

# Water Waves, Sound Waves, down the River, up the Staves: Representations of the Danube in Romanian Music

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## Abstract

*The present article is the second part of a study that explores, from a cultural studies perspective, the way in which the Danube has inspired the music of its riparian countries across the ages. The first part, which will appear in another publication, analyses significant works composed in the other nine European countries crossed by the river, while this second part focuses on folklore, urban songs, operetta, and film music composed in Romania – the land of the delta. As chance will have it, the first part will be published later than the second. Starting from the physical and metaphysical kinship between water and sound waves, this article shows how the Danube has constantly loomed large in the musical creation on its Romanian banks, reflecting the way of life of the inhabitants, their customs and traditions, their mentalities and philosophies, also preserving information about long-gone local places and conferring immortality (or at least an afterlife) to ephemeral generations. Stressing the river's function as border meant both to separate and to unite lands and peoples and to bring into bold relief both their similarities and differences, the study underlines another paradoxical duality of the Danube: its versatility and its individuality. Analysing a selection of folk songs, Ioan Ioanovici's famous waltz "Danube Waves", George Grigoriu's eponymous operetta, and four films from the perspective of their soundtrack, the article concludes that it is opportune to tackle the great shapeshifting river through music – a language that needs no translation and a journey that knows no borders – in order to capture one more facet of its cultural significance.*

**Keywords:** *Cultural studies, music, cinema, operetta, mentalities*

Water and sound are organically connected through the way in which they travel – namely wave motion, which is fascinatingly described in physics as the “propagation of disturbances – that is, deviations from a state of rest or equilibrium – from place to place in a regular and organized way. Most familiar are surface waves on water, but both sound and light travel as wavelike disturbances” (Britannica). They share movement, vibration, and oscillation. And this physical as well as metaphysical yearning for balance has rendered

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both of them prone to being associated with emotional turmoil and, thus, with poetry, music, painting, and even sculpture.

In a cultural studies approach, the present article sets out to show how this great river has constantly loomed large in the musical creation on its Romanian banks, reflecting the inhabitants' way of life, their customs and traditions, their mentalities and philosophies, also preserving information about long-gone local places and conferring immortality (or at least an afterlife) to ephemeral generations.

### **Romania – the country of the Delta, a musical treasure**

“All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea *is* not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again” (Ecclesiastes 1:7, King James Bible). Romania contains the largest section of the Danube – 1075 km, more than a third of the whole length of the river. In primary school, pupils learn that their country looks like a bunch of flowers and the Danube is the ribbon that ties and ornaments it. It discharges 6550 cubic metres per *second* into the sea, and yet the sea is *never* full. The beauty of this philosophical question contemplated in the Bible can be considered one of the many everyday miracles of our world. Physical reality mingles with art in the perception of the Danube continuously, and the great poet Friedrich Hölderlin (1770-1843) wrote in his epoch-making [1] poem “Der Ister” that “It seems almost / To run backwards: / I’d think it should flow / From the East. / Much could be said / About that,” using the Christian symbolic metonymy that light comes from the East and blending it with an entirely cultural and intellectual view that considers Greek classicism to be deeply formative.

If the German imaginarily reverses the course of the Danube to explain how all the legacy of the Orient was bestowed on his country, Romanians feel that the Danube is theirs with its spring *and* its delta, just as the noun *mouth* is ambivalent, suggesting a point of origin when, in fact, in the terminology of navigation, it designates the point of discharge. “How proud today’s Romania is of its ancient past, especially of the combative Draker king, becomes clear when you see the Decebalus [2] monument at the mouth of the Mraconia [3], just before the small town of Tekija. The Tabula Traiana [4] is close by, the colossal monument seems like a provocative answer of the historical opponent” (Trötschinger 2013: 271) [5].

### **Danube-inspired folklore**

As the whole width of Romania is crossed by the Danube, folk songs inspired by it have stemmed from many areas. Thus, “Dunăre, Dunăre” (“Danube, Danube”) is a girl’s song that evokes a (probably faithless) lover whom she has

thrown over a tall maple (no doubt in wishful thinking). She describes him using the discourse of Romania's national folk ballad, *Miorița* (*The Little Sheep*), interestingly taking the Danube as interlocutor. She invokes it as "road without dust and without grooves" [6] and blames it for having drained/dried her heart, an image normally associated with droughts, not water. The Danube thus becomes a witness of intimate suffering. But a fascinating metamorphosis has occurred to this song and new lyrics have been written in order to express the brotherhood and good neighbourly relations between Romanians and Serbs, only separated by the Danube. In this version it is sung by a Serbian woman and a Romanian man who switch languages. The Danube becomes a cumbersome barrier that makes it more difficult for the two peoples to come together, even if they are one and the same: "Dunăre, Dunăre, între noi ai închis hotarele! Ne ții departe cu apele!" ("Danube, Danube, between us you have closed the borders! You keep us apart with your waters!")

The Dobruđjan song "Hai, Dunărea mea" ("Lo, My Danube") makes use of the tradition of the pathetic fallacy in which the girl contrasts the quiet impassibility of the river with her own love torment and longing. All the water in the Danube cannot extinguish the fire of a heart in love.

Another Dobruđjan song, "Dunăre, pe apa ta" ("Danube, on Your Water"), is also a love song intoned by a fisherman's daughter in love with a young fisherman whom she asks to take her in his boat, as she is not afraid of the waves. Living in close symbiosis with the river, human beings seem to turn amphibian.

Entirely different, the fast-paced "Dunăre, Dunăre lină" ("Danube, Smooth Danube"), with a vigorous cimbalom accompaniment, is yet another love song in which the girl asks the good Danube to carry her heavy tears away, as her lover is sailing on a ship and has left without eating or drinking. The same folk area has also engendered "Dunăre cu valuri line" ("Smooth-Waved Danube"), a slower tune on puzzling reflections - "He who sails by ship / Sings and quenches his longing. / He who sails in a barge / looks for his love. / We ride in an ox-drawn cart / And live our love in twain." [7]

Many other songs come to complete the picture of the Danube that accompanies, mirrors or contrasts all aspects of everyday life, such as "Curge Dunărea la Vale" ("The Danube Is Flowing Downstream") or the splendid "Dunăre cu apă lină" ("Smooth-Watered Danube") - an old modal Dobruđjan song in which the waves comfort the love turmoil of the girl, who asks the river to tell her where her lover's house is, if it can speak as well as it can travel.

But not only folk music is profoundly inspired by the Danube in Romania. Light music songs such as "Orașul de la Dunăre" ("The Town by the Danube") are part of the urban lore. This is an affectionate description of Galați, the greatest port on this river.

### **Ioan (Iosif) Ivanovici's waltz "Valurile Dunării" ("Danube Waves"), 1880**

However, the most important musical creation associated with the Danube is definitely Ioan (Iosif) Ivanovici's waltz "Valurile Dunării" ("Danube Waves," 1880). Ivanovici [8] (1845-1902) was born in Timișoara/Alba-Iulia [9], but joined an infantry fanfare in Galați. He thus settled in Moldavia and studied music in Iași. In 1900 he became general inspector for military music in Romania, and his compositional interests oscillated between dances and military songs - over 300 works - waltzes [10], polkas, mazurkas [11], gallops, quadrilles, marches, many of which are lost today (Caraman Fotea).

In the whole of Europe, *la Belle Epoque* sees the advent of a new genre - urban musical miniatures meant for entertainment in cabarets, cafés-concerts, garden follies, or private parties. In Romania, the main influence was French, but German and Austrian trends left their imprint too and the first felicitously adapted Viennese waltz in Bucharest was "O, du lieber Augustin" [12] (Caraman Fotea 2017).

The power of invention of Ivanovici's composition is truly outstanding, as he chains at least eight waltz themes. Most of them are Western through and through, especially Viennese. Only one of them, in minor key, evinces slightly exotic oriental sonorities and may have influenced the refrain of "Tumbalalaika," [13] one of the favorite folk songs of Eastern European Jews (Ashkenazim) in Yiddish that circulated in Poland, Ukraine, Russia, Belarus and Moldova, as well as in Israel and the USA. [14]

For Romanians who are familiar with Ivanovici's waltz as part of their national cultural legacy today, it is difficult to realise the degree of universal fame that it has reached after it was first published in 1880 by Constantin Gebauer, with a dedication to his wife. The gate to fame was opened by the fact that, out of 116 musical works written by reputed composers from all over the world, "Danube Waves" won the competition for the great honour of becoming the official 'anthem' of the Paris Universal Exhibition in 1889 [15], the same edition that inaugurated the Eiffel Tower. It was later printed at the Remick publishing house in New York but... as composed by Johann Strauss the Younger! Touring on the territory of today's Romania, Strauss had included the waltz in the repertoire of his orchestra, hence the publisher's mistake. Subsequently, the error was corrected and the waltz appeared at over twenty [16] publishing houses, among which Ricordi, Shot, and National Music. It was performed extensively in Europe, especially in Germany (and in Berlin it was also staged as a ballet), Austria [17] and in Paris. German newspapers called Ivanovici the Romanian Strauss (Caraman Fotea 2017).

An even greater impetus was given to this waltz by its transmediation [18] on screen: Marlene Dietrich appeared playing "Danube Waves" on the piano in Josef von Sternberg's [19] successful 1931 American pre-Code [20]

romantic spy film *Dishonored*. However, the film that consecrated the waltz was the musical *The Jolson Story* [21] (1946), retitling it “The Anniversary Song” with lyrics by Al Jolson and Saul Chaplin. In this variant, the connection with the Danube is completely lost: “Oh, how we danced on the night we were wed / We vowed our true love, though a word wasn’t said / The world was in bloom, there were stars in the skies / Except for the few that were there in your eyes.” [22] However, it became so popular as to be included in the Billboard Hot 100, where it stayed for fourteen weeks in 1947 and ranked as No. 2. It thus gained such momentum that it was rapidly taken over by great singers such as Guy Lombardo, Dinah Shore, Tex Beneke and Glenn Miller’s orchestra, Andy Russell and Paul Weston, Artie Shaw and his New Music orchestra, Django Reinhardt and Quintette du Hot Club de France, a. o. Later, the pleiad of musicians that interpreted it included Bing Crosby, Rosemary Clooney, Eva Cassidy, Mitch Miller, Joni James, Frank Sinatra, Andy Williams, and Tom Jones [23]. Starting with 2001, André Rieu included a “Danube Love Medley for violin & pops orchestra” in his international concert repertoire, made of “Danube Waves” [24] and Lehár’s aria “Liebe, du Himmel auf Erden” from his operetta *Paganini* (Dulea 2013, online). “Danube Waves” was popularised in Korea in the 1920s by soprano Yun Shim-doc as “The Psalm of Death” (Lee 2006: 3). Ivanovici’s waltz continued to appear on famous film soundtracks such as *Mayerling* (1968), *Falling in love again* (1980), *Avalon* (1980), *Payback* (1999) and Michael Dudok De Wit’s *Father and daughter* that won the Oscar for best short animated film in 2000. The whole world, including the Romanian public, could hear it in the famous TV series *M.A.S.H.* (season 9, ep.14) and *Married with Children/ The Bundys* (season 1, ep. 6) (Dulea 2013).

To go back to the Danube, Ivanovici’s symphonic music succeeds in summoning a visual and kinetic image of the flowing river – ominous in the introduction, then carefree, nostalgic or playful in its many themes. The title was initially “Pe malurile Dunării” (“On the Banks of the Danube”); the lyrics for the first variant were written by A. Pappini [25], and for the second (1888) by Carol Scrob [26], slightly altered by Aurel Felea in 1970 into the text that is generally known today [27] (Dulea 2013). This text – another love poem – is the only one among all those that we have discussed so far that closely associates the Danube with singing and dancing, as the love of the couple is now a waltz that the Danube is said to carry away on its silver waves.

The manuscript of this epoch-making waltz is preserved at the Jewish Community Centre in Lugoj, as the ‘muse’ who inspired this composition was a little Jewish girl, Sara Fried. Ivanovici met her and years later came back and gave her this “thin cardboard brochure, 78×88 mm in size, on which the composer had written all the five musical stanzas of the famous waltz in miniature,” as the late Lugoj-born conductor, composer and musicologist Tobias Schwager testified in an article published on 20 September 1985 in

*Revista mea* (*My Magazine*) in Israel (qtd. in Dulea). The dedication on this manuscript is “Donauwellen Walzer, von I. Ivanovics für Fräulein Sara, gewidmet und geschrieben für Fräulein Sara” [28] (qtd. in Dulea 2013).

### ***Valurile Dunării (Danube Waves) – George Grigoriu’s operetta, 1974***

All these very few details known about Ivanovici’s life and work were carefully assembled and, from revered composer, he also became the character of an operetta whose title and subject are *Valurile Dunării (Danube Waves)*. The work “pencils the moving personality of the composer [Ivanovici]” (Sbârcea 1985: 291). The author, George Grigoriu (1927-1999), was already known as part of Trio Grigoriu – a vocal group formed of three brothers [29] born on the Danube, in Brăila, who composed the music, wrote the texts, and interpreted their own songs – light music that, as time went by, started borrowing even rock features, which was very forward at that time: “The trio tackled both jazz and light music, Latino, Afro-Cuban, or swing rhythms, while from the point of view of their vocal interpretation style, they used close harmony, being especially influenced by the American vocal groups in fashion at the time” (Andrei Tudor 2023: 30-2).

George Grigoriu, however, continued very serious musical studies and, little by little, besides continuing to write songs for the trio, started orchestrating other composers’ music, writing film music [30], and, finally, writing music for great stars of the time – especially Margareta Pâslaru. Subsequently, he started composing much more complex music – “musicals, revue, ballets, choral and instrumental music, 3 vocal-symphonic” works (Andrei Tudor 2023: 77).

At the beginning of the 70s, he wrote music for several films produced by Englishmen, who invited him to Britain and proposed he should settle there and be hired by a cinema studio. He surprised them by saying that he had to go back to Romania and finish the operetta he had started – *Danube Waves*. This opus, on a libretto by Aurel Storin, has absolutely no light music sonorities. Unfortunately, there was only one production – during the 1973-74 season at the Galați Opera House, at a time when operetta was very popular, as it already had a very solid tradition: “From [the nineteenth] century we can talk about the beginnings of an autochthonous lyric theatre due to certain inspired vaudevilles, operettas strewn with pleasant and winning melodies, and operas not devoid of accomplished section” (Popovici 1974: 139). As Moisescu and Păun remark, “Operetta has rich and strong traditions in our country. (...) The pioneers of Romanian theatre saw this form of intellectual activity not as mere entertainment, but as an efficient means to satirise the mores and feuds of the society of the age” (1969: 15). Romanian music, in general, had made a leap and joined the rest of Europe in its modern discoveries: “Receptive to innovation

and profoundly significant changes, the composers extended our audience's horizon of sensibility with ample creations. (...) Pages of intense lyricism, deep meditation (...) gained a steadfast place in the creation of the most important representatives of Romanian symphonism" (Brâncuși 1969: 206-7).

The action of Grigoriu's operetta takes place in the second half of the nineteenth century in Galați, where Ivanovici was working. The libretto opens with this splendid literary introduction:

This performance starts in the foyer of the theatre. In the folly installed right in the middle of the foyer, a military fanfare is playing promenade music – softly, rockingly. In this neurotic century, haunted by speed and deafened by noises, the waltz – charmingly murmured by the fanfare – will offer the audience the surprise of certain memories that, with the passage of time, seem to become fresher, more persistent. Young people might see the fanfare as a curiosity. But here points of view are of no concern. The fanfare will be placed at the centre; it is only a way, a device, a reality that might express and recompose – from shards of biography and songs, and especially from legends – the figure of Iosif Ivanovici, a brilliant artist and ardent patriot who, to his glory and that of Romanian art, has given *DANUBE WAVES* to the world (Storin 1973, n. p.)

The plot is thus introduced as a story placed midway between reality and legend, while music is not only the medium of the operetta, but also its subject, in an early instance of meta-composition. Certain names are historically accurate, such as Lieutenant Ivanovici, the protagonist, or Carol Scrob – the lyricist (although presented as the first and only author of the text of the waltz rather as the second). Other names are fictionalized, possibly because of the families' reluctance to have their names made public: G(h)ebauer, the name of the initial publisher, and his wife are renamed Mihai and Didona Sterescu, as from the telltale dedication on the original score Storin invents a love story between the composer and the publisher's wife in a typical instance of postmodern retrospective reconstruction. Sara Fried and her mother are rechristened Otilia and Mrs Protopopescu, names that erase all Jewish resonances. The dramatis personae include a copyist, a conductor of the Civic Guard fanfare, a gaxis [31], waltzers and... Johann Strauss! The stage directions include poetic indications such as "a frantic overflow of music and dance and colour" or "the city's box of feelings" (Storin 1973: scene I, p. 2). The erroneous publication of Ivanovici's waltz as composed by Strauss is here theatrically 'translated' as a misunderstanding: the fanfare conductor thinks he is to perform Strauss' latest waltz when in fact it is one of Ivanovici's (another waltz at the beginning of the operetta, not *Danube Waves*). Humour, essential to an operetta libretto, is built less coarsely than in other titles of the genre, through genuinely comic gags such as the fact that the trombone player keeps trying to

stand up each time Strauss' name is mentioned – out of respect. The Moldavian accent [32] is another source of fun – in the orderly's speech.

Patriotism is another red thread in the libretto, as Ivanovici tells Sterescu, for instance, that his "heart sings in Romanian" (Storin 1973: scene II, p. 1), while in his first aria, in G major, he sings "Romanian blood flows in my veins." The music does not sound like typical patriotic songs; instead, the chorus intones a folk refrain – "Mugur, mugur, mugurel" ("burgeon"), which enshrouds the whole piece in the traditional ethos of the forefathers. In the same aria, the composer declares that from wherever he might be in the world, he always returns to the Danube banks, and describes Romania as the country where songs bloom (Grigoriu 1973) [32].

Ivanovici's second aria is the famous "Muzica" ("Music"), which has long ceased to be a tenor operetta aria and has turned into a creed for all singers, regardless of their vocal *Fach* [34]. Best known for her superb interpretation of this felicitous miniature is soprano Angela Gheorghiu: "Believe me, it always meets with great success. This aria is the hymn of my life" (qtd. in Andrei Tudor 2023: 81). The text of the aria reveals how, on all the charming paths of life's journey, Ivanovici carries the Danube in his heart.

The scene in which Ivanovici composes the waltz comes at the end of the operetta; its doleful, mournful air is justified as gushing forth from the pain of his impossible love for an honourable married woman. The moment of inspiration is brilliantly captured as he sits down and starts humming the tune and throwing a few chords on the piano. After the prophecy pronounced by Cecală, the copyist, who tells him that the waltz no longer belongs to him, but is a treasure of the whole world (Storin 1973: scene VI, p. 11), the climactic end of the operetta engulfs the audience in the full-blown orchestral version of the *Danube Waves*. The sets disappear and, over walls and the borders of time, dozens of beautiful young couples flood the stage waltzing. Storin poetically concludes that this apotheosis marks the centennial of the waltz, which has survived untouched because of the genius and fervent patriotism of a Romanian artist. This winds up the operetta that was meant to be a portrait of and a homage to the artist who, in a moment of sublime inspiration, gave *Danube Waves* to the world (Scene VI, p. 12).

The most interesting turn of the libretto is its permanent parallelism between Ivanovici and Strauss. The Colonel tells Ivanovici: "I heard that an Italian editor asked Strauss what he thought of your endeavours. 'If he lived in Vienna – the composer answered him – you would ask Ivanovici what he thinks of Johann Strauss' endeavours'" (Storin 1973: scene III, p. 4). Ivanovici thanks him for this "legend" which the Colonel has invented. The latter declares: "I am proud that here, near *my* Danube, near this Romanian shred of land, there is a heart that can sing at the level of the great and civilized Europe" (Storin 1973: scene III, p. 4; italics mine). The implication, however, is not



particularly flattering for Romania. Scrob tells Didona that the Danube is full of spells and that he is certain that one of the most bewitched songs will surge from it (Storin 1973: scene III, p. 6). However, the most original is Scene VI, whose action takes place on the Danube bank, “At the Quarantine” – the place where the border quarantine used to be and where the audience incredulously witnesses an encounter between Ivanovici and Strauss in Viennese attire. The latter tells his bewildered colleague that he has come by the blue Danube after having conducted *Die Fledermaus* that evening and confesses to Ivanovici that he envies and hates the latter’s famous waltzes that now travel without his consent. However, he advises Ivanovici to write his own autobiography, to step out of his modesty and anonymity before someone else invents a life he thinks the composer has lived. He also advises him to do something spectacular by which he might be remembered: resign from the army, challenge a cuckolded husband to a duel, drown in the Danube, commit suicide by poisoning, or something even more serious – get married. In a postmodern cue, Ivanovici replies that he would be happy if one day his whole biography might be encapsulated in a song – prophesying what we know has already happened. And precisely when Strauss tells him he has the duty to make his small country shine, the orderly comes yelling for Ivanovici and the audience realizes it has all been a dream (Storin 1973: scene V, pp. 1-3) – the agelong narrative technique used both in mediaeval lays and in fairytales.

The music is melodious, inspired, contrasting lyricism, dramatism, humour and merriment. The whole work testifies to the love that composer George Grigoriu had for the great river: “All three [brothers] were masterful swimmers, they would cross the Danube swimming, they would jump into the waves for the Cross [35], Cezar would jump into the waters from the very mast and sometimes they would even put their life in danger out of too much courage in confronting the Danube, escaping from drowning by the skin of their teeth” (Andrei Tudor 2023: 29).

The libretto reflects certain significant institutions and personalities in Galați. Thus, in Scene II, Ivanovici says he is in a hurry to get to the Inglesi Café, where he has reserved a seat to see the great artist Matei Millo [36] in a performance.

Galați was for a long time an attractive centre for itinerant theatre troupes that, when hard up, would organise a tour in Galați, the town that would more often than not ‘save’ them. But after Ventura, the so-called theatre – but in fact a sort of cave – was pulled down (...), there was no location left for theatre (...). During summers, in order to respond to this appetite, they would improvise ‘arenas’ or ‘amphitheatres.’ (...) Matei Millo came to Galați and gave a few performances in the vast hall of the second floor of the Inglesi Café, where the stock market also functioned – more or less across the road from the Port Authority (Massoff 1966: 165-6).

In another postmodern retrospection and fictional reinvention, the libretto mentions the birth of a baby that was to become the greatest Romanian operetta tenor – Leonard [37]. Otilia’s uncle, Constantin Naia, a railway mechanic, has just had a son in the Galați district of Bădălan. “Listen to the ridiculous name they have given him: Leonard. I am sure that – with a name like that – no woman will ever love him” (Scene VI, p. 6). This strong irony is very efficient, as the whole audience knew that the extremely handsome Leonard had been adored by women: “Women guessed more precisely the reason of his life – he had appeared for them and for the relentless frenzy they have known since the Genesis. That is why, when he passed away – this meteor – they cried bitterly, the beautiful ladies!” (Michailescu 1984: 8) In a more serious book, he is described thus: “Leonard was, perhaps, the greatest artist of the genre. Handsome, harmonious in gestures and movements, a singer, a dancer, an actor, and a dancer at the same time, he was nicknamed ‘The Prince of Operetta,’ had a miraculous career, becoming an idol to the public” (Nichimiș et al. 2010: 12).

### **Romanian film music starring the Danube**

Due to the spectacular, picturesque, scenic or dramatic riverscapes offered by the Danube in Romania, it has been featured as a significant background in Romanian cinema, with certain screenwriters and directors turning it into a veritable character. Out of the long list of Danube-set films, this article has selected four for closer analysis, not only because they are all noteworthy cinematic achievements, but also because their music was written by great Romanian composers.

#### ***Valurile Dunării (Danube Waves), 1959***

Made in 1959 and released in 1960, *Valurile Dunării* is a black-and-white war film [38] directed by Liviu Ciulei, who also stars as Mihai Strejan, the coxswain of barge NFR 724. The screenplay was written by Francisc Munteanu and Titus Popovici. The film also stars Lazăr Vrabie as Lt. Valentin Toma, an undercover officer [39], and Irina Petrescu – Ana Strejan, Mihai’s wife. The music was composed by Theodor Grigoriu (1926-2014), first cousin to George Grigoriu (and the whole Trio), fourteen years before the premiere of the operetta. He was a talented and prolific symphonic and chamber music composer who also wrote many film soundtracks.

Almost the whole action takes place on the Danube – on the barge or on the shores – and the intro music suggests a journey, possibly influenced by Wagner’s *The Rhinegold*. The music is quintessential in building up a tense, ominous atmosphere of danger and suspense. The quasi-permanent musical

background heard in the film is symphonic, alternating lyricism with dramatism, and seamlessly inserting non-musical sounds such as the wail of the ship alarm, the bell with which the coxswain summons the sailor, or the sirens of air raids. The beginning, on 9 August 1944, contrasts the gloomy prospect of raking the waters for mines with the mock-serene sound of Ivanovici's waltz, *Danube Waves*, to which the star-eyed newlyweds are listening on a record player on the barge while honeymooning during the demining mission. The voice that is heard is that of the great Romanian actress Clody Bertola [40], who had the low range fashionable at the time, as audiences were so used to associating Marlene Dietrich-like timbres with war films. A boat explodes during the part of the waltz that is in a major key, thus emphasizing the absurdity of life and the element of unexpectedness.

Other songs are heard too, such as Cristian Vasile's well-known tango "Ilona" (1932), used to recreate a cultural and historical atmosphere auditorily, a technique that has a very direct emotional impact. The soundtrack also evinces American influences, or uses very simple double-bass staccati to suggest mystery and suspense.

On the other hand, the splendour of the Danube in sunlight is used to enhance Ana's natural beauty, equally pure. The tension is sometimes alleviated by short attempts at humour, such as Valentin's (mendacious) tale of how he was arrested for whistling in church and condemned to two years' holidays on the Danube. The modern technique of flashbacks is also used, supported by percussion and wind instruments.

The Russian air attack is punctuated with fast, anguished, panic-instilling music. Its visual counterpart is the Danube burning, releasing thick, black choking smoke into the air.

The Danube, presented as a place of danger and death from the beginning through the mines and explosion, now becomes a place of execution, as the two men on the barge finally trust each other with their sincere anti-Nazi feelings and decide to assassinate the German they have aboard. Nevertheless, the murder is not shown, the camera staying on Ana and Valentin. The audience understands what has happened because they *hear* the splash made by the body falling into the water, and also through Mihai's dark humour as he comes back and reports: "He said he didn't mind."

When *Danube Waves* is played again, it brings into bold relief Ana's suffering when Mihai thinks she has cheated on him with Valentin. This utter despair is aurally suggested through the skipping of the record, which obsessively repeats the word *Dunărea* (the Danube), subliminally connecting the anguish with the river. Moreover, breaking the barriers of realism, the sound of the record goes ever higher in pitch (which is acoustically impossible) in order to suggest the psychological ordeal in which Mihai's nerves are strung like the strings of an instrument when the tuning pegs are turned to stretch

them and raise the pitch. The camera zooms in on Ana's face in Hitchcock style, and then suddenly the whole tension is defused. The lack of adultery is sealed with the bond of political and national alliance between Valentin and Mihai. The political conflict is also translated into ethnic nuances, as the fascists are foreign, while the communists are Romanian.

The Danube becomes a symbol of hope, of escape, and liberation, as the barge illegally takes weapons to the communists. But in the final battle, it becomes a place of slaughter, of theft, of lies, and of betrayal. The parents of a child (who is fond of Mihai) die, as well as Mihai. The Danube is also a place of loyalty and sacrifice, and the trumpet, traditionally used to announce victory, marks the defeat of the Germans. The final scene shows banners with the slogans "We are changing sides against Hitlerism", "Death to Hitlerism", "Long live the Patriotic Guards!" and "Long live the Soviet Army!" (the latter barely discernible). The last line belongs to Ana, who is frantically looking for her husband and asks "Where is Mihai?" The last image shows the victorious troops; grafted upon Ana's line, it conveys to the spectator the idea that the victory has been ensured by sacrifice.

It is very important to underline the fact that Ciulei managed to make a whole politically charged film without once slipping into the dialogues words like communism, socialism, the USSR, Russia, etc. The banners at the end are barely discernible and in a cinema the public would probably not even look at the texts. Theodor Grigoriu's music is 100% of Western filiation, while the Romanian works – Ivanovici's recurring waltz and the other urban songs intoned – all belong to the occidental musical tradition. Thus, the symbolism of the fight for liberation becomes timeless and doctrineless, free from the false propaganda of the time. These quiet subversive techniques, as well as the exquisite script, direction and acting make it both a great social and cinematic achievement. Due to it, Ivanovici's waltz and the image of the Danube travelled all the way to China, where the film was distributed, and where the waltz was translated into Chinese.

### ***Explozia (The Explosion), 1972***

*The Explosion* was made by Mircea Drăgan in 1972 on a screenplay by Ioan Grigorescu and produced by Româniafilm. The film relates a real story – the 1970 fire on the Vrachos (a ship renamed Poseidon in the script) that was carrying 3,700 tons of ammonium nitrate and that stood to explode, thus threatening to blow Galați and the steel plant (Combinatul Siderurgic) out of existence. The film has an all-star cast: Gheorghe Dinică (petrol firefighter Gheorghe Oprișan nicknamed Gică the Salamander [41]), Radu Beligan (Professor Luca), Toma Caragiu (Ticu Corbea, prime-secretary of the communist county organization in Galați), Dem Rădulescu (navy officer

Neagu), Jean Constantin (Tilică the gypsy fiddler), George Motoi (navy captain Marinescu), Colea Răutu (Anghel, commander of the Galați Port), Draga Olteanu Matei (Angela, Salamander's wife), Mircea Diaconu (navy officer Victoraș), Florin Piersic (foreign sailor), Cezara Dafinescu (blond girl), Tatiana Iekel (Ileana, secretary Corbea's wife), and Mihai Mălaimare (a thief in the port of Galați).

The music belongs once again to Theodor Grigoriu. His original soundtrack harks back to the symphonic Western tradition, like the previous one, but this time it is strewn with Romanian *folk* tunes, as well as pieces of oriental origins for local colour, as well as non-musical sounds for an impression of realism. The intro surveys the Danube waters, while the sounds are violent type-writing clicks that suggest the string of urgent communications meant to prevent the disaster. The music in minor key is once again influenced by Wagner and creates a sense of tension.

The whole film is built through the technique of antithesis – between the deadly danger of the explosion and the carefree existence led by the townspeople, who are completely unaware of the impending catastrophe. Thus, a loud wedding party is held on a boat that nears the Poseidon, cheering to a boisterous Serbian dance (*sârbă*). On it, the father of the bride is none other than firefighter Oprișan nicknamed Salamander, and this is the coincidence that will probably save the day, as he selflessly boards the ship and uses his experience in dodging the explosion. Officer Neagu sings an urban song about thirty corpses, which he means to be humorous, but is macabre, as it is simultaneous with the fire on the ship, aurally expressed through repetitive violin sounds, as nerve-racking as a giant mosquito threatening to bite.

The crew of the Panama-registered Poseidon has left the ship and sent a mayday message to the Port Authority in Galați. This highly reprovable behaviour is later explained through the fact that the crew only had one month's experience. All the local authorities realise the imminent danger, as the direct effect of the blast would be combined with a secondary explosion, that of the Liquid Oxygen Factory situated within the steel plant. The brilliant aspect of the script is that all the characters involved in the decision-making process have valid points of view during their brainstorming, even when they clash. Sometimes a point of view may seem narrow-minded or obstinate, but then the professional argument is given and the logic of the character's position is revealed. Compared to the fairytale-like films of the time, in which all communists are good and all capitalists are bad, this fine psychological differentiation between the personae is remarkable. The collective effort, which rings true because it *was* a real situation with which the town had been faced, is truly moving. The victory is a real one, and the example it gives serves the communist doctrine perfectly, just as it is a perfect illustration of Christian abnegation or of lay civic heroism. The moving conclusion is expressed in the

script: Party secretary – “People are different.” Professor: “Yes, but they die the same way.”

The film depicts several strategic institutions and places of entertainment of the Municipality of Galați: the Danube and the Danube Promenade, the steel plant, the shipyard, the television tower, the streets downtown, the Olympic Restaurant (the oldest in Galați), the Prefecture of Galați County, Galați City Hall, the river station, and the Cocuța Beach. There were no stunts in the film-making process. The explosions were real, the helicopters belonged to the army, the cars to the Fire Brigade.

The volatile quality of the ammonium nitrate is enhanced by the proximity of certain oxygen tubes nearby (the one thing that does *not* ring true, as such an arrangement in the ship seems profoundly illogical). The dark humour that permeates the film allows the spectator to see a “Do not smoke” sign on the wall.

The wedding party is a constant source of humour and, as Salamander boards the ship, his wife urges the musicians to play thrilling music so that he might regret leaving them. The ensuing melody is a *djampara*, a song of Turkish origins meant to be played and danced after the wedding feast. Its vitality and exuberance create a stark discrepancy with the death lurking in the air.

Comic-key antitheses are also created, as the (very tawny) fiddler (Constantin) has an encounter with the (very blond) foreign sailor (Piersic) and yells, asking that the Viking be taken off him!

The music conveys panic through dissonant and very modern clusters, while noises overlap: water hoses, thuds, crackling fire, sirens, vapour, engines, waves, and blasts.

In parallel, humour is also expressed through puns: Professor – “You must tow the ship. (...) Otherwise we are in God’s hands.” The Party secretary (in a politically correct phrase): “I do not like God’s hands.” [42]

The officials decide to allow the ship to pass through the town, while the fiddler sings the very famous urban song: “It’s a really jolly life / When you party through the night / And at dawn you’re on the outskirts / Under that nincompoop’s wife’s skirts” [43]. Other famous songs follow, such as “Ionel, Ionelule”, and the fiddler roasts his chicken leg in the fire on the ship.

Everybody is saved due to coordinated joint effort, intelligent planning, intellectual competence, and selfless heroism. After the blast, the deserted riverscapes of a very green Danube covered in thatch and complete with swans make the audience think for a second that Salamander is dead, especially because ominous birds are circling in the sky. But, in his Sunday best soaked in mud, he rises like the Phoenix, and the truly moving ending shows his very stout wife running to hug him, an image that is repeated at least ten times. Rather than expressing the joyous victory, the music is meditative and inconclusive, while the text on the screen informs the spectator that this is a

true story and that the film is a homage to all the heroes that live among us. In this splendid film, the Danube is continuously present, both overtly and covertly, as the ship is on it and all the strategies converge towards it.

*Pe malul stâng al Dunării albastre (On the Left Bank of the Blue Danube), 1983*

This film is a masterpiece, perhaps because it relies on three brilliant actors: Gina Patrichi (Zaza Bengescu, former cabaret artist, now an upper-class widow), Gheorghe Dinică (Matei, butler to the Bengescu family, intimate with Zaza), and Stela Popescu (former cabaret artist Zaraza Lopez, Zaza's friend). Directed by Malvina Urșianu [44] on her own screenplay, it boasts a whole stellar cast: George Constantin (Costi Bengescu, land owner, Zaza's brother-in-law), Fory Etterle (M. Guy, Costi's senile uncle), Ileana Stana Ionescu (a relative of Zaza's husband), Virgil Ogașanu (a relative of Zaza's husband), Geo Saizescu (Teodor "Bobby" Davidescu, Mrs. Davidescu's son, land owner), and Marius Pepino (a Gendarmes sergeant).

It is a war film whose action starts shortly before 23 August 1944 [45], when several persons are looking for a list of Nazi spies that had been hidden in Zaza's country-house, a large mansion that she has inherited from her husband.

The music was composed by Răsvan Cernat (1945–), better known as conductor, but a very talented composer too. The soundtrack alternates high society entertainment music with martial-sounding marches, nostalgic themes, and the urban music popular in Europe in the first part of the twentieth century. As always, various noises complete the soundtrack, and in this case the most shocking are the pistol shots taken by Zaza at the pictures hanging from her walls; the significance of this gesture is unclear – she may be utterly unappreciative of fine arts, or she may consider that she has nothing to lose anymore, or she simply has the disdain for money that the nouveau riche have. The distant – or sometimes close – roar of airplanes creates a permanent sensation of threat and insecurity, counterbalanced by the excitement of foxtrots on the radio or the gramophone.

The definitely decadent life of the idle bourgeoisie is cleverly presented as charming, but strewn with politically-charged remarks: Zaza to the mechanic on her estate – "Do you think the Russians are coming?" His answer: "I think the Germans are leaving." Zaza seems to be incapable of any political thought, so she is only happy to be courted by the German major. However, she reminisces: "I met a splendid Russian man! What a talent at playing the balalaika! What a good sport! What do I have against Russians?" In a conversation with Costi, her brother-in-law, he warns her that the communists are coming. Zaza: "Let them come! I have modest roots." Costi: "If you do, why do you spend time with the Germans?" Zaza: "Because they are refined chaps

and know how to party. I have nothing against them.” Costin: “Communists do.” Putting it into a nutshell, Eva Sirbu synthesises: “Gina Patrichi’s Zaza is astonishing and paradoxical like the blend between French cologne and the scent of onion and brandy” (qtd. in Căliman 2000: 344).

In the first scene in which the Danube appears, pure breed horses can be seen playing in the water, which turns the river into a symbol of freedom, joy, and escape. No towns or villages are seen in the film, but Crețești is mentioned, which makes it obvious the mansion is in Mehedinți county, not far from Drobeta-Turnu Severin.

But, if geographically it is not clearly inscribed, the film attempts a curious mergence between reality and fiction. For instance, Zaza’s friend is called Zaraza and is presented as a former cabaret artist. Although here she is not a gipsy, the reference is to the well-known Zaraza, the seductive gipsy who embarked upon a passionate love story with the famous singer Cristian Vasile in 1944 – the very year of the events in the film. The fact that her surname in the script is Lopez seems to ascertain the fact that this is indeed the woman in the tumultuous artistic life of the capital city, a luxury prostitute immortalized by Vasile’s tango, which had in fact been composed by the Argentinian Benjamin Tagle-Lara. The actual existence of the exotic head-turner has never been confirmed; some believe it is utter fantasy, but it led to another myth – that of the rivalry between two famous singers, Vasile and Zavaidoc, the latter intending to murder the former out of jealousy. Any doubt is cast away as Bobby plays a record of Vasile’s tango “Zaraza” precisely when the character of the same name comes down the stairs. The frantic dance of the two wanton women who miss the glamour of the city is unforgettable. Even if of doubtful morality, their fresh blood is seen as preferable to the degenerate families, represented by the senile Monsieur Guy. Young Bobby, who should be full of vigour but nods off instead, is further proof of that: he shoots hens for fun, which – according to his mother – is his residual warrior instinct, inherited from his father, who used to shoot peasants and had consequently been forced to leave the country. The same deceased land owner, who did not beat his wife, did however strangle her regularly until she came within a hair’s breadth of her death. The fall of the old world and the advent of the new one is auditorily symbolised, as the pop of the champagne cork cannot be told apart from the pistol shot that kills a German in the mansion, and the rumble of the timpani provides a solemn and worrying background. While communists and nazis kill each other in her house, and while her in-laws shamefully mistreat a peasant-girl servant in another part of the mansion, Zaza dresses up elegantly, drinks, and dances to her gramophone records. Drunk, she will be helped out by the communist, who will quietly take over her house. As the corrupt butler attempts to fraternise, saying he is happy that simple folk like him will have a chance now, the wise communist calms him down and, on the one hand seeing



through all pretence, and on the other hand being endlessly benevolent, watches over everybody's safety.

The Danube, mostly distant and concealed, symbolizes the equidistant blindness of history that sees everything happen, understands everything, but does not take sides. Răsvan Cernat's music closely seconds all the themes, uniting them through the recurring melancholy motif that traverses the score from beginning to end.

### *Sosesc păsările călătoare (The Migratory Birds Are Coming), 1985*

Romanian cinema has not only used the Danube in tragedies, but in comedies too, and to evoke not only war but also life and science. Geo Saizescu's film on Fănuș Neagu's [46] script grafts a love triangle story onto the everyday life of the Danube delta – fishing, fish farming, research of the flora and fauna, medicine, fine arts, etc. Its cast is formed of extremely well-known and popular actors, if not actors of great art films: Emil Hossu (engineer Radu Cojar, chief of the fish farm in Barza), Rodica Mureșan (Dr Iulia Râmnicănu, Radu's sweetheart from their student years), Tora Vasilescu (Nurse Vera from the village clinic), Octavian Cotescu (landscape painter Joil Dumbravă), Ștefan Mihăilescu-Brăila (Ștefan Brăileanu, mayor of Barza), Sebastian Papaiani (engineer Șerban Pamfil, canoe coach), Geo Saizescu (the photographer of "Foto Bujor"), Jean Constantin (publican Marin Pârvulescu), Rodica Popescu-Bitănescu (Auntie Gherghina, the witch), George Mihăiță (fisherman Petrache), Ovidiu Moldovan (fisherman Valeriu), Mihai Mălaimare (fisherman), Dan Puric (young Țăfnă, the 'herald' of the commune), Marius Pepino (professor at the Institute of Medicine in Bucharest), Lamia Beligan (Joil's model), and Mariana Cercel.

The music is signed by Temistocle Popa (1921-2013), famous for film music and songs, among which Romanians are probably most familiar with the *Veronica* films, *Mama*, and "Trecea fanfara militară" ("The Military Fanfare Was Passing"). His soundtrack to *The Migratory Birds Are Coming* is inspired, influenced by the harmony of Russian music. He too inserts separate songs into the soundtrack and, after the first image of thatch, we see Nurse Vera singing "Iubirea" ("Love") accompanied by an accordion.

The film is marked by great artificiality, both in its comic scenes and in its romantic ones. The dialogues have a discursive, philosophical ring that brands them as false: Radu exclaims that he was born to live on that land, which makes Șerban retort that the delta is neither land, nor water. Radu majestically replies: "It is the mixture that begets *life!*" Radu offers to teach Iulia how to talk to the foxes in the delta. There are also symbolic sentences such as "Everything starts beautifully, with a birth!" – the kind of reflections that nobody expresses in such bookish phrases in everyday speech. Artificiality is all-pervasive – not

only at the level of speech, but of action too, and people jump into the water hanging from lianas, like would-be European Tarzans. The communist doctrine is another great source of artificiality. Children must therefore be taught: “The delta has 20,000 hectares of land that will soon be irrigated and covered in grain! (...) It has the widest beach on the Romanian littoral.”

The soundtrack, on the other hand, although it too is lavish in pathos every here and there, is truly felicitous, and enhances the visual images of the camera. For instance, there are many images of birds (one of the great assets of the reservation – around 320 species from seven ecosystems): so, the music imitates bird sounds. The camera follows the fishermen’s routine, so the music seconds that through repetition. Spectacular sunsets are highly romantic, so the music echoes this, just as the working cranes are accompanied by the music of machines. The music is mostly inspired by American sonorities. It somehow mirrors the artificiality of the film through pompousness, while the heterogeneity of the people assembled in the delta is also reflected in the music they like – foxtrots, dixies, an Apache tango, Serbian dances (*sârbe*), “The Dobrudjan Girl”, or the Habanera.

Besides the bewitching images of the Danube and the beautiful music, another redeeming quality of the film is its humour sometimes. Such an instance is the fact that the publican sprinkles salt into the dishes from his very long pinkie nail, and one of the clients tells him to stick it into his neck while he still has it.

In this film, the Danube is a place of danger (as a serious fishing accident occurs), of love (and Radu’s character is strangely amoral, trying to entice both Iulia and Vera), of beauty, of artistic inspiration, of everyday life, of humour, and of playfulness.

## Conclusion

The Danube crosses the old continent and determines its economic and financial well-being, its communication, transportation, and tourism. It gives it water, food, light, and warmth. In times of war, it protects or exposes it. It traverses ten countries, and its basin includes four more. The river unites them all, drawing a thread from the West to the East, but it also sets borders between them, borders that bring into bold relief both the similarities and the differences between the peoples and lands bathed by the same waters, thus revealing the greatest richness of planet Earth: plurality.

Science describes borders as transitional spaces between pluralities, as places of mediation between different positions. (...) Every idea of identity means drawing boundaries. Borders are places of transformation and thus of the new. In their function all kinds of borders (political, linguistic, religious, cultural) are equal. (...) Dialogues about borders thus represent the basic principle of

collective identity formation in Europe. Europe sees itself (...) as a place of contrasts and diversity. As a result, Europe is permanently defining itself through its internal and external borders (Brix: 173-4, 168).

However, despite its miraculous versatility that seduces us with its wealth, what is even more astonishing about the Danube is its formidable individuality; we see it round the corner – a weak stream – but we recognise it like an old friend, even if the last time we saw it it was lofty and wide and confident in its power. I, for one, can safely assert with Nick Thorpe: “I realised that I now carry the whole river within me. (...) Those who fall in love with the Danube do so with the whole river, with her entire body, even those parts they have never seen” (X & 2). So how better to tackle this monolithic giant who mischievously winks at us and demonstrates it can be a shapeshifter than through music – a language that needs no translation, a journey that knows no borders? In a cultural studies approach, the present article has attempted to catch the Danube unawares and explore, as through a kaleidoscope, its many musical hypostases – folk, symphonic, theatrical, cinematic, or popular. If it has managed to reveal some of its mysteries, it has certainly marred none of its charm.

## Notes

The translation of the primary sources in Romanian used in this article (lyrics, quotations, etc.) is mine unless mentioned otherwise.

[1] Martin Heidegger analysed it in detail in *Hölderlins Hymne 'Der Ister'*, a lecture series published in 1942.

[2] The rock sculpture of Decebalus is a colossal carving of the face of the last king of Dacia (r. AD 87–106), who fought against the Roman emperors Domitian and Trajan to preserve the independence of his lands. The sculpture is near Orșova, on the Danube bank near the Iron Gates, and twelve sculptors worked on it between 1994 and 2004. It is the tallest rock relief in Europe (55m x 25m).

[3] Convent built between 1993 and 2000 on the site of the old convent erected in 1523. It is on the Danube bank, 15 km away from Orșova.

[4] Memorial plaque placed on the bank by Emperor Trajan to celebrate the victory of the Roman Empire over the Dacian kingdom after the second Dacian-Roman war (105–106).

[5] Quotations from Trötschinger and Brix are provided by Georg Steiner and the “Sustainable mobility linking Danube Travel Stories” project within the larger frame of the Danube Transnational Programme.

[6] “Drum fără pulbere / Și fără făgaș / Inima-mi secași.” On the contrary, in the song entitled “Dunăre, potecă lină,” the girl sees the Danube as a path and says that her lover hacks a way through it to get to her.

- [7] Cine merge cu vaporul / Cântă și-și alină dorul. / Cine merge cu barca / Își caută dragostea. / Noi mergem în car cu boi / Și ținem dragostea-n doi.
- [8] Like many other names in the Banat area, his surname was given a Serbian-sounding ending.
- [9] Both towns appear as birth places in various sources and there is no indication which one is correct.
- [10] "Amalia", "Frumoasa româncă" ("The Beautiful Romanian Woman"), "Alina", "Aurel", "Cleopatra" (D'Alba).
- [11] "La balul curții" ("At the Court Ball"), "Pe Dunăre" ("On the Danube"), "Plăcerea balului" ("The Pleasure of the Ball") (D'Alba).
- [12] Written in ca. 1800 and recounting the brush with death of balladeer Max Augustin during the Great Plague of 1679.
- [13] Rendered famous by Nana Mouskouri in 1968 as "Roule, s'enroule".
- [14] The fact that Ivanovici's waltz appealed to the Jewish community in the United States is known from the 1946 film *The Jolson Story* – see Notes [21] and [22] below.
- [15] It celebrated 100 years from the French Revolution, so its visibility was even greater than that of other editions.
- [16] D'Alba claims over sixty.
- [17] Eduard Strauss, Johann Strauss II's brother, introduced the waltz into the repertoire of the Vienna Court Orchestra (D'Alba).
- [18] Charles Suhor's term – The process of taking meanings from one sign system and moving them into another (250).
- [19] Austrian director, well placed to have been acquainted with the waltz.
- [20] Pre-Code Hollywood was the unregulated period in the American film industry between the widespread adoption of sound in film in 1929 and the enforcement of the Motion Picture Production Code of censorship known as the Hays Code in 1934. "Historically, it refers to a specific period between the announcement of the Hays Code and the formation of the PCA to actually enforce it. Culturally, the interregnum represented a fertile few years in which the studios tested the outer limits of propriety with movies of increasing frankness and fearlessness" (Bell).
- [21] A fictionalised biography of Al Jolson, a Lithuanian-American singer, actor, and vaudevillian who must have known the waltz from his life in Europe.
- [22] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3VcQVNw2w78&t=157s>
- [23] [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EUhyXr\\_NGkE&t=5s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EUhyXr_NGkE&t=5s)
- [24] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A7MDVGNBYIQ>
- [25] "Bătrân Danubiu, apriga-ți fire se agitează" ("Old Danubius, your fierce nature is stirring") – difficult to conceive how it fit the tune.
- [26] "Barca pe valuri saltă ușor / Inima-mi bate plină d'amor / Dulcea speranță e-n al meu pept. / Vino, ah! vino, că te aștept" ("The boat is lightly leaping on the waves, / My heart is beating, full of love. / There is sweet hope in my breast. / Come, oh come, I am waiting for you!").
- [27] "Barca pe valuri plutește ușor, / Dar cine îngână un cântec de dor? / Nu, nu e vântul, nici Dunărea nu-i, / E lopătarul și cântecul lui..." ("The boat is lightly floating on the waves, / But who is humming a song full of yearning? / Not the wind, and not the Danube, / It is the boatman and his song...")
- [28] "*Danube Waves*, by I. Ivanovics to Miss Sara, dedicated and written for Miss Sara".

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[29] Angel (the lyricist), George, and Cezar. The two older brothers studied opera singing at the Royal Conservatoire in Bucharest (Andrei Tudor: 27; all quotations from this book are given in my translation). In 1948 they founded Trio Grigoriu and started singing the light music of the time in cinemas and restaurants in order to be able to support themselves through their studies. But the Conservatoire considered that this was below the dignity of opera students and exempted them, which forced them to become students of the Private Jazz Conservatoire (Andrei Tudor: 30).

[30] He also collaborated with his younger brother, Cezar, who became a film director.

[31] German term for a person who earns gages, which in Romanian has come to mean musician hired in a military fanfare for a salary.

[32] *Și, șe* instead of *ci, ce*, or *chi* instead of *pi*. *De șe?* instead of *de ce?*, *a chica* instead of *a pica*.

[33] The unpublished vocal score only includes the musical numbers, while the unpublished libretto only includes the spoken dialogues. Complete scores and complete libretti normally include the whole text, both spoken and sung. As they are today, the pages of the score are numbered per each piece – aria or ensemble – so page numbers are irrelevant; the pages of the libretto are numbered per each scene. My thanks go to Mrs. Andreea Andrei Tudor, who has given me a copy of the score from her personal archive, who has obtained a copy of the libretto from the Storin family archive, and who has shared with me all the memories that the family have of the production of this operetta.

[34] Type of voice.

[35] Romanian tradition observed in many settlements on the Danube, including Brăila, and performed on the day of the Epiphany – 6 January – which in Romania is called Bobotează and commemorates the baptism of Saint John the Baptist in the Jordan. The Danube thus serves as an arch in space and time. The religious service is officiated on the banks rather than in church, as usual, and the priest throws a cross into the river. Strong brave men jump into the freezing water and try to bring the cross to the shore. The winner is commended for his bravery and is believed to be protected from disease and troubles all year long.

[36] Great Romanian stage actor and playwright (1814-96), also the author of the libretto of the first Romanian operetta – *Baba Hârca* by Alexandru Flechtenmacher.

[37] Nae Leonard (1886-1928) – Romanian tenor called “The Prince of Operetta,” the son of Constantin Nae, a train engine mechanic from Galați, and of Carolina Schäffer, his foreman’s wife.

[38] Made by the “București” Cinema Studio and distributed by Româniafilm.

[39] He pretends to be Ovidiu Manolescu, a pickpocket, so that he might be impressed on the barge (that is, to be enrolled in the navy without his consent, which could be done to convicted felons, and even to other categories of men, both in Romania and in other countries. See Herman Melville’s and Benjamin Britten’s *Billy Budd*).

[40] Married to Liviu Ciulei.

[41] Extant in texts by Pliny the Elder, St. Augustine, and Leonardo da Vinci, the folk European tradition of the salamander presents it as born from the flames and invulnerable to fire. Occultists considered it to be the elemental spirit of fire.

[42] “Dumnezeu cu mila!” “Nu-mi place mila lui Dumnezeu!”

[43] “Ce frumoasă este viața / Când te-apucă dimineața, / Dimineața la șosea / Cu nevasta altuia.”

[44] At Casa de Filme Unu and distributed by Româniafilm.

[45] The day on which Romania changed sides in World War II – it ceased its alliance with Germany and joined the Allies (United Nations).

[46] A very well-known Romanian writer.

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