

Liliana Iacobescu – Tara Bârsei Review – 2010/01 - - <http://tara-barsei.ro>

Masters of Music Pedagogy in Brasov – MIRA POPESCU

Summary: Mira Popescu was born on April 3, 1928, in Russia. She studied in Sverdlovsk. Her marriage with Pompiliu Popescu, whom she met in Russia, took her to Braşov, where she settled in 1955, as a piano teacher, at the Popular School of Art and then at the Music Lyzeum.

She had exceptional qualities: science, patience, love for children, altruism. She had very distinguished students, such as Radu Lupu and Cristian Mandeal, and she often presented her students in competitions, where they won important prizes.

She “left” on May 1, 2005 (Easter night), leaving a wonderful memory.

Before dealing with a prominent personality of Braşov piano pedagogy, we believe that it would be appropriate to mention those who, over time, have contributed to the realization of this edifice. We have an important document related to this issue, namely, a letter from the musicologist Gemma Zinveliu, addressed to the pianist and teacher Ioana Minei, from the Bucharest Conservatory, who had requested information about education in Braşov. We reproduce the letter in its entirety, dated 27 Nov. 1979:

“I am sending these lines late, because the archive of the most important musical education institution in Braşov, from the first half of the 20th

century (Astra Conservatory), cannot be researched, the only usable sources being the press and a few brochures published over the years.

Based on them, I was able to establish the following:

1. Piano pedagogy has a solid foundation in Braşov, established in the 19th century, when outstanding pianists and organists from abroad settled in Braşov, founding private music schools and carrying out intense pedagogical activity (Henri Mauss, I. Humpel, etc).
2. During the 20th century, the Astra Conservatory, founded in 1928, was at the forefront by bringing together the most valuable local performers and teachers, regardless of nationality.

The Conservatory's curriculum provided for teaching, within the instrumental section, piano, violin and cello. The duration of studies was 7 years, including a one-year preparatory course, a 3-year lower course and a 3-year higher course. In the case of very talented elements, the duration of studies could be extended with a period of specialization.

When the Conservatory was founded, the piano department was made up of the following teachers: Elena Dima - niece of the composer Gheorghe Dima, a graduate of the Cluj Conservatory, in the class of Prof. Ana Voileanu; Imanuel Bernfeld - graduated from the "Schola Cantorum" in Paris (former student of the Bucharest Conservatory); Wlateral Schlandt - graduate of the Leipzig Conservatory, class of prof. Robert Teichmüller; Veturia Mureşianu - graduate of the Bucharest Conservatory (she was the daughter of the military doctor Iuliu Mureşianu, cousin of the composer Iacob Mureşianu).

3. In the fifth decade, the following teachers were also included in the piano department of the Astra Conservatory: Ilona Weissz – graduate of the Budapest Conservatory, class of prof. Dohnany; Lia Busuioceanu – graduate of the Bucharest Conservatory, class of prof. Snegiu; Marga Alexandrescu – graduate of the Cluj Conservatory, class of prof. Ecaterina Fotino-Negru (she had only a few piano lessons, the rest were accordion lessons); Sidonia Ellenbogen – graduate of the Cernăuți Conservatory, class of prof. Paul Jelescu.

Among the graduates, there were also pianists of international reputation, such as Radu Lupu and Theodor Paraschivescu.

4. A special merit goes to the Conservatory teachers for the fact that, in addition to the productions organized together with the students, they carried out a rich concert activity. Concerts were performed with orchestral accompaniment (Ilona Weissz), with piano accompaniment (Elena Dima), recitals on two pianos (Bernfeld and Schlandt) and festivals, preceded by conferences (Festival Beethoven, C. Franck, Chopin, Debussy).

5. In parallel with the activity carried out within the Conservatory, the following gave private piano lessons: Rudolf Lassel – studies at the Leipzig Conservatory, Paul Richter – graduate of the Leipzig Conservatory, class of prof. Karl Reinecke and Cocius; Victor Bickerich – graduate of the Berlin Conservatory; Klara Strome – graduate of the Budapest Conservatory, class of prof. P. Kadossa; Gabriela Dima – daughter of the composer Gheorghe Dima, graduate of the Cluj Conservatory, class of prof. Ana Voileanu; Emil Honigberger, graduate of the Berlin Conservatory, prof. Paul Gustav; Margrit Hübner, Emma Faflik, Miți Szarvas.

That's about all I could gather. If you want more information on a problem, please send it to me and I will try to find more material.

With all my love,

Gemma”

As can be seen, the piano education in Braşov had a solid foundation, on which a valuable construction could be built. A significant contribution to the development of this field was made by Professor **Mira Popescu** who was born on April 3, 1928, in Cropotkin, a town in the Ural Mountains - Russia. Her family name was Voznesenski, which means "Ascension", a significant word for her entire life. Her father was a university professor of Latin and ancient Greek, and her mother, a high school teacher, taught German.

Between 1944 and 1947, Mira attended the Sverdlovsk Music School and then attended the Conservatory - the piano department - in Sverdlovsk, between 1947 and 1953. A year before graduation, she was hired as a piano teacher at the Music School in the same city (1952-1955). In the meantime, she met Pompiliu Popescu, who was a student at the Polytechnic (1950-1955) in Sverdlovsk. They married on June 23, 1955, in Braşov, from that moment she settled here permanently.

At first, she was a piano teacher at the Popular School of Art (1956-1962), and then she was hired, also as a piano teacher, at the Music Lyzeum in Braşov, where she was then appointed head of the piano department until her retirement.

As a piano teacher, she demonstrated exceptional qualities, a rare mastery, intertwined with an extraordinary patience, knowledge and boundless dedication; she managed to win the affection and respect of the young people she guided, as well as of her fellow musicians, as evidenced by the gratitude shown by them, even after decades.

Among Mira Popescu's most distinguished students is the world-class pianist Radu Lupu, who has fond memories of her. Whenever he was in Braşov, he visited her and invited her to his concerts and recitals, in Braşov, but also in Bucharest.

Another special student was Cristian Mandeal, who began his career as a pianist, and eventually became one of Romania's most valuable conductors. He too remembers his teacher with respect.

Among Mira's other students are: Dana Nigrim, Vlad Dimulescu, Ana and Ioan-Andrei Szilagyi, Paul Cristian, Steffen Schlandt, Rodica Greavu, Dorina Popescu, Mirela Franz, Rosaura Borgovan.

These students and many others were carefully prepared for school auditions and exams, but also for various competitions, such as the Suceava "Ciprian Porumbescu" Contest, "Cântarea României", regional and national olympiads, festivals, Radio and TV shows, etc.

Many times, these students, prepared with so much love and meticulousness, returned with prizes, to the honor of their teacher and the school they belonged to.

Another aspect, which deserves all our respect and admiration, is Mira Popescu's assistance in the advanced interpretation courses in Cluj and Bucharest.

In Cluj, she attended the courses of maestro Harald Enghiurliu and the courses held by teachers Ana Pitiş and Ioana Minei, at the Bucharest Conservatory.

Especially Dana Nigrim and Vlad Dimulescu were the students who benefited from this specialization. The notebooks in which Mira conscientiously noted all the instructions received are preserved.

In 1982, the Musical Publishing House in Bucharest published the Treatise on Piano Art, written by Ana Pitiş and Ioana Minei, a work that brings many valuable clarifications to the art of piano performance after which the two Masters were invited to several cities in the country to explain the conclusions they had reached. Mira Popescu was very interested in these things from the very beginning and over time, the relationship with these "Ladies Teachers" turned into a beautiful friendship, Mira constantly traveling to Bucharest with her students and the invaluable advice received was applied in her teaching.

Not only did people love her, but also God, who took her to Himself on the night of Resurrection, on May 1, 2005, spiritually prepared (confessed and communed), leaving everything in order behind, to ease the burden of those left behind. Those who stood by her in her last moments were very impressed by the precision with which she announced her departure. Her passage into the spiritual world was truly an "Ascension", which made us think of her name before marriage...

