

# Music criticism in the Iași press (1840–1945). Documentary landmarks and quantitative guidelines

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**Abstract:** This paper analyses Iași music criticism during the period between 1840 and 1945, focusing on the role of the first specialized magazines and the contribution of the first musicologists to the formation of a national cultural identity. I aimed to carry out a predominantly quantitative analysis, followed by some comments regarding quality. The development of Iași music criticism was influenced by the work of central figures, such as Teodor T. Burada and Eduard Caudella, who contributed to the professionalization and structuring of music criticism. At first, the articles had a descriptive character and supported artistic manifestations without rigorous analysis. Later, through the efforts of influential critics, music criticism acquired an educational role, promoting clear aesthetic standards and contributing to the maturing of public taste.

**Keywords:** music criticism, evolution, research.

## 1. Introduction

This article aims to contribute to the foundation of a systematic research on the emergence and evolution of music criticism in Romania, by focusing on the Iași press from 1840 to 1945. While the history of Romanian musicology still remains a developing field, the analysis of primary sources provided by local newspapers and magazines allows for the reconstruction of the initial stages of musical discourse, especially in the context in which Iași was one of the most important centres of culture and education in modern Romania.

The chronological delimitation of the research between 1840 and 1945 is justified, on the one hand, by the appearance of the first printed publications in Moldavia that also included musical reflections (such as „Foaie Sătească”), and on the other hand, by the end of a cultural and political era marked by World War II. The year 1945 marks a significant break in public discourse, with the beginning of the Communist regime, which profoundly and irreversibly changed the tone and cultural themes promoted in the press.

This article does not offer an aesthetic or interpretative analysis of the phenomenon of music criticism, but rather provides a general framework of reference, by inventorying relevant publications, classifying musical content,

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identifying columnists and writers, as well as by presenting related technical and quantitative data. In this sense, the article opens a field of research into which the author will go deeper in her doctoral thesis, called “Iași musical culture in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century”.

The aim is a systematic presentation, grouped thematically and chronologically, with an emphasis on identifying the first forms of musicological discourse, on the emergence of professional signatures, and on the typological diversity of publications.

## 2. Methodology and documentary sources

The analysis presented in this article is based exclusively on primary sources, consisting of newspapers and magazines printed in Iași between 1840 and 1945, accessed in digital form on the *Arcanum* platform. Publications containing explicit or recurring references to music, musical performances, choral activity, artistic education and local concert life were selected.

The selection criteria for the materials included: the existence of musical columns, mentions of the Iași Conservatory of Music, the presence of Romanian composers, columnists or performers in a local context. The publications were then ordered chronologically, analysed thematically and classified according to their type (educational, cultural, polemical, musicological, etc.).

The researched documents were checked for redundancies and overlaps, and the relevant information was manually extracted and indexed in a database that allowed the drafting of a synopsis table and the thematic synthesis presented in the article. All citations are accompanied by the mention of the year, issue and page of the source, according to scientific standards.

No secondary material was used, except for background data on the founding of publications or brief biographies of the personalities involved, for which established academic sources were checked.

## 3. Inventory of the publications analysed here

Table 1 presents the publications analysed from the perspective of the main information regarding the years of publication, the type of publishing house or printing house responsible for the publication, the owner or founder, whether state or private, the place of publication, as well as the alphabet used by the publication.

Nr.	Publication	Years	Publishing House / Printing House	Owner / Founder	Place	Alphabet
1	„Foaie Satească”	1839–1849	Official Printing House of Moldavia	Government of Moldavia	Iași	Cyrillic
2	„Zimbrul”	1851–1877	National Printing House	C. A. Rosetti	Iași	Latin

3	„Gazeta de Moldavia”	1852–1857	Kogălniceanu Print.	Mihail Kogălniceanu	Iași	Cyrillic/Latin
4	„Steaua Dunării”	1855–1859	Printing House of the Albina Institute	Mihail Kogălniceanu	Iași	Latin
5	„Foiletonul Zimbrului”	1855	Zimbrul	The editorial team of Zimbrul	Iași	Latin
6	„Zimbrul” și „Vulturul”	1858	Zimbrul Print.	The united editorial team of Zimbrul and Vulturul	Iași	Latin
7	„Patria”	1858–1859	Unknown	Unknown	Iași	Latin
8	„Tribuna Română”	1860–1867	Unknown	Unknown	Iași	Latin
9	„Familia”	1865–1906	Sonnenfeld Print.	Iosif Vulcan	parțial Iași	Latin
10	„Convorbiri Literare”	1867–1944	Junimea Print.	Titu Maiorescu, Junimea Society	Iași	Latin
11	„Curierul de Iași”	1868–1880	The Printing House of Curierul	Iași Mayor’s Office	Iași	Latin
12	„Curierul Foaia Intereselor Generale”	1870–1890	Curierul Print.	Unknown	Iași	Latin
13	„Fulgerul”	1888–1889	Fulgerul Print.	Unknown	Iași	Latin
14	„Era Nouă”	1889–1900	Era Nouă	Nicolae Gane	Iași	Latin
15	„Ecoul Moldovei”	1890–1903	Ecoul Moldovei Print.	Burada family	Iași	Latin
16	„Evenimentul ”	1893–1944	Evenimentul Print.	Ioan N. Roman	Iași	Latin
17	„Opinia”	1897–1951	Opinia Print.	C. C. Bacalbașa	Iași	Latin
18	„Gazeta Muzicală”	1898–1899	Gazeta Print.	M. Scarlat	Iași	Latin
19	„Teatru Muzică Modă / Moda Parisiană”	1898–1900	Moda Print.	Unknown	Iași	Latin
20	„Curierul Artelor / Gazeta Artelor”	1902–1919	Curierul Artelor Print.	Unknown	Iași	Latin
21	„Carmen Sylva”	1902–1903	Carmen Print.	Artistic societies	Iași	Latin
22	„Muzica”	1908–1910	The Printing House of the Conservatory	Eduard Caudella	Iași	Latin
23	„Scena”	1908–1918	Scena Print.	Unknown	Iași	Latin
24	„Rampa”	1911–1944	Minerva Print.	N. D. Cocca	Bucharest/Iași	Latin
25	„Cultura”	1911–1944	Cultura Print.	Al. Philippide	Iași	Latin
26	„Albina”	1916	Albina Print.	Unknown	Iași	Latin

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27	„Izvoarașul”	1919–1922	Izvoarașul Print.	Unknown	Iași	Latin
28	„Lumea”	1920–1938	Lumea	Gh. Lăzărescu	Iași	Latin
29	„Revista Istorică Română”	1931–1945	The National History Institute	The Romanian Academy	Iași	Latin
30	„Cronica”	1932–1944	Cronica Print.	Grigore T. Popa	Iași	Latin
31	„Revista Fundațiilor Regale”	1934–1947	The Royal Foundations	The Royal Academy	Bucharest/Iași	Latin

Table 1 Publications of Iași with musical content (1840–1945)

### 4. Theme and type analysis

The musical content identified in the Iași press from 1840-1945 can be divided into several theme categories. These reflect local interests related to the musical phenomenon, but also external influences, the reception of European trends and the development of artistic education. Among the most frequently identified themes are symphonic and chamber concerts, vocal and instrumental recitals, choral and religious activity, musical education in schools and at the Iași Conservatory, as well as the presence of musical personalities in the public space through articles, interviews or evocations.

A series of programmatic articles on the role of music in the formation of aesthetic taste is also noteworthy. For example, in the newspaper *Curierul de Iași*, on 21 November 1871, the article *Classical music soirées*, signed Gzt. N., appears, which reflects on the aesthetic and educational function of classical music, and advocates for the cultivation of a refined musical taste. Although it does not seem to be written by an established musicologist, the column presents a theoretical reflection on the value of classical music, chamber genres and the educational role of listening to music regularly, within a group. The text refers to the initiative of the director of the Iași Music School to organize “soirées” for the cultivation of classical music — a pedagogical, artistic and cultural activity that reflects the beginnings of the professionalization and organization of musical life in Iași:

“Music is the art of modern times, and its purpose is much higher than the simple passing of time. It is, for him who learns to appreciate it, a source of spiritual happiness; it elevates and ennobles thought and character, as does an ancient statue or a drama of a great poet.”<sup>1</sup>

In “Curierul” (Th. Balassan) „Foaia intereselor generale” of 1 August 1879, we find the following note about the concert of the students from the Iași Conservatory:

“On 1 July 1879, we attended the production of the students of the Conservatory and were thoroughly satisfied with the progress of this

<sup>1</sup> Gzt. N., “Classical music soirées”, „Curierul de Iași”, Year IV, issue no. 128, 21 November 1871, p. 2

school. [...] From the production of the students of the Conservatory, held on 1 July 1879 at the National Theatre, we formed the conviction that the first musical institute in Moldavia fully fulfils its high calling, although there were times when it had to fight with the greatest difficulties, which endangered its very existence. The Conservatory is composed of 2 piano classes, 1 violin, 1 singing, 1 harmony, 1 principles and solfeggio, 1 declamation, 1 cello and double bass, 1 clarinet, oboe, bassoon and flute and 1 for brass instruments. It would be desirable to give greater scope to the study of music on woodwind and brass instruments.”<sup>2</sup>

The article is a critical reflection on a local musical manifestation, analysing the level of training, institutional difficulties and artistic value. Furthermore, the article provides data on the internal organization of the Conservatory: the existing classes, the subjects taught, the instruments covered. This contributes to the reconstruction of the musical infrastructure in Iași in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – an essential part of the “first steps of musicology”.

From a typological point of view, the analysed publications can be classified into: a) educational publications (e.g. „Foaie Sătească”, „Curierul de Iași”), b) cultural magazines with constant music columns („Opinia”, „Evenimentul”, „Ecoul Moldovei”, „Lumea”), c) publications with a militant or ideological character („Steaua Dunării”, „Zimbrul”, „Gazeta de Moldavia”), d) specialized magazines published in the context of the development of the Conservatory and musical societies („Gazeta Muzicală”, „Muzica”, „Izvoarașul”).

This thematic and functional classification allows for a clearer understanding of how music was perceived, discussed and integrated into Iași’s public discourse, reflecting both local realities and national and European trends of the time.

## 5. Musical personalities and the Iași columnist

The Iași press from 1840-1945 offers a diverse image of those who contributed to the development of local musical life. Numerous composers, conductors, performers, cultural promoters and pedagogues active in Iași were identified in the pages of newspapers and magazines, as well as constant collaborators of the music columns. Among the central figures are Eduard Caudella – opera composer, conductor and founding professor of the Iași Conservatory – and Teodor T. Burada – folklorist, pedagogue and initiator of musical projects which included the establishment of a local music printing house. Also from the musical education environment, we can mention I. Vlăduță

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<sup>2</sup> \*\*\*, “The concerts of Conservatory students and the role of music”, „Curierul. Foaia Intereselor Generale”, Year VII, issue no. 89, 1 August 1879, pp. 2-3.

(conducting), A. Sion (piano), Plesnilă (piano), Brill (choral music), E. Mezzetti (choral and chamber music) and Roșea (flute).

In „Ecoul Moldovei” of 27 June 1897, for example, we find published a response by Eduard Caudella, director of the Conservatory, to a criticism made by a journalist against the orchestra:

“Dear Mr. Manoliu,

My sincere thanks for everything you have accepted to print in your esteemed newspaper against me. I am glad, however, that I was able to have the opportunity to get to know you better and I assure you that I prefer a frank enemy to a false friend.

My only protest is that the Conservatory orchestra is not composed only of teachers, as there are only six of them: Mr. Bursuc being ill, this time only five remained: D. Aureseu, Soceanu and the three Cirillo brothers. The others are all students or former students of the Conservatory. Completely strangers to the school were also D. Gheorghiu (double bass), Hlavsa (viola), Segal (2nd violin) and three military men.”<sup>3</sup>

This highlights the fact that the Iași press was an active platform for debating local musical life, an essential aspect in demonstrating the media's involvement in the formation of a critical musical discourse.

In „Evenimentul” from 22 July 1919, we see an (unsigned) article about Teodor T. Burada:

“15 years ago, Mr. Burada was celebrated by the General Association of Artists of Iași, on the occasion of his 50<sup>th</sup> artistic jubilee. Today, Mr. Burada, who turns 80, is celebrated by the Association of Journalists of Moldavia.

Teodor Burada is represented in all fields. In the legal field, as well as the ethnographic, folklore, archaeological, literary, and artistic ones – in all these directions, his name shines.

He was the first Moldavian student enrolled in the Paris Conservatory of Music, very often performing our folk songs at the soirées of the teachers of this Conservatory. [...]

In the artistic field, Mr. Burada, having received a distinguished musical education, appeared in public in 1854, on the stage of the old theatre in Iași [...]. His charity concerts in the country are countless, and abroad we find him performing in Varna, Chișinău, Belgrade, Bitola, Sofia, Athens, London, Odessa, Constantinople, Brașov, Budapest, Prague, Rome, etc., where he made our ‘doina’ and folk songs known.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> D. (Eduard) Caudella (1897). *Eduard Caudella's letter to the editorial team*, in „Ecoul Moldovei”, Year VI, issue no. 51, 27 June 1897, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> \*\*\* (1919). *The celebration of Teodor T. Burada*, in „Evenimentul”, Year XXVII, issue no. 122, 22 July, p. 1.

The text recognizes and honours Burada's contribution to ethnography, folklore and music – fundamental fields in the establishment of musicology as a science in Romania. The tribute proves that the generalist press from Iași constantly and deeply covered the musical activity and the founding personalities of the field. The article is not just a celebratory account: it reconstructs the musical, artistic and institutional biography of a key figure, contributing to an early form of narrative musicological memory in the public space.

As performers, names such as Jenny Safir, Matilda Vasiliu, Vasile Gheorghiu, Liciu and Miss Darclée appear, as well as other international soloists active in concerts organized by the Conservatory or by local cultural societies. Also, the activity of the „Carmen” Choral Society, under the direction of conductor D. G. Kiriac, had a wide coverage in the press. For example, in the „Curierul de Iassi”, of 20 August 1871, a note dedicated to the recitals given by the French soprano Jeanette Mont d'Or appears:

“We welcome the young artist with great joy in our midst, whose enchanting voice will surely provide the Iași audience with the most pleasant and at the same time most welcome evenings, for years have already passed since our city has last had the happiness of seeing a singer of some value.”<sup>5</sup>

This article thus reflects the interest taken by the Iași press in the local musical life, showing an early form of music review. Although short, the text includes aesthetic appreciations and expresses the public's expectations of rare appearances. This type of discourse is the precursor of the specialized articles in later music magazines.

The authors of the music reviews often remain anonymous, but the language used and the references suggest that many came from among the teaching staff and former students of the Conservatory or local intelligentsia. An increase in the quality and complexity of these reviews is noticeable with the passage of time, especially in publications such as „Evenimentul”, „Opinia”, „Era Nouă”, and „Ecoul Moldovei”.

Thus, in the „Era Nouă” of 21 March 1893, there is a column about a musical soirée in which Eduard Caudella is present as a conductor and performer, alongside other soloists of the era, but also as a composer of the music that is performed:

“The program of this evening was composed of beautiful musical pieces by the greatest composers, and conducted by our well-known and beloved virtuoso Mr. Eduard Caudella; [...] The production was perfect in every way: The *Latina gintă* choir by Mr. Caudella reproduced in music, through angelic voices, the lofty idea of our great poet Alexandri, which makes the hearts of all those who come from the Latin family tremble with joy. [...]

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<sup>5</sup> \*\*\* (1871). *The concert of a primadona soprano* [Jeanetta Mont d'Or], „Curierul de Iași”, Year IV, issue no. 87, 20 August 1871, p. 2.

Beethoven's Trio for piano, violin and cello, performed with surprising certainty, clarity and elegance by Miss Elisa Haret, accompanied by Messrs Caudella and O. Weiss; [...] Duo Concertante by Osborne and Bériot, performed by Miss Olga Sakellary, accompanied by Mr. Caudella, who made the piano produce tones that penetrated the heart.”<sup>6</sup>

The article, signed by D. G. Iamandi, is an extensive and analytical column commenting on musical pieces, performers, styles and aesthetic emotions, which reflects the emergence of a critical musical discourse in the Iași press. The author evaluates clarity, certainty, harmony, expressive interpretation, etc., which shows the existence of criteria for artistic judgment, a significant step towards the professionalization of music reception. The soirée takes place in the New Young Ladies' Secondary School, in an elitist educational context, and is addressed to a “distinguished audience,” which shows the consolidation of a cultivated audience and a space for academic musical performance, important for the history of the reception of classical music in Iași.

## 6. Directions for future research

The research will continue by going deeper into the qualitative analysis of the musical content published in the Iași press, with an emphasis on the language of criticism, aesthetic orientations, international comparisons and the role of music reviews in the formation of artistic taste. A special emphasis will be placed on the recovery and contextualization of signed articles, the identification of French and German influences, as well as highlighting the female presence in the field of interpretation, pedagogy and music journalism.

## 7. Conclusions

The present study has aimed to provide an overview of the presence and evolution of music criticism in the Iași press between 1840 and 1945, through a quantitative and technical approach of the sources identified on the *Arcanum* platform. The inventory of publications, the thematic classification, the analysis of music columns and the identification of relevant columnists allow us to outline a solid documentary framework which reflects not only the history of the local cultural press, but also the first forms of musicological discourse in modern Romania. Subsequent evolution turned music criticism into an essential pillar of Romanian culture, influencing the perception and appreciation of authentic musical values.

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<sup>6</sup> D.G. Iamandi (1893). *Musical soiree at the new Young Ladies' Secondary School*, „Era Nouă”, Year IV, issue no. 181, 21 March 1893, pp. 3-4.

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