works cumulatively to build a single intensity curve, and at the same time functions as a kind of development section for the work as a whole. It has been remarked by one commentator that the third movement (Adagio (funèbre)) functions like a further variation. But it is perhaps easier to think of this as a distillation of processes of thematic transformation that had always preoccupied Enescu, and it is notable that the linked finale (Allegro molto moderato) likewise opens with a version of the same theme before returning to the material of the first movement: four movements in one, and at the same time a single impulse of departure and return.

Before completing the *Chamber Symphony*, in July 1954, Enescu suffered a stroke that left him semi-paralysed, and the final stages of the compositional process were dictated to Marcel Mihalovici. Less than a year later he died in straitened and distressing circumstances in a small two-room apartment in Paris.

Jim Samson



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Tampere Philharmonic Orchestra

Comprising 97 musicians, the **Tampere Philharmonic Orchestra** is one of Scandinavia's foremost symphony orchestras. Its Artistic Director from autumn 2009 onward is Hannu Lintu.

The orchestra has its home in Tampere Hall, the largest concert hall in Finland. On top of its season programme of symphonic and chamber music, the TPO also performs as resident opera and ballet orchestra and plays regularly at the Tampere Biennale contemporary music festival. Educational projects and various events for young people are among the TPO's priorities, and it is the first orchestra in Finland with a club for young listeners. The orchestra has so far been on tour in Scandinavia, Estonia, Great Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain and the United States.

The TPO has an impressive discography of over 40 recordings mainly for the Ondine label, featuring works by Uljas Puulkis, Einojuhani Rautavaara, Nino Rota, Richard Strauss, Veli-Matti Puumala, Kimmo Hakola, Jouni Kaipainen, John Corigliano, Einar Englund and Jean Sibelius, to name a few. The recordings have received excellent reviews and awards, such as the Cannes Classical Disc of the Year Award 2004 (for Peteris Vasks's *Symphony No. 2*) and a total of five Cannes Classical Awards. The first classical Emma Award was presented to the recording of Jukka Tiensuu's music in 2007.

The history of the Tampere Philharmonic Orchestra dates back to the year 1930. Since 1947 it has been maintained by the City of Tampere. The orchestra's former conductors are John Storgårds, the Conductor Laureate Eri Klas, Tuomas Hannikainen, Leonid Grin, Ari Rasilainen, Atso Almila, Paavo Rautio, Juhani Raikinen and Eero Kosonen.

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Hannu Lintu

Hannu Lintu is one of Finland's most sought-after conductors and is rapidly creating an international career. He has been Artistic Director and Chief Conductor of the Tampere Philharmonic Orchestra since August 2009, and also Principal Guest Conductor of the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra in Dublin. Before assuming the new role of Chief Conductor of the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra in 2013, he will become the orchestra's Chief Guest Conductor in 2012. Hannu Lintu was previously Chief Conductor of the Turku Philharmonic Orchestra and Artistic Director of the Helsingborg Symphony Orchestra. He is a regular guest conductor with the Avanti! Chamber Orchestra in Finland and was Artistic Director of the orchestra's Summer Sounds festival in 2005.

Hannu Lintu studied the cello, the piano, and subsequently conducting with Jorma Panula at the Sibelius Academy. He participated in master classes with Myung-Whun Chung at the Accademia Chigiana in Siena, Italy, and won first prize in the Nordic Conducting Competition in Bergen in 1994. He has appeared with the Cincinnati Symphony, Indianapolis Symphony, St Louis Symphony, Toronto Symphony, City of Birmingham Symphony and Dallas Symphony orchestras, the Stuttgarter Philharmoniker, Orquesta Sinfonica de RTVE, Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra, Taiwan, and the Hong Kong Philharmonic, Seoul Philharmonic and Royal Flemish Philharmonic orchestras. He has also conducted a cycle of the complete Beethoven Symphonies with the Iceland Symphony Orchestra. Hannu Lintu has conducted several recordings for Ondine.

www.hannulintu.fi



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