

## Genres of Non-academic Musical Theater in Romania: Pages of History

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of the paper is to analyze the premises of the appearance of the musical on the Romanian scene, as well as to bring to light the first attempts to create the national musical. The origin of the theatrical-musical genres of entertainment is, like all other forms of theatre, in the period of syncretism of the arts, being found in performances of the genres of comic opera, operetta, revue theatre, etc. The first examples of Romanian musicals appeared in the 1970s. In a wide variety of examples from world drama, literary bases of authors are used: O.Wilde with the play Salome, L. de Vega with the play The Gardener's Dog, G. B. Shaw with Pygmalion, W. Shakespeare with Romeo and Juliet and A Midsummer Night's Dream, R.B. Sheridan with Rivalries and so on. The Romanian literature is represented by Chirițele, Piatra din casa, Sânziana and Pepelea, after plays by V.Alecsandri, O noapte furtunoasă, O soacră by I. L. Caragiale, Trei crai de la Răsărit, by B.P.Haşdeu, Titanic Vals, Fulgi de nea by T. Muşatescu and others.*

*American musicals are presented on Romanian stages in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with examples such as The Phantom of the Opera by A.L.Webber, Cabaret by R. Burns, Chicago by John Kander, West Side Story by L. Bernstein, etc. As far as local composers are concerned, we can say that an entire plethora is formed that contributes to the development of the musical genre: Edmond Deda, Henry Mălineanu, Gherase Dendrino, Mihail Sebastian, Temistocle Popa, Nicu Alifantis, Răzvan Alexandru Diaconu, Dan Ștefăniță, Endre Sarosy, Sorin Chifiriuc, Liviu Cavassi, Ada Milea, Anca Hanu, Roman Vlad, Camelia Dăscălescu, Marius Țeicu, Dumitru Lupu, etc.*

**Keywords:** *non-academic musical theatre; vaudeville; comic opera; operetta; musical;*

### Introduction:

The musical is a non-academic musical theatre genre that combines literature, theatre, music, dance, set, and light design, creating a show for audiences of all ages. According to the British encyclopedia, "a musical, also called a musical comedy, is a theatrical production of a sentimental and amusing nature, with a simple but distinctive subject, featuring music, dance, and dialogue"<sup>2</sup>.

According to the aforementioned source, "the beginnings of the musical can be traced to several 19<sup>th</sup>-century forms of entertainment, including music hall, comic opera, burlesque, vaudeville, variety show, pantomime, and the minstrel show. These early entertainments blended the traditions of French ballet, acrobatics, and dramatic interludes"<sup>3</sup>.

A similar situation occurred in Romania, where the forerunners of the musical can be considered different genres of musical theatre: vaudeville, comic opera, and operetta. Librettists: Vasile Alecsandri (1792-1854), Costache Negruzzi (1808-1868), Matei Millo (1814-1896), Eugeniu Carada (1836-1910), and composers Alexandru Flechtenmacher (1823-

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<sup>2</sup> *Musical*. Retrieved May 21, 2023, from <https://www.britannica.com/art/musical>.

<sup>3</sup> *Musical*. Retrieved May 21, 2023, from <https://www.britannica.com/art/musical>.

1898), Eduard Wachmann (1836-1908), Eduard Caudella (1841-1924) and Iacob Mureșianu (1857-1917), contributed to the development of the musical theatre genre, paving the way for the emergence of the first examples of the so-called *musical* genre.

Artistic life in Romania was linked to theatrical performances: elements of lyrical and dramatic theatre. These elements coexisted in the fully established genre of vaudeville from 1830. One of the first performances of the genre was by *the Romanian Vaudeville Theatre*, founded in 1866 in Bucharest by the Romanian actor and playwright Iorgu Caragiale (1826-1894).

### 1. The leading representatives of Romanian vaudeville:

A vast creation, comprising about 50 vaudeville and musical comedy couplets, belongs to the composer E. Wachman, son of Johann Andreas Wachmann (1807-1863), a well-known creator of vaudeville and operetta. Here are some of his works: the vaudeville *Păunașul codrilor* (1857), *Prăpăstiile Bucureștiului* (1858), *Spoielile Bucureștilor* (1863), etc., which have been performed over the years in the operetta theatres of Bucharest and Iași.

In enriching the national repertoire with valuable creations, most of them with a historical substratum belonged to the composer E. Caudella, the vaudeville *Harță-Răzeșul* (1872), was written on the text of V. Alecsandri.

An impressive list of creations based on the texts of well-known writers of the time belongs to the composer A. Flechtenmacher. Thus, in 1848, based on the text of C. Negruzzi's vaudeville *Doi țărani și cinci cărlani* (1848) was composed. Inspired by the works of V. Alecsandri, he composed the vaudeville *Iorgu de la Sadagura* (1844), *Iașii în carnaval* (1845), *Piatra din casa* (1847), *O nuntă peasantnească în Moldova* (1848), *Scara mâței* (1850), *Cinel-cinel* (1857), *Banii, gloria și amorul* (1861), *Millo director* (1865). The creation of *Razvan and Vidra* (1867) is a historical drama based on the text by B. P. Hașdeu. The composer is the author of the music for the plays *Provincialul Vadră* (1846), on the text of Alecu Russo (1819-1959) and a series of *Chirițelor* on the text of V. Alecsandri: *Coana Chirița in Iași or Două fete și-o neneacă*, *Întoarcerea Coanei Chirița* and *Coana Chirița în provincie*, all made in 1850.

The revaluation of the Romanian musical theatre at the level of European culture is built with the help of the genre known as a true amalgam of elements of vaudeville with those of comic opera, through the connection made by its correspondents: the French comic opera, the Italian opera buffa, the German singspiel or the Spanish zarzuela. The musicologist Octavian Lazăr Cosma (b.1933) highlights the differences between vaudeville and operetta: "In the operetta of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, music is no longer a mere carrier of the couplet texts, as in Flechtenmacher's or Wachmann's vaudeville, but, through greater consistency, it makes an important contribution to deepening and intensifying the dramatic effect of the libretto"<sup>4</sup>.

### 2. Establishment of the operetta genre in Romania

A landmark moment in the history of musical theatre in Romania is the staging of the first Romanian operetta *Baba Hârca* (1848), by A. Flechtenmacher. The operetta contains two acts and three tableaux, based on a text by M. Millo, which marks the historical beginning of Romanian musical literature. In this performance M. Millo personified Baba

<sup>4</sup> Octavian Lazăr Cosma. 1962. *Opera românească. Privire istorică asupra creației lirico-dramatice*, vol. 1. București: Editura Muzicală, p.262.

Hârca, playing the first Romanian transvestite role. The costume from that performance is preserved at the *Mihai Eminescu* Museum in Iași. Its premiere took place on 26 December 1848 at the *National Theatre* in Iași. Two years later, the operetta was also performed in Bucharest. This creation is considered the most important musical-theatrical work of the composer. This was followed by the operetta *Rotarul* (1886), based on a text by Mihail Pascal (1830-1882), a Romanian actor, director, theatre director, playwright, and publicist.

In his book *Opereta și lunga ei poveste*, the musicologist and composer George Sbârcea (1914-2005) tells us: "Being conceived, as the chroniclers of the newspapers of the time remarked, "in the national form and with a national purpose", they brought to light an exceptional artistic physiognomy and at the same time, the tenacious intention to educate and prepare the public for the understanding of a musical theatre of a higher order. Even if the discerning ear of today's audience no longer like them, these vaudeville and "operetta" were not hybrid appearances, but, on the contrary, the starting point of an indigenous musical theatre"<sup>5</sup>.

From the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, vaudeville lost ground to operetta, making its mark both in terms of quantity and quality through the musical numbers that support the action. It is also during this period that the crystallization of the operetta genre was marked by the contribution of the two schools: the French, through the eminent contribution of Jacques Offenbach (1819-1880), and the Viennese, masterly represented by Johann Strauss Jr. (1825-1899).

According to the Online Dictionary of Operetta "The genre of Romanian operetta tends to leave its traditional patterns, seeking less conventional forms of expression, more modern in writing, closer to the sensibility of contemporary audiences. In line with the general innovations in musical language and dramaturgy, through the emergence and sometimes under the influence of new forms of pop performance, the revue theatre, film, and television are distinguished by a relatively rich creation at the beginning of Romanian musical theatre. This new genre consistently asserted an educational purpose and a strong national character."<sup>6</sup>

The path traced by A. Flechtenmacher's *Baba Hârca* is continued by Ciprian Porumbescu (1853-1883), his operetta *Crai Nou* being representative of this genre. The chroniclers at the time stated that the young maestro's score was "taken from the soul of the people"<sup>7</sup>, the musical value is enhanced by the inspiration of Romanian folk genres: doina, hora, old songs, country dances, and lute romances.

In his volume, *Hronicul muzicii românești*, music historian O. L. Cosma remarks: "It is only in 1882, with the appearance of *Crai nou*, that we can record a qualitative leap in operetta, only then the features of the genre, based on the creation of Offenbach and J. Strauss, are fully identified in a Romanian operetta. From this moment on, we can speak of national operetta in the classical sense of the notion, meeting the dramaturgical-musical requirements of the genre. Until then, operetta had been a theatrical-musical form that justified its determination not so much by its compositional virtuosity as by its title. In this way, we are dealing with a preparatory stage with works that could be classified today as semi-opera or improper operetta"<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> George Sbârcea. 1979. *Opereta și lunga ei poveste*. București: Editura Muzicală. p. 262.

<sup>6</sup> *Operetă sinonim | definiție*. Online Dex. Retrieved May, 24, 2023, from <https://www.dex.md/definitie/operet%C4%83>

<sup>7</sup> George Sbârcea. 1979. *Opereta și lunga ei poveste*. București: Editura Muzicală. p. 269.

<sup>8</sup> Octavian Lazăr Cosma. 1973. *Hronicul Muzicii Romanesti*, vol. 1. București: Editura Muzicală, p. 61.

A distinctive element of this creation is the introduction of the choral ensemble, which has led to the personalization of many of the lively musical numbers. Perceiving images from nature, the Viennese style of operetta blends seamlessly with popular melody. This was also due to the sound qualities of the famous *Cor Mitropolitan*, conducted by Gavriil Musicesu (1847-1903).

The composer E. Caudella also contributed to the affirmation of the Romanian operetta genre. In 1880, his first Romanian comic opera *Olteanca* was staged in Iasi. In the same year, the comic opera *Urechile bărbatului în dar de nuntă*, composed by E. Caudella and Gustav Otremba (1833-1891), on a libretto by Gheorghe Bengescu-Dabija (1844-1916), was also staged and enjoyed great success. In his creation *Olteanca*, E. Caudella uses equal-voice choruses *Corul fetelor la tors* in the first act, and the *Marșul oștenilor* in the second act. This was followed by the operetta *Fata răzeșului* (1881), the opera buffa *Hatmanul Baltag* (1882), on a libretto by C. Negruzzi and I. L. Caragiale, the operetta *Beizadea Epaminonda* (1883), on a libretto by C. Negruzzi.

George Ștephănescu (1843-1925) is another example of the operetta genre, of his creations we can name: *Cometa*, *Mama soacră*, *Scaitul bărbaților* on the text of T. Speranța. G.Ștephănescu is the one who founded the *Romanian Opera Company* in 1885.

Constantin Dimitrescu (1847-1928) also played an important role with his creations: *Sergeantul Cartuș* (1895), a two-act operetta, on a libretto by I. Apostolescu (1876-1918), and the comic opera *Nini* (1897), on a text by D. Ionescu-Zane, as well as *Sânziana și Pepelea* (1899) – a five-act extravaganza on a libretto by V. Alecsandri. Their creations mark the undeniable progress of the Romanian operetta genre.

### 3. The Romanian musical theater of non-academic orientation from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

The development of non-academic musical theatre genres in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was stimulated by the development of the theatre movement, and the emergence of new theatre companies, artists, singers, directors, and theatre directors. In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, theatre groups performing musical theatre and operetta evolved on many stages of the famous *Union*, *Oteteleşanu*, and *Rașca* terraces in Bucharest. At *Grădina Union* performed the *I. D. Ionescu*, the famous author, and performer, who distinguished himself by performing the famous couplet *Piciorușul Aglăiței*. This complex artist contributed to the evolution of Romanian musical theatre. Many established actors, significant names of the Romanian theatre supported the representatives followed by tours around the country.

Operetta and vaudeville began to be supported by artists. The tenor Constantin Grigoriu (1866-1918) founded the most representative operetta company in the country, the *Romanian Opera Company*, which was founded in 1904, he is considered the founder of Romanian operetta. Together with his troupe, he presented performances on the famous terrace in *Oteteleşanu* Park, in the center of Bucharest, which became, at the end of the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a meeting place for many writers, visual artists, and actors. This troupe presented almost the entire operetta repertoire, making artists such as sopranos Florica Cristoforeanu (1886-1960) and Mara d'Asti (1871-1950), mezzo-soprano Florica Florescu (1887-1960), tenor Ion Băjenaru (1863-1921), George Niculescu-Basu (1882-1964) and others.

Another famous name in musical theatre is Nae Leonard (1886-1928), who made a name for himself with his exceptional vocal qualities, nicknamed *the prince of operetta*, he made his debut on stage, joining the *Nicu Poenaru Comedy and Operetta Company*. In 1904

he joined a provincial troupe, *Alexandru Marinescu's artistic troupe*, with which he toured the country several times. Later he was also invited to play in C. Grigoriu's *Opera Company*, performing the main roles in Offenbach's *Pericola*, F. Lehár's *Count of Luxembourg*, and E. Audran's *Mascota*. However, he made a name for himself playing the role of Daniello in the famous operetta *The Merry Widow* (1906) by Franz Lehár (1870-1948). After finishing his studies in Paris (1909) N. Leonard continued his career in the country and abroad. His operatic repertoire includes operettas: *Povestirile lui Hoffman*, *Contesa Marița*, *Sylvia* and *Baiadera*.

The theatre person Constantin Tănase (1880-1945), stage and vaudeville actor, founded the *Cărăbuș* revue theatre (1919) in Bucharest, combining genuine features of revue and cabaret theatre over the next 20 years. It is worth mentioning that, in parallel with C. Tănase and his fabulous *Cărăbuș*, during the 1930s and 1940s he also successfully evolved in the revue and operetta troupe of the *Alhambra* Theatre, in a faithful competition and a beneficial complement for the development of this genre. The *Alhambra* Revival Theatre was founded in the autumn of 1930 and was active during the interwar period in Bucharest. The name of Ion Dacian (1911-1981), one of the greatest artists of Romanian operetta, is closely linked to the history of Romanian operetta. A remarkable quote related to this name belongs to Margareta Zirra (1930-2022), art critic, publicist, and ballet dancer of the operetta theatre:

"The splendor of modern operetta was born with Ion Dacian and died with him. ... His unique voice lives on in our spiritual space"<sup>9</sup>.

At the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, between 1946 and 1950, the history of Romanian operetta marked a new stage. The subunit of *the Army Theatre* moves to a new building, establishing *the State Operetta Theatre* (1950). It opened its season with the premiere of *The Wind of Freedom* by the Soviet composer and conductor Isaak Dunaevski (1900-1955), a composer who worked in the 1940s and composed music for operetta and comedies.

I. Dacian, as the first soloist of the theatre, appears in a series of operas, which were a great success: *Liliacul* and *Sânge Vienez* by J. Strauss Jr., *Lăsați-mă să cânt* by G. Dendrino, *Lysistrata* by German composer Carl Emil Paul Lincke (1866-1946), *Vânzătorul de Păsări* by Austrian composer Carl Zeller (1842-1898), *Văduva Veselă* and *Paganini* by F. Lehár, *My Fair Lady* by Frederick Loewe (1901-1988), *Secretul lui Marco Polo* by Francis López (1916-1995), *Anton Pann* by Alfred Mendelsohn (1910-1966) and others.

Between 1942 and 1947, I. Dacian was the deputy director of the *Alhambra* Revival Theatre. Throughout his career he played 57 roles in over 5000 performances and took part in concerts with famous orchestras, becoming a famous artist. In 1949, the *Savoie* State Revue Theatre was founded, which in 1952 was annexed by the *Army Street Theatre*, forming the *Ensemble de Estrade*. Since 1956, this reunion of two institutions will be called the *Constantin Tănase Satirical-Musical Theatre*.

#### **4. The Romanian musical theater of non-academic orientation from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century**

After 1950, composers: Gherase Dendrino (1901-1973), Filaret Barbu (1903-1984), Nicolae Kirculescu (1903-1985), Elly Roman (1905-1996), Alfred Mendelsohn (1910-1966), Viorel Doboș (1917-1985), Henry Mălineanu (1920-2000), Florin Comișel (1922-1977), George Grigoriu (1927-1999) made a remarkable contribution to the development of

<sup>9</sup> Daniela Caraman Fotea. 2006, December 8. „Ion Dacian, O glorie a operetei românești”. Retrieved May 13, 2023, from <http://www.cimec.ro/Muzica/Cronici/DCFotea45.htm>.

Romanian operetta. Here are some titles from the works of these Romanian composers: *Lăsați-mă să cant* (1954), in two acts, is an operetta by the composer G. Dendrino on a libretto by Erastia Sever (1914 - the year of death unknown), Liliana Delescu (1932-2002) and V. Cosma. It premiered at the *Operetta Theatre* in Bucharest on 30 October 1954. On June 29, 1972, on the occasion of the establishment of the operetta section within the *Oltenia Philharmonic*, the operetta by G. Dendrino was staged under the musical direction of Teodor Costin (1923-2010), the soloists were: tenor Filimon Siminic (1942-2014), Valentina Mănescu (b.1972); the choir was conducted by the conductor and composer Alexandru Racu (1937-2017).

Another work by the same composer is a two-act operetta *Lysistrata*, a libretto by Nicușor Constantinescu (unknown source regarding his years of life) and George Voinescu (1918-1999). It premiered at the *State Operetta Theatre* in Bucharest on 31 December 1960.

Another representative composer of the Romanian operetta genre is F. Barbu with his debut work, the vaudeville *Privighetoarea albă* (1924). The composer wrote 16 musical-theatrical works, which are appreciated among the 20<sup>th</sup>-century operetta creators. The operas were a real success: *Armonii bănățene* (1935), *Florentina* (1940), *Izbânda vieții* (1947), *Ana Lugojana* (1950), *Culegătorii de stele* (1954), *Soarele Londrei* (1972), *Leonard* (1972), *Răspântia* (1974), *Leonard* (1976), *Adâncile iubiri* (1977), *Urmașii Meșterului Manole* (1980), *Fata moșului cea harnică* (1982) and others.

Composer F. Comișel wrote the operas *Izbânda vieții* (1947), *Culegătorii de stele* (1954), *Soarele Londrei* (1970), *Răspântia* (1974) and *Adâncurile iubirii* (1977).

The composer N. Kirculescu wrote the musical comedies *Suflet candriu de papugiu* (1940), *Un băiat iubea o fată* (1941), *Atlantida* (1942), *Contele de Monte-Cristo* (1942), *Dragoste cu cântec* (1944), *Primăvara, bate-o vina* (1945), *Sfinxul din Hollywood* (1945), the comedy *Îngerul albastru*, (1946) etc. Later his operetta *N-a fost nuntă mai belle* (1950) on the libretto of H. Nicolaide and Harry Negrin (1896-1964) appeared. It premiered on 7 February 1951 in Bucharest. The set design was by George Teodorescu (1919-1999), the musical direction was by the conductor and founder of Romanian opera Egizio Massini (1894-1966), and the choreography by the master choreographer Elena Penescu-Liciu (1910-1996).

The operetta *Întâlnire cu dragostea* (1962), was conceived on the libretto of the poet, composer and director Bogdan Căuș (1920-2000) and composer N. Kirculescu. The author also wrote the radio operetta *Aventurile Baronului Münchhausen* (1955).

Another composer who contributed to the development of the genre is E. Roman. As the founder of the *Elly Roman Jazz Orchestra*, he worked in the *Cărăbuș*, *Alhambra*, and *Atlantic* revue theatres as a conductor. In addition to pieces for symphonic ensembles, he has composed music for revue performances as well as operettas: *Barbara* (1946), *Rapsodia țiganilor* (1948), *Prichindel și Mărunțica* (1955), *Colomba* (1956), *Fetele din Murfatlar* (1960), *Sfârșitul pământului* (1968), *Violete de Parma* (1980). It is worth mentioning that E. Roman was among the first Romanian composers to include mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Western pop music (e. g. twist) in his scores.

V. Doboș, Romanian composer and conductor, is the author of numerous creations: *Palos Voinicul* (1948), *Cântecul munților* (1949), *Târșița și Roșiorul*, both created in the same year (1950), the creation *Copita de argint* (1952), *Scufița Roșie* (1953), *Nimfa litoralului (Nausica)*, (1967), *Ultimul secret* (1985).

G. Grigoriu dedicated himself to composing light music and film music. His record includes music for operettas: *Se mărită fetele* (1973), and *Valurile Dunării*, the latter being sung on the great stages of the world by soprano Angela Gheorghiu (b. 1965).

H. Mălineanu is a composer of light music, romances, operettas, musical comedies, film music, and Jewish theatre music from Romania.

We mention in parenthesis an impressive list of revue performances: *Primavara in do major* and *Barașeum '42* (1942), performed on the stage of the *Barașeum* Theatre, *Dai un ban dar face*, performed on the stage of the *Barașeum* Theatre (1943). A series of musical-theatrical creations loved by the public are brought together by the image of Gioconda: *Gioconda Place* (1942), performed on the stage of the *Gioconda* Theatre, *Răpirea Giocondei* (1945), (teatrul *Gioconda*), *Aliații Giocondei*, *Gioconda la Savoy* (1946), *Gioconda pe puncte* (1947). In 1948 he wrote *Doi băieți și două fete*, a performance at the *Boema* Theatre. This was followed by *Estrada primavera* (1950), *Între noi femeile* (1950), a show performed at the *Teatrul de Revistă*, *Concert în hazliu* (1960), *Expoziție de muzica ușoară* (1963), *Revelion în iulie* (1968), in collaboration with the founder of the *Fantasio* revue theatre Aurel Manolache (1931-2010), a show performed at *Fantasio* in Constanța and so on.

Trying to analyze the specifics of the Romanian musical, in her book *Actorul de musical sau tripla amenințare*, Dana Rotaru refers to certain specific features: "Romanian musicals are either original creations or they use Romanian plays or fairy tales/literary works which thus become original creations. When we speak of original creations we mean all projects designed to be staged as musicals"<sup>10</sup>. These features mentioned in the above quote are found in musicals derived from plays.

Romanian theatre director Sanda Manu (b.1933) staged the musical *Au fost odată două orfeline* in 1966. The production team included the Romanian writer and actor, author of scripts, lyrics, and dramatic adaptations Eugen Mirea (1894-1973), composer H. Mălineanu, set designer Liviu Popa (1921-1977), and conductor Jean Ionescu (1928-1996). The performance was presented on the stage of the *I. Nottara theatre* in the 1965-1966 season.

In 1970 the musical *Alcor si Mona* was staged after the play *The star without a name*, by the playwright and literary critic Mihail Sebastian (1907-1945), the libretto belongs to S. Manu and Flavia Buref (1937-2016), set designer, poet, lyricist of light music, musical theatre and film. The music in *Alcor si Mona* belongs to Camelia Dăscălescu (1921-2016), composer of musicals, films, and light music. The show was performed at the *Comedy Theatre* in Bucharest.

The musical *Bună seara domnule Wilde*, directed by Alexandru Bocăneț (1944-1997) is a complex performance, inspired by the universal drama of the original play *Ce înseamnă să fii onest*, by Oscar Wilde (1854-1900), premiered on 28 November 1971 at the *Notarra* Theatre in Bucharest. Choreography by Cornel Patrichi (1944-2016), sets by set designer Sică Rusescu (1945-2004), and costumes by L. Radian, this show was the most performed in the history of the genre. This trend, which values the Romanian play, was continued by the show *Lady X*, which appeared in 1974, by author Middleton, crowned with the activity of the couple of creators E. I. Mirea and H. Mălineanu, who contributed to the birth of Romanian musical. These authors have enriched by their artistic contribution, by the value of their works, which have had positive echoes even outside the borders of the country.

At the beginning of the 1980s, the musical *Fratele meu Charles* (1982), by composer Edmond Deda (1920-2006) and librettist Alecu Popovici (1927-1997), was inspired by Richard Brinsley Sheridan's (1751-1816) comedy, *Școala bărfelilor*. Directed by Alexandru Darian (1928-1996), it stars the well-known Romanian light music singer Angela Similea (b. 1946). The show was performed at the *Alexandru Davila* Theatre in Pitesti.

On February 7, on the stage of the *Notarra* Theatre in Bucharest, there was the premiere of another local musical *Misterele Londrei* (1995), after the famous play *Pygmalion*

<sup>10</sup> Dana Rotaru. 2017. *Actorul de musical sau tripla amenințare*. București: UNATC Press, p. 54.

by B. Show, the creators being the composer Dan Ștefănică (1944-2010), the lyricist Eugen Rotaru (1941-2018) and the director Dominic Dembinski (b. 1957), the scenography belongs to Sică Rusescu (1945-2004), the costumes to Viorica Hussar, the scenic movement to Liliana Iorgulescu (b. 1961). The main roles were played by Ilinca Goia (b. 1969) and Ion Dichiseanu (1933-2021).

Therefore, we can say that in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the repertoire of musical theatres was enriched with the first examples of national music.

The beginning of a new century and a new millennium marked the next phase in the evolution of the musical genre on the Romanian stage. Thus, at the *Ion Dacian* National Operetta and Musical Theatre in Bucharest, the show *Ce înseamnă să fii Bonbury* (2007) was staged, directed by Vlad Massaci (b. 1968), and choreographed by Florin Fieroiu (unknown source regarding his years of life). The musicologist George Sbârcea (1914-2005), notes the following reference: "through music, Henry Malineanu succeeded not only in rendering an atmosphere of London authenticity but, through the picturesqueness of his evocation, he also provided a particularly suggestive rhythm to the action, the presentation and the caricature interpretation of the characters ... A magical musical theatre adventure – this is what Eugen Mirea and Henri Mălineanu have achieved with *Bună seara, domnule Wilde!*... "<sup>11</sup>.

*Vânătoarea de balene* (2007), a musical set to the music of R. A. Diaconu (who had the double role of composer and actor), with lyrics by V. Valgard. The production team was mostly made up of students. The main role was played by soprano Marta Sandu (b. 1990), who also provided vocal training for the students. The cast included: M. Sandu – *Jeune femme*, S. Tarța – *Femme en deuil*, A. Unguru – *Homme 1*, R. A. Diaconu – *Homme 2* and C. Ulici – *Joueur de billiard* etc.

Inspired by the tragedy of O. Wilde, the poet and playwright, the composer R. A. Diaconu staged another premiere at the *Masca* Theatre in Bucharest, *Salome* (2012). The musical is based on O. Wilde's controversial drama, but unlike the original play, the performance conceived through the directorial prism of R. A. Diaconu impresses by the complexity of the acting, the music is extremely suggestive and well synchronized with the intense feelings of the characters, which it highlights. Here is the cast of that performance: Sorin Dinculescu (b. 1957) as Herod, Ana-Maria Pâslaru (b.1961) as Herodias, Emilia Manea (b.1989) as Salomeea, Alexandru Nagy (b. 1990) as John the Baptist and Victor Apetrei (b.1983) as Naraboth. The choreography is by Felicia Dalu (b.1962), the set and costumes by Mădăline Cristina Troneci. The actors' vocal training was done by Haricleea Bădescu (b. 1976). The director reveals *Salome's* inner feelings and describes her purity and yet the other side, that of seduction, through music and dance. Diaconu, who puts a lot of passion into the musical, argues that the musical "is the purest and most complete form of spectacular manifestation and contains in its structural material all the arts, with the requirement of real and necessarily convincing standards"<sup>12</sup>.

According to the source hotnews.ro "Salome is a performance about discovering the deepest obsessions inside the human being. Obsessions that are all based on the violation of a superhuman order, an ancestral order, which man, in his sick desire to seek and assume total power over everything he lives, violates, forgetting that, after all, somewhere, everything is already written for him. *Salome*, princess of Judea, daughter of the queen Herodias and

<sup>11</sup> Ileana Perneș Dănălache. 2019, June 29. „Week-end-ul devoratorilor de musical *Bună seara, Domnule Wilde!* ” Retrieved May, 15, 2023, from <https://magnanews.ro/2019/06/week-end-ul-devoratorilor-de-musical-buna-seara-domnule-wilde>.

<sup>12</sup> *Salomeea cu masca și fără masca*. 2012, January, 19. Retrieved October 25, 2022, from <https://a1.ro/timp-liber/evenimente/salomeea-cu-masca-si-fara-masca-id19434.html>.



granddaughter of King Herod, later her stepfather, is torn, in her transformation from girl to woman, between the need for purity and the carnal lust aroused by John the Baptist."<sup>13</sup>

The actor and director of the *Masca* Theatre, Mihai Mălaimare (b. 1950), considers this musical "exceptional", characterizing it as such: "Oscar Wilde's controversial once-banned drama is a story about decadence, sin, sacrifice, love in all its forms and the implacability of destiny. The poignancy, intensity, and euphoria that define the actors' performance will take you on an incredible and heart-wrenching ride through an exceptional musical"<sup>14</sup>.

The musical *Căinele grădinarului*, based on L. de Vega's play, is a musical adaptation by Sorin Chifiriuc (b. 1950), guitarist, performer, and rock music composer. It was originally directed by Șerban Puiu (b. 1971). The show was directed by Florian Pittiș (1943-2007), a comedy director and actor. This show was performed over several seasons at the *Bulandra* Theatre in Bucharest. The cast included: Emilia Popescu (b.1966), Oana Pellea (b.1962), Mihai Gruia Sandu (b. 1956), Răzvan Ionescu (b.1955), F. Pittiș, Manuela Ciucur (b.1963), Marcel Iureș (b. 1951).

In 2015 the musical *Căinele grădinarului* has a new cast of students. Their talent, combined with the expertise of Ș.Puiu and coordinating teachers Ștefan Velniciuc (b.1949) and Ana Doru (b.1954), have produced a show full of life and music. They combined the classics of L. de Vega (1562-1635), with music by S. Chifiriuc and other well-known Slavonic pieces.

## 5. Conclusions:

The study of these materials helped us in clarifying the evolution of the genres of musical theater of non-academic orientation – comic opera, operetta, vaudeville, revue theater from the Romanian space. These creations prepared the appearance of the musical 150 years ago. As a result of this long process of evolution, composers gained experience in composing musical-theatrical creations, and performers, directors, and singers gained experience in performing art specific to the genre. The public in turn has been educated about this kind of performance by listening to and appreciating these creations. This fact led to the attempts that prepared the birth of the musical genre, derived from vaudeville, operetta, operetta, variety show, and revue theatre, at its beginnings in Romania.

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<sup>13</sup> *Premiera cu spectacolul "Salome" la Teatrul Masca*. 2012, January, 10. Retrieved October 25, 2022, from <https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-cultura-11155723-premiera-spectacolul-salome-teatrul-masca.html>.

<sup>14</sup> "Oscar Wilde's controversial once-banned drama is a story about decadence, sin, sacrifice, love in all its forms and the implacability of destiny. The poignancy, intensity, and euphoria that define the actors' performance will take you on an incredible and heart-wrenching ride through an exceptional musical".

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