

UNIVERSITATEA NAȚIONALĂ DE MUZICĂ DIN BUCUREȘTI  
ȘCOALA DOCTORALĂ

TEZĂ DE DOCTORAT  
**Tragedia lirică *Oedipe* op.23 de George Enescu –  
o abordare interpretativ-dirijorală**

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**Summary**

The genesis of the lyric tragedy *Oedipe* Opus 23 by George Enescu was a long one, taking place over more than a couple of decades. In the year 1905, after the completion of the Symphony No. 1, Opus 13, the composer starts to think of the possibility of approaching a more comprehensive work of the lyrical genre. During the next three years he analyses and rejects projects of the libretto because of the subject or because of how they are approached. The inspiration of many of the projects was the lyrical drama *Pelleas et Melisande* by Claude Debussy, conceived on the symbolist playwright of Maurice Maeterlink. In the year 1909 in Paris, Enescu saw a performance of Sofocle's *Oedipus Rex* at the *Comedie Française*, in which the great actor Mounet-Sully was performing the leading role. The impact of this performance on the young composer was overwhelming. After a couple of years this is what he said in the „Conversations with Bernard Gavoty”: ”Coming out the *Comedie Française*, I was halucinated, possessed. An *idée fixe* took me over: to compose an Oedipe.”<sup>1</sup>

The one who made possible the meeting between George Enescu and Edmond Fleg, soon to become the librettist of the lyrical tragedy *Oedipe* Opus 23, was the music critic Pierre Lalo. Edmond Fleg, his real name being Edmond Fleigenheimer, was born in Geneva in a family of orthodox jews. He was the son of a university professor of comparative philology. The family and social enviroment encouraged an attraction to the classical culture at an early stage in his life. The libretto's making process took place over many years because the collaboration between librettist and composer was hindered by the start of the First World War. Even more so, some schetches of the score, which Enescu started to write after his interraction with the Sofocle's playwright, took the road to Moscow after Romania entered the war, in august 1916. In 1922, the 19th of November, Enescu presented, in the front of a small gathering of friends (among them were musicians like Mihail Jora, Alfred Alessandrescu and Emanoil Ciomac, the future translator of the libretto inro Romanian) the complete version of the initial vocal score.

During the next decade, all of his time was dedicated to working on the orchestration and refinements of the musical language he imagined, all alongside his busy concert schedule. Enescu was actually working almost only during the summer months, for the thoroughness obliged him sometimes to spend a whole day at the working desk before completing only one page.

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22 Bernard Gavoty, *Amintirile lui George Enescu*, Editura Muzicală, București, 1982, p.82

Below we present the completion dates for different stages of the general score, as they appear in the Enescu's manuscript:

### **First Act**

Started on the 9th of July, 1923, in Făget-Sinaia, Romania

Completed on the 11th of October, 1923, in Făget-Sinaia, Romania

### **Second Act**

First *Tableau* (all through the No. 115 of the score): completed on the 20th of August, 1925 in Tescani, Romania

Second *Tableau* (all through the No. 136 of the score): completed on the 7th of October, 1925 in Bucharest, Romania

Third *Tableau* (the scene of the Sfinx, all through the No. 170 of the score): completed on the 12th of October, 1927 in Luminiș-Sinaia, Romania

The end of the second Act („The coronation”), composed in three successive stages:

- From No. 170 to 176: completed on the 18th, 1927 in Luminiș-Sinaia, Romania

- From No. 176 to the fifth bar after No. 190 (page 238 of the manuscript):

completed on the 12th of April, 1928 in Luminiș-Sinaia, Romania

- From the sixth bar after No. 190 to the end of the second Act: completed on the 27th of July, 1928 in Luminiș-Sinaia, Romania

### **Third Act**

Without an initial date specified. The final version was written in two successive stages of work:

- From the opening of the third act to No. 304 of the score: completed on the 11th of January, 1930 in Luminiș-Sinaia, Romania

- From the No. 304 („Creon Episode”) to the end of third act: completed on the 24th of June, 1930 in Bellevue – Les Cytises, France

### **Fourth Act**

Without an initial date specified. Completed on the 27th of April, 1931.

The interpretative approach of this „Opus Magnum” by Enescu meant, in a first stage, a *detailed analysis* of the libretto. The unequivocally discerning of all the ancient greek mythology touches, combined with the reading of Sofocle’s writings, had the purpose of clarifying the paper’s general plan as music was following the libretto in its creative process. As we go on with the comprehensive approach of Edmond Fleg’s writing, comparing it to the translation of Emanoil Ciomac, we realize the necessity of putting together a proper romanian translation, without following the versification’s rules imposed by the classic *canon*. This translation, meant to help any Romanian musician who wants to approach Enescu’s work in an interpretative way, is set to eliminate, as possible, the inherent ambiguities of an adaption from a French language filled with archaisms and touches of ancient greek mythology. The declared

purpose of this step was a simply functional one, likely to facilitate the agreement of a relation between word and music.

After clarifying some aspects regarding the libretto, we immersed in an analysis of all the elements which enter in the composition of the opera's musical language: the writing of the vocal part (vocal range, type, etc), the features of the choral score and, in the end, the orchestration. Gathering all the analyzed material we obtained an "integrative flow" of the score, process which allow us, only in this stage, to establish a morphological approach.

A so-called analysis of the "integrative flow" found itself the simplest expression in an approach of holistic type, starting from the whole and reaching the details. The main criteria in establishing the section was the one of dramaturgical logic, combined with other of its subordinates as the imposing of some audible centers over the musical discourse or different requests related to the symmetry present between some phrases, groups or sections. The result of this step was expressed through a discursive display (in succession) of some groups of measures notated with numbers (always taking into consideration the main *accent* of this measures), which are made from the construction elements of the whole musical structure. On the side of this *Riemannian* approach, we also specified in the transcription of the analysis a next level group with the origin in the *Barform* structures. This approach found its confirmation times and times again in the conducting practice, allowing the summing of some semantic structures at a musicaldiscursive levelm all depending on the way in which every performer chooses to highlight certain aspects of the score. In a way, we can say that the manner of reading and approaching the score converts to specific way of elaboration of the creativeinterpretative vision.

The last stages of this double process of discovery (heuristically) and interpretation (hermeneutically) consisted in proposing a new reading of the whole work, with the purpose of highlighting those aspects which build the real preparation we do with the soloists, choir and orchestra: specifying different aspects related to the conducting techniques, tempo changes, the relationship between different compartments, passages of the score which can create problems in the execution. In this stage the attention focuses on the logical-dramaturgical aspects, following the way in which most detailed elements of the score serve to the action's development or description.

When studying a score, a conductor operates with a sum of audible virtualities. The conception that is decanted as a result of a thorough process of reading, analyzing and reflection is, in the end, the result of a sum of mental projections, a final expression (emergent) of the gathering of different aspects written in the score (convergent).