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“Elements of lament in George Enescu opera *Œdipe*”

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Romanian composer and violinist George Enescu (1881–1951) lived in a time of great political, social, and cultural transition. Aged 6 young Enescu left his home country Romania for Vienna, and later Paris. He very successfully studied violin and composition and his works drew great attention while he was still a teenager. In Enescu's music very different musical sources became assimilated into a unique musical language: Viennese and German musical tradition (including a great admiration for Wagner operas), mingled with French impressionism and – most importantly – with the influence of the inexhaustible heritage of Romanian traditional music. One of the main characteristic elements of traditional music from Romania is the presence of a melancholy trait. In Enescu's works musical gestures of lament are omnipresent. Especially Enescu's large scale opera *Oedipe* (1936) can be interpreted in terms of different forms of musically expressed lament. Oedipus, Jocaste, Laios – for each of them Enescu finds a way of expressing their own form of grief, altogether guided by the irreversible, and omnipresent strength of destiny, which is represented through a form of musical lament as well. In this way, a strong and intense correspondence is created between the complexity and multidimensionality of the tragic events, the variety of emotional expressions and the music.

In my presentation for the “Science and Arts-Colloquium” I demonstrated how Enescu uses musical elements of lament and grief on every musical level of his opera, so that they become the medium through which his interpretation of Sophocles' tragedy becomes evident. Enescu's interpretation of the ancient tragedy in turn reveals a valuable insight on the composer's deepest beliefs and his trust in freedom, thus giving the ancient tragedy profound relevance for our own times.



Oedipus facing the Sphinx
Attic Kylix, Vatican museum in Rome (470 b.C)