

# ROMANIAN CULTURAL INSTITUTES NETWORK



'09



You are invited to discover in the following pages a few glimpses of the more than 800 events organised this year by the network of Romanian Cultural Institutes in Europe, the United States of America and the Middle East. With its central headquarters in Bucharest, the Romanian Cultural Institute evolved continuously over the past five years, and today it is represented in 17 major cities abroad: Berlin, Brussels, Budapest, Szeged, Istanbul, Lisbon, London, Madrid, New York, Paris, Prague, Rome, Stockholm, Tel Aviv, Warsaw, Venice and Vienna.

We believe that this selection of events will provide an overview of the Romanian arts in 2009, a comprehensive image of the multiple connections between Romanian artistic endeavours and European as well as global cultural dynamics. You will find essays by professionals in the fields of the performing arts, literature, visual arts, film and music at the beginning of each chapter, as well as information on events held to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Iron Curtain, and on EUNIC (the European National Institutes for Culture network), whose presidency will be held by the Romanian Cultural Institute in 2010.

We would like to thank all our colleagues, collaborators and partners for their talent, intelligence and professionalism. Without this team effort, we would not have been able to celebrate our successes so far or to find inspiration for the future projects and partnerships presented in real time on our website, at [www.icr.ro](http://www.icr.ro).

Irina Ionescu  
Director General  
Directorate General for Romanian Cultural Institutes Abroad

Ovidiu Dajbog-Miron  
Director  
Directorate for Assessment of the Programmes of the  
Romanian Cultural Institutes Abroad

For the Romanian Cultural Institutes, the interval from 2009 to 2012 represents a period of institutional consolidation and extension of its international network, marked by the inauguration of new institutes in Moscow, Beijing, South Korea and the Arabic nations.

The strategy developed during previous years will continue to be implemented within the cultural markets that are already open to the Institute, enabling it to maintain its status as a tactically and strategically prepared partner, ready to evolve on a world stage that is increasingly confrontational from an ideological point of view, and more and more competitive from a professional point of view.

Thanks to the open-ended dialogue carried on by Romanian artists and intellectuals, the Romanian Cultural Institute and its network of institutes abroad present a vibrant and contemporary image of Romanian culture within a global context.

H.-R. Patapievici  
President

## The Party of Romanian Film

After an exuberant year in 2007 – when Romanian cinema won two major awards at the Cannes Festival: the Palme d’Or for *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days* and the Un certain regard award for *California Dreamin’ (endless)* – 2008 was a quiet year. “The calm after the Palm”, as we called it in a balance-sheet article for French monthly magazine *Cahiers du Cinéma*. It would seem that Romanian cineastes, still groggy with the unprecedented double success for Romanian film, are gradually becoming aware of what is at stake. Young directors, especially the two who form the hardcore of what has been called the “Romanian new wave” (and who are no longer quite so young: Cristi Puiu is forty-two and Cristian Mungiu forty-one), have planned their latest offerings more cautiously. The exception to the rule is one of the youngest of these directors, and also the most gifted: Radu Munteanu, aged thirty-eight, who launched his third feature film, *Summer Holiday*, in the Quinzaine des réalisateurs section at Cannes in 2008. Since then, he has been working on his next film (entitled, for the time being, *Tuesday, After Christmas*). 2008 closed with two notable successes: the Palme d’Or for best short film – awarded to *Megatron* by Marian Crişan – and the premiere of the feature film *Hooked* by Adrian Sitaru (from the same generation as Radu Munteanu) at the Venice Film Festival (in the “Giornate degli autori” section).

Cristi Puiu, on the other hand, who is chiefly “to blame” for this wave that has become a tsunami, is still working on his third feature film, *Aurora* (in which he also acts in the leading role), which will probably come out in 2010, and about which all kinds of rumours are circulating. Cristian Mungiu opted to work on a joint project for the big screen, *Tales from the Golden Age*, a film consisting of a series of sketches, for which

he was the scriptwriter, co-producer, and one of the five directors (the others being Ioana Uricaru, Hanno Höfer, Răzvan Mărculescu and Constantin Popescu). The film was premiered at the 2009 Cannes Festival, in the same section in which Puiu had triumphed in 2005 with *The Death of Mister Lăzărescu* and the late Cristian Nemescu in 2007 with *California Dreamin’*. It also opened the eighth annual Transylvania Film Festival (TIFF) in Cluj – Romania’s most important film festival – where Mungiu’s other two feature films had also been presented (his debut, *Occident*, had opened the first TIFF in 2002). *Tales from the Golden Age* is (and is intended to be) a “popular film”, which also works very well as collective laughter therapy: the six urban legends from the Ceausescu era demonstrate that just as humour was a reservoir of resistance in the blackest period of Romania’s history it can also help us break away from the past with a smile on our lips. A kind of *Goodbye, Ceausescu...*



*Tales from the Golden Age – The Legend of Bughi and Crina*  
© Mobra Films



*The Happiest Girl in the World* © Cornel Lazia

With this title serenely arriving right in the middle of 2009, the year had got off to a good start. At the Berlin Film Festival, Radu Jude’s debut feature film, *The Happiest Girl in the World*, was presented in the Forum section, winning the C.I.C.A.E. award, while Paul Negoescu’s short *Renovation* was programmed outside the competition. Also at the Berlin Festival, British director Peter Strickland’s feature film *Katalin Varga* won an award for Best Artistic Contribution. The film was co-produced by LibraFilm (director Tudor Giurgiu’s production company) and filmed in Romania, with actors from the Theatre in Sfântu Gheorghe. *The Happiest Girl in the World* had its national premiere at the European Film Festival organised by the Romanian Cultural Institute with the support of European embassies, cultural institutes and centres, and then hit the big screen throughout the country. The Romanian premiere of *Katalin Varga* took place at the end of 2009.

A significant, albeit somewhat overlooked, event took place at the end of March: the second meeting

between Romanian and foreign critics interested in the fate of Romanian cinema. Important names from major publications such as *The Guardian*, *L.A. Weekly*, *Positif* and *Variety* discussed with their Romanian counterparts the spectacular evolution of the “new wave”, attempting to define and anticipate where it will go next. The discussions were passionate and sometimes heated, given that in spite of its successes abroad appreciation of the new Romanian cinema is far from unanimous (above all in Romania). As part of the colloquium, there were advance showings of a number of the titles that were to be launched during the course of 2009, including *Police, Adjective* by Corneliu Porumboiu and *Francesca* by Bobby Păunescu. Porumboiu’s second feature film was subsequently selected both at the Cannes Festival (where it received an award in the Un certain regard section) and at the Transylvania Festival (where it shared the main trophy with a Norwegian film). Its career did not stop there: in September, *Police, Adjective* was shown at the prestigious New York Film Festival, where it was rated (by major publications such as *The New York Times*) as “one of the four must-see films”. (And it should be said that the Romanian Cultural Institute in New York was substantially and positively involved in promoting the film, as it had also done in previous



*Police, Adjective* © Periscop Pictures

years.) *Police, Adjective* is the most radical Romanian film since Cristi Puiu's *Stuff and Dough* (2001) – a deeply innovative proposal at the level of expression and one that is courageous and salutary in terms of its subject matter, as it brings to the centre of debate the relationship between an individual (in this case, a young policeman) and the State (represented by an inflexible law, and this law by... a dictionary). After the public and critical acclaim lavished on his first film, *12:08 East of Bucharest* (Camera d'Or at Cannes, 2006), Porumboiu (aged thirty-three) demonstrates with this film that he is an author capable of reinventing himself, a director capable of substantial surprises.

*First of All, Felicia* – the film debut of scriptwriter and novelist Răzvan Rădulescu – was also given an advance screening at the colloquium for film critics in Bucharest, and was later selected at the Sarajevo Film Festival (the most dynamic such event in the Balkans). Răzvan Rădulescu, who together with Cristi Puiu in effect laid the foundations of Romanian “neo-realism”



Gruber's Journey © Orion Film

in their debut film *Stuff and Dough*, is perhaps the most discreetly active figure in “made in Romania” cinema. After writing the screenplay for *The Death of Mister Lăzărescu*, he wrote scripts for two films by director Radu Muntean (together with screenwriter Alexandru Baciu): *The Paper Will Be Blue* (2006) and *Summer Holiday*. He was also a consultant for the film *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days*, for which it seems he was the “author” of the film's already famous table scene. And not least, alongside Alexandru Baciu once again, he wrote the screenplay for the feature film *Gruber's Journey*, a spectacular comeback for a director from an older generation, Radu Gabrea (aged seventy-three). The film has been shown at the European Film Festival (where it represented Romania along with the debut film by young director Radu Jude), and at numerous other international festivals, in the U.S.A. and Australia, via Israel. *Gruber's Journey* is the only Romanian film to have gone back in time, with soberness and also a feeling of urgency, to one of the darkest (and least known) episodes in Romania's recent history: the Iași pogrom of June 1941. The main character is Italian writer Curzio Malaparte, who witnessed the pogrom during his short stay in Romania. Radu Gabrea's film is an example of artistic and intellectual implication in an area of history that has most often been left to the mercy of nationalist mystification, when not ignored completely.

The man at the centre of one of the most surprising feature film debuts has been Bobby Păunescu. He wrote and directed the film *Francesca*, with the beautiful Monica Bârlădeanu in the leading role, an actress who had already gained much attention for her brief role in *The Death of Mister Lăzărescu*. The reason the debut is surprising is that Păunescu, the son of a controversial businessman, linked to the former communist nomenclatura, was known up until this film only as Cristi Puiu's producer, with whom he laid the foundations of the Mandragora production company. But the tale of Francesca is to a certain extent a



Constantin and Elena © Filmlab

personal story: Păunescu lived for a number of years in Italy, the country where the young teacher in the film aspires to emigrate. And so the decision to direct the screenplay himself was only natural, and also followed advice from Puiu. *Francesca* has plenty of reasons to surprise: it is a mature debut, without any major errors, the dialogue is very authentic, and the acting is spot on. The film was invited to open the Orizzonti section of the Venice International Film Festival, where a line in the film spoken by Francesca's father – with reference to Alessandra Mussolini – caused the Italian politician to demand that it be withdrawn from the big screen (thereby provoking the no. 1 scandal of the Venetian selection).

An event that has already become a tradition, one in which the Romanian Cultural Institute in New York is also involved, is the Tribeca TIFF Romanian Film Festival, now in its fourth year. The event is held at the beginning of December and is a partnership between the prestigious Tribeca Festival, the Transylvania Film

Festival and the RCINY. In a selection made by Mihai Chirilov, the art director of TIFF, it is possible to see here the most interesting Romanian productions of the last twelve months, at screenings attended by directors, screenwriters and actors. For the 2009 event, Chirilov has decided to focus on documentary films, a number of which have been shown at TIFF: *Constantin and Elena* by Andrei Dăscălescu and *Australia* by Claudiu Mitcu. In New York last year, Thomas Ciulei's *The Flower Bridge* was shown, one of the most beautiful documentaries of recent years. It is a welcome occasion for audiences to convince themselves that Romanian film is a lot more varied than might be thought and that, from feature films to documentaries and shorts, there is an unprecedented energy here, unbounded by genre. Romanian film, the best selling product of all Romania's cultural exports, is at the same time the “politician” (without any political party!) that best represents us. In any case, it is the politician film-lovers vote for.

Alex. Leo Șerban



## Romanian Cultural Institute Events

This year too, the success chalked up by prize-winning Romanian film productions at major international film festivals has had a significant impact on the Romanian Cultural Institute's strategy for the promotion of Romanian cinema abroad. Besides Romanian entries at the most important international film industry events, Romanian Cultural Institutes abroad have conceived and implemented framework programmes to support the latest home-grown cinematic productions, representative of what critics have termed the "new wave" in Romanian cinema.

### Romanian Film at Major Festivals

At the beginning of this year, the "Titu Maiorescu" Romanian Cultural Institute in Berlin was involved in supporting the Romanian presence at the **Berlin International Film Festival**, the second largest and second most important event of its kind in Europe, after Cannes. The RCI Berlin was responsible for organising the Romanian stand at the Berlinale European Film Market and for supporting Romanian entrants in the various sections of the festival. The film *Katalin Varga*, directed by Peter Strickland, this year won the Silver Bear, having been presented in the Berlinale-Wettbewerb section. *Katalin Varga* is a Romanian, British and Hungarian co-production, and stars Hilda Peter (of the Magyar State Theatre in Cluj) and Tibor Palffy (of the Sfântu Gheorghe Theatre) in the leading roles. The film *The Happiest Girl in the World*, directed by Radu Jude, was selected in the Berlinale Forum section. It represents the director's feature film debut and has been awarded the C.I.C.A.E. Prize (Confédération Internationale des Cinémas d'Art et d'Essai Européens). Along with Competition and Panorama, Forum is one of the festival's most

important sections, aimed at showcasing new voices in world cinema. In the Berlinale Shorts section, the productions *Renovation*, directed by Paul Negoescu, and *Bric-Brac*, directed by Gabriel Achim, were invitees. During the course of the festival, between 5 and 15 February, the RCI Berlin provided support for the festival attendance of directors Gabriel Achim, Radu Jude and Paul Negoescu, scriptwriter Simona Ghiță, actors Ioana Blaj, Andreea Boșneag, Paul Ipate and Clara Vodă, cameramen Andrei Butică and Marius Iacob, and film editor Dorin Pene.

During the same period, *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days*, directed by Cristian Mungiu, received the **Goya Award**, awarded by the Spanish Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for the Best European Film. At the Goya Awards Ceremony, which took place in Madrid on 1 February, director and actor Fernando Guillén Cuervo handed the "Spanish Oscar" to Cristian Mungiu, who was present in the auditorium at the invitation of the Romanian Cultural Institute in Madrid. Besides Cristian Mungiu's film, the other



Cristian Mungiu – the Goya Award for The Best European Film for *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days*

nominees in the category of Best European Film were *The Edge of Heaven* by Fatih Akin, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, directed by Mark Herman, and *The Dark Knight* by Christopher Nolan. At the same ceremony, *Bucharest, la memoria perdida (Bucharest, Memory Lost)*, directed by Albert Solé Brusset, a Spanish director born in Bucharest, was presented the award for Best Documentary Film. The documentary is autobiographical, and pays homage to Spanish exiles from the time of the Franco dictatorship. On the same occasion, the RCI Madrid organised an event dedicated to current Romanian cinema, in partnership with the Spanish Academy of Film. On 2 February, Cristian Mungiu held a colloquium, chaired by Carlos Heredero, the film critic and director of *Cahiers du Cinéma* Spain. The debate with Spanish film enthusiasts was also accompanied by showings of the films *West*, *The Death of Mister Lăzărescu*, *12:08 East of Bucharest* and *California Dreamin' (endless)*.

At the sixth **IndieLisboa International Festival of Independent Film**, held between 23 April and 3 May, the Romanian participants were *Summer Holiday*, directed by Radu Muntean and included in the Emerging Cinema feature films section, and *The Happiest Girl in the World*, the selection for the International Competition for Short and Feature Films section. Director Constantin Popescu Jr.'s short *The Yellow Smiley Face* was included in the Emerging Cinema short film section at the same festival. Radu Muntean was invited by the organisers to sit on the festival's jury alongside Marco Müller, the Director of the Venice Film Festival, and Christophe Terhechte, the Director of the Forum section of the Berlin Film Festival.

Also in the Iberian Peninsula, this autumn the RCI Madrid team provided support for the Romanian presence at the sixteenth **L'Alternativa Independent Film Festival in Barcelona** (13-21 November). *Police, Adjective*, directed by Corneliu Porumboiu, competed in the Feature Film section, alongside

*Megatron*, directed by Marian Crișan, in the Short Film section. *Police, Adjective* won the Fiction Feature Award. In recognition of the success of the Romanian new wave in cinema, the festival organisers held a round table discussion on the subject "Romanian Film before and after 1989", at which director Corneliu Porumboiu, producer Ada Solomon, and film critic Mihai Chirilov took part. The event was accompanied, over the course of the festival, by showings of the following films: *California Dreamin' (endless)* by Cristian Nemescu, *The Happiest Girl in the World* and *The Paper Will Be Blue* by Radu Muntean, *The Death of Mister Lăzărescu*, directed by Cristi Puiu, *Passo Doble*, directed by Dan Pița, *Reconstruction*, directed by Lucian Pintilie, and *Sequences*, directed by Alexandru Tatos.

The **Haifa International Film Festival** is held annually over a period of eight days, the length of the Jewish festival of Sukkot. Now in its twenty-fifth year, the festival on average presents one hundred and fifty premieres, with a total of almost two hundred and fifty screenings (feature films, documentaries, animation, short films, retrospectives, and tributes). The Romanian presence in 2009 was supported by the Romanian Cultural Institute in Tel Aviv, in partnership with the Haifa Cinematheque, Haifa City Hall, the Ministry of Education Science and Sport, and the Israeli Film Council. The films *Police, Adjective* and the series *Tales from the Golden Age*, directed by Ioana Uricaru, Hanno Höfer, Răzvan Mărculescu, Constantin Popescu and Cristian Mungiu, were warmly received by both press and public. In July, Romanian film was also featured at the **Jerusalem International Film Festival**, with a projection of *The Happiest Girl in the World*, organised by the RCI in partnership with the Jerusalem Cinematheque and the Van Leer Foundation.

Between 11 and 20 September, the fourteenth **Milan Film Festival** hosted screenings of the short films *Tarantyno* and *Oli's Wedding*, directed by Mircea



"Police, Adjective and Tales from the Golden Age – Romanians entered the Haifa Film Festival at the last moment, increasing its level of quality by a number of notches." *Ma'ariv*, 30 September 2009

"A story that went straight to my heart. In Porumboiu's excellent film, the directing evokes with extraordinary artistry the moral and professional dilemma in which the main character finds himself. (...) It is a pleasure to talk to such a young director, and I'm even a little envious, because he is aware of what he is doing, of his place in the history of cinema and of its influence on him. (...) A *tour de force*. I can hardly find words to recommend it. (...) Romanian film, more than that of any other former communist countries, has in recent years produced a number of very good films and Corneliu Porumboiu stands out as one of the most important film directors." Uri Klein, *Ha'aretz*, 8 October 2009

Nestor and Tudor Jurgiu respectively. The Romanian Cultural Institute supported these screenings via the Accademia di Romania in Rome.

Throughout the year, the Romanian Cultural Institute in London played an active part in bolstering cinema, supporting Romanian participants at a number of major events dedicated to film. In spring, with the support of Romanian Cultural Institute in London, Romanian cinema was represented by five short films and one feature film at the suggestively titled **New Europe Film Festival**, dedicated to productions

from the new member states of the European Union. Alongside films from Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Lithuania, Estonia, Hungary, and Poland, the feature film *California Dreamin' (endless)* by Cristian Nemescu and shorts *Boxing Lesson*, directed by Alexandru Mavrodineanu, *Megatron* and *A Good Day for a Swim* by Bogdan Mustață, *Life's Hard* by Gabriel Sirbu, *Waves* by Adrian Sitaru, and *The Yellow Smiley face* were screened in Edinburgh and London. The same short films featured in the "Renewal" programme hosted by the famous London gallery Tate Britain with the support of the RCI London.

Nor were Romanian films absent from major British festivals in the autumn, including the Psychoanalytic Film Festival, presided over by celebrated director Bernardo Betolucci, the Encounters Short Film Festival, the European Documentary Film Festival, and the annual festival held at The Barbican Centre.

#### Hey DOCs!

Documentary films by Romanian directors such as Thomas Ciulei, Alexandru Solomon, and Florin Iepan, as well as by younger filmmakers, were screened at a number of prestigious international festivals. Thomas Ciulei's *The Flower Bridge* was presented in premiere at the **Documentary Fortnight festival** organised by the Museum of Modern Art in New York (11-25 February), and at the second **Documentarist Festival** in Istanbul (1-7 June). *Asta e*, another film by Thomas Ciulei, was shown at the **Documenta Festival** in Madrid, Spain's most prestigious documentary film festival (5-8 May). *Children of the Decree* (2005), directed by Florin Iepan, and *Cold Waves* (2007), directed by Alexandru Solomon, were also selected at the same festival.

Together with the DocuMentor Association, Alexandru Solomon also took part at **Sunny Side of the Doc – Marché International du Documentaire**, the most important European event dedicated to documentary film, which is held annually in La Rochelle, France (23-

26 June). The Romanian presence at the festival, as well as the stand to promote Romanian documentary film, was supported by the Romanian Cultural Institute in Paris and by the National Cinematography Centre.

#### Romanian Film in New York

The RCI New York has conducted a sustained campaign to promote Romanian cinema in an extremely competitive film market, as is certainly the case in North America. For the fourth year running, the RCI New York held a **Festival of Romanian Film**, in collaboration with the Transylvania International Film Festival and the Tribeca Film Festival: "4 Years, 3 Days and 2 Decades Later". Mihai Chirilov, the festival's selector, this year chose a series of productions to represent both the "new wave" of Romanian film and the twentieth anniversary of the 1989 Revolution: *Hooked*,



"4 Years, 3 Days and 2 Decades Later" – The 4th Romanian Film Festival in New York

directed by Adrian Sitaru (2008); *Katalin Varga* (2009); *The Other Irene* by Andrei Gruzniczki (2009); *Police, Adjective* (2009); *Silent Wedding* by Horațiu Mălăele (2008); *Videogrammes of a Revolution (Videogramme einer Revolution)* by Harun Farocki and Andrei Ujică (1992); *The Oak* by Lucian Pintilie (1992); and *State of Things* by Stere Gulea (1995). Besides these feature films, New York audiences also had a chance to watch the documentaries *Australia* by Claudiu Mitcu (2009); *The Flower Bridge* (2008), and the short films *11 PM* by Alexandru Sava; *Bric-Brac* (2009); *For Him* by Stanca Radu (2009); *Oli's Wedding* (2009); *Renovation* (2009) and *Tarantyno* (2009). Taking part at the festival were actor Vlad Ivanov (*Police, Adjective* and *The Other Irene*), winner of the Los Angeles Journalists Association Award for Best Supporting Actor in 2007 for *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days*, director Horațiu Mălăele (*Silent Wedding*), actor Andi Vasluianu (*The Other Irene*), and producer/director Tudor Giurgiu (*Katalin Varga, Australia* and *Love Sick*).

Romanian films earned a well-deserved place not only on the big screen but also on North American satellite television programmes. From November 2009 to January 2010, **Link TV** will broadcast nine feature and documentary films: *Taxi or Limousine*, directed by Titus Muntean; *The Paper Will Be Blue*; *Stuff and Dough* directed by Cristi Puiu; *Love Sick*, directed by Tudor Giurgiu; *Cold Waves*; *Day Bar and Other Tales*, directed by Corina Radu; *12:08 East of Bucharest*, directed by Corneliu Porumboiu; *Testimonial*, directed by Răzvan Georgescu. Each broadcast will be prefaced by an introduction; the texts of these introductions have been prepared by film critic Mihai Chirilov, who collaborates with the RCI New York with a view to promoting this series of films.

#### Romanian Film in Paris

The **3rd Romanian Film Festival in Paris** was organised in partnership with the ArtRoumain



Association and the Nouveau Latina, under the auspices of the Latin Union and the Romanian National Cinematography Centre. Between 7 and 14 April, the Nouveau Latina Cinema showed the feature films *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days*, *Silent Wedding* and *The Rest Is Silence* (the film that represented Romania at the 2009 Oscars), ten short films, including *Megatron* and *A Good Day for a Swim* (winner of the Golden Bear at the 2008 Berlin Film Festival), and various documentaries, including the remarkable *Cold Waves*. Numerous leading lights of Romanian film were present at the Nouveau Latina to answer questions from the audience, as part of the debates held in conjunction with the film showings. As part of this event, critic Magda Mihăilescu gave a lecture on contemporary Romanian film. The honorary president of the event this year was actress Anamaria Marinca, and the other participants included Nae Caranfil, Vlad Ivanov, Horațiu Mălăele, Radu Muntean, Alexandru Solomon and Magda Mihăilescu.



*The Stone Wedding*

As part of its 2009 programme of events, the Romanian Cultural Institute in Paris also supported Romanian documentary filmmaking, to which it dedicated a retrospective of thirty-five films at the **États généraux du Film Documentaire** festival, which was held between 16 and 22 August at Lussas (Ardèche). In February and March, the Institute also supported a cycle of films by director Paul Barbă Neagră at the Sacred Architecture and Geography Festival, showing six of the thirteen documentaries produced for French national television in the 1970s and 80s.

#### **Festival of Romanian Film in Vienna**

The expanded format of the festival included twelve film showings over eleven evenings, at the Urania Cinema and the Romanian Cultural Institute in Vienna. The programme included a press conference at which the speakers were director Cornel Mihalache, film critic Christoph Huber (*Die Presse*), and producer Harun Farocki. The films included *12:08 East of Bucharest* (2005), *Videogrammes from a Revolution* (1992), *Children of the Decree* (2005), *Police, Adjective* (2009), *The Happiest Girl in the World* (2009) and *Tales from the Golden Age* (2009).

The festival also included a section entitled "Off: Retrovisions", which was held at the Romanian Cultural Institute in Vienna and included showings of *The Paper Will Be Blue* (2006), *The Way I Spent the End of the World* (2006), directed by Cătălin Mitulescu, *Requiem for Dominic* (1990), directed by Robert Dornhelm; *Timișoara, December 1989* (1989), directed by Ovidiu Bose Paștina, *We Got our Ration of Freedom for Christmas* (1990), directed by Cătălina Fernoagă and Cornel Mihalache, and *1989. Blood and Velvet* (2005), directed by Cornel Mihalache.

This year, the Romanian Film Festival also had a prelude: a special edition of the weekly film programme "Okoskop", broadcast by Okto TV on 1 November 2009. The festival's guests included director and producer Cornel Mihalache, TVR cameraman Silviu

Andrei, film critic Christoph Huber (*Die Presse*), and director Harun Farocki. The event's partners were the Urania Cultural Centre, Okto TV, the Austro-Romanian Association, the National Cinematography Centre, and TM Base, the company which produced the CD of Romanian music provided to audience members along with their tickets.

#### **Festival of Romanian Film, Romanian Cultural Institute Stockholm**

At the beginning of April, the Romanian Cultural Institute held its third Festival of Romanian Film at the Zita Folkets Bio Cinema in Stockholm. The films were selected by critic Adina Brădeanu, who took a thematic approach, setting out from the metaphor of the vampire that wanders between two different worlds. Taking part in discussions of the topic of transgression were director Irene Lusztig, writer Ola Larsmo, Vesna Goldsworthy, Mattias Fyhr, Adina Brădeanu, theorist Mihaela Miroiu, feminist writer and theorist Moa Elf Carlén, and expert in gender studies Tina Rosenberg. Two weeks after the close of the event, the Romanian Cultural Institute in Stockholm joined the EUNIC-Recent Experimental Shorts Festival, with a showing of *A Good Day for a Swim*.

#### **"Roads South" at the Romanian Cultural Institute Warsaw**

In the Central-European region, the RCI in Warsaw held a festival of Romanian film, entitled "Roads South", at the Luna Cinema in Warsaw between 26 and 29 May, as in previous years. The event was also supported by the National Cinematography Centre. Six films representative of post-war Romanian cinema were shown. The Institute also organised a Romanian Documentary Film Days event in the Nowa Huta quarter of Krakow, at the Sfinks Cinema, between 8 and 11 October. The documentary films shown were *Don't Get Me Wrong* directed by Adina Pintilie, *Children of the Decree*, *Bela Lugosi. The Fallen Vampire*, directed

by Florin Iepan, *Cabal in Kabul*, directed by Dan Alexe, *To Be or Not to Be*, directed by Anca Damian, and *Me sem baxtalo...*, directed by Tudor Giurgiu.

In other Central-European cities such as Budapest and Prague, Romanian Cultural Institutes hold monthly showings of recent films, as well as pre-1989 productions. To these can be added the annual Romanian Film Days at the Ořechovka Cinema in Prague. At this year's festival in Prague, held between 20 and 24 February, audiences had the chance to see eight feature films (*4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days*, *The Paper Will Be Blue*, *12:08 East of Bucharest*, *The Death of Mister Lăzărescu*, *Taxi or Limousine* and *Ryna*, directed by Ruxandra Zenide) and five shorts (*Cigarettes and Coffee*, directed by Cristi Puiu, *The Flat*, directed by Constantin Popescu, *Traffic*, directed by Cătălin Mitulescu, *Challenge Day*, directed by Napoleon Helmis, and *17 Minutes Late*, directed by Cătălin Mitulescu).

#### **Major Successes for Short Films**

Short films by young Romanian directors were also shown at the Vienna Independent Shorts festival (14-20 May), with the support of the RCI in Vienna (*Alexandra*, directed by Radu Jude, and *Waves*), at the Curtas Vila do Conde International Short Film Festival (*Renovation* and *Megatron*), financed by the RCI Lisbon, and at the short film section of the Cottbus International Film Festival (*The Palm Lines*, directed by George Chiper). RCI Stockholm this year took part in the Betting on Shorts Festival. The theme of this year's festival, which was held at the Rio Cinema in Stockholm on 14 November, was "Control". The festival is organised in the form of a competition, which unfolds in fifteen European cities simultaneously and includes twelve films. The Romanian entrant was *A Family*, directed by Emanuel Pârnu.



## The Roads of Romanian Theatre in 2009

In quite an ambiguous political and economic context nationally, Romanian theatre encountered at the institutional level in 2009 the same difficulties in adapting to a financial context affected by crisis, but also a marked tendency toward increasingly visibility on stages around Europe.

The difficulty arises from the often contradictory way in which the relevant legislation, in particular the law governing theatrical institutions, and also political decisions (the decentralisation of institutions in the field of the arts) are applied in practice: the calendar is often incoherent and a number of obvious shortcomings cause concern in theatre circles. This year, massive cuts in the budget allocated to cultural programmes, implemented by the ministry against the backdrop of the financial crisis, have led to the resizing or alteration of Romanian theatres' operating plans. One highly publicised case, one not ungrounded, but with sparse arguments, is that of the National Theatre Festival. Romania has had such a festival since 1990 and it is an index of the high level and diversity of the performing arts. This year, the Festival, which, like the UNITER (Romanian Theatrical Union) Awards, is a focal point for the ambition, pride and talent of Romania's theatre world, will be scaled back, although it will still offer many points of interest for theatregoers. The fact that theatres in Romania are, with the exception of the very few private or independent establishments, subsidised from the state budget says much about the cultural authorities and their support to the arts, but also much about the weaker dynamic of commercial or experimental theatre. The theatres subsidised from the state budget are called "repertory theatres", they work on the principle of the theatrical season (whereas funding is awarded on the principle of the

calendar year), and they offer a different show every day of the week: the idea of scheduling a show for six to seven consecutive weeks until the number of paying spectators is exhausted is not yet current in Romania. The advantage of the present system is that a show can play in repertory for at least a few years.

Of course, participation at theatre festivals has become an increasingly prominent trend among some Romanian repertory theatres and it is a remarkable opportunity in this respect, albeit one which raises questions not only about economic efficiency but also image. The most interesting cases are *The Sickness of Family M* by Fausto Paravardino, produced by Radu Afrim for the National Theatre in Timișoara and invited for a season at the Théâtre de L'Odéon in Paris, then the presence of the Cluj Hungarian Theatre in the *off* section at Avignon, with the play *Naître à jamais* by Visky András, directed by Tompa Gábor, and finally the "jewel in the crown", the production of Goethe's *Faust* at the Radu Stanca National Theatre in Sibiu, directed by Silviu Purcărete, which was in the official section of the Edinburgh Festival. The three productions have enjoyed media exposure to the measure of their value, as well as a number of performances significant enough



*The Sickness of Family M* © Radu Afrim



*Faust* © Scott Eastman

to leave a cultural "mark" on paying audiences in the countries in question. However, participation in theatre festivals abroad with just one or two performances involves a large financial outlay for often modest returns. Nevertheless, it is important to participate if this will lead to something developing in time. Of course, the equation also has to take into account the calibre of the festival in question. Often, in the mass media the presence of Romanian theatres at European festivals, be they large or small, seems to be viewed in terms of sporting rather than artistic performance. There are few analyses that look at what impact has been made on audiences abroad. Productions by Purcărete, Afrim, Gianina Cărbunariu, Mihai Măniuțiu, Alexandra Badea or Andrei Șerban might have provided pretexts for an analysis of what communication via the theatre means in the case of Romanian shows in other cultural contexts. But how is success to be quantified? Can one measure the emotional, intellectual or rational impact of a performance?

The Romanian stage continues to keep directors at the forefront. This has been a structural characteristic of Romanian theatre for more than a century. A director's theatre also characterises the theatrical experience

in other countries, however, so the polarisation of attention around the figure of the director is not something new, but rather the sign, for a number of decades, of a frustrating evolution in relation to the theatre's centuries-old star – the actor.

In 2009, Silviu Purcărete, Andrei Șerban, Radu Afrim, Alexandru Dabija, Tompa Gábor, and Victor Ioan Frunză have yet again directed productions that revisit the classics (Goethe, Chekhov), but it is an encouraging sign that they have also explored contemporary texts, especially in the case of Radu Afrim. Radu Afrim's stage work is all the more interesting given that the director has for a number of years been developing a theatrical language where the visual signs of twenty-first-century modernity are developed within an unusual relationship with the text of the drama, be it classic, be it contemporary (Bulgarian/Austrian Dimitre Dinev, Germans Dea Loher and Tankred Dorst, Irishman Martin McDonagh). For many years, the director has been an emblem of the idea of the new with regard to theatre directing, a newness that is often substantial, in synch with the informational medium, networks of virtual socialisation and an unusual textual *accrochage*, all of which speak for a particular, younger Romanian audience, but also for the *modernity* of the theatrical act. Radu Afrim's theatre possesses, and this is a rarity, the power of seduction usually to be found only in painting and music.

The directors who in this period have without doubt drawn attention in terms of creative experimentation are Andrei Șerban, with his Traveling Academy in Romania and New York, and Gianina Cărbunariu, with her guest appearances in France and other countries. Here, the contribution of the Romanian Cultural Institute, as well as in other cases, has been of great importance and has allowed dynamic support of Romanian culture abroad. What triggers these appearances, as can be seen from the articles published on them, is the fact that foreign audiences, but also professionals, are becoming increasingly





*mady-baby.edu* by Gianina Cărbunariu

accustomed to the performance and creative style of Romanian theatre.

The Romanian theatrical scene is currently agitated by the idea that theatres are reticent towards original Romanian drama. However, we have been able to observe a number of trends: one is that young playwrights such as Ștefan Peca, Gianina Cărbunariu, Mimi Brănescu, Lia Bugnar, Mihaela Michailov, Vera Ion *et al.* have been able to establish their reputation quickly by means of their mobility and participation in workshops, festivals dedicated to new theatre, and residencies at celebrated theatres, and another is that a number of authors have reacted against a refusal, or lack of interest, to stage their work on the part of theatres. A group that formed around playwright Ștefan Caraman has demanded in a letter addressed to the authorities that there should be a *legal* obligation for theatres to stage Romanian plays. This initiative comes seven years after the establishment of the dramAcum group (made up of young directors, including Gianina Cărbunariu), which set out to revitalise the Romanian stage through a different kind of drama, one that corresponds to a more direct approach to reality. Their appearances in performances or workshops not only

in Romania but also in New York, for example, reveal a pragmatic means of achieving their goals. On the subject of new Romanian drama, let me also signal the publication of an anthology, *Six Minutes of Romanian Theatre*, by the Panga Pank publishing house in Krakow, with the support of the Romanian Cultural Institute. It is the first Polish-language anthology of contemporary Romanian theatre. The book includes six of the already staged plays by dramatists who have made a name for themselves since 1990: Saviana Stănescu (*Final Countdown*), Mihai Ignat (*Crisis*), Gianina Cărbunariu (*mady-baby.edu*), Alina Nelega (*Kamikaze*), Nicoleta Esinencu (*A(II)Rh+*), and Peca Ștefan (*Bucharest Calling*). The visible impact that some of these new Romanian authors have had on the theatre has not gone unobserved in France, Britain or the U.S.A., and above all, I think, in Central Europe.

Let me remark upon a special event in the area of dramaturgy and audio performance: in September, Radio Romania Cultural launched the first outlet for radio theatre in Romania, which is to comprise an encyclopaedia of Romanian and international drama. Among other major publications, the Romanian theatre world has greeted an impressive illustrated book on Liviu Ciulei, which, along with the two books dedicated to Andrei Șerban published last year by the Romanian Cultural Institute, offers a profound testimony to a transient art.

The Romanian stage – also the name of a new theatre magazine (*scena.ro*), alongside the older *Teatrul azi* (*Theatre Today*) and the atypical *man.In.fest* – is, naturally, the matrix of a paradox, one of those that can, in one way or another, be found in the rest of Central Europe: 1990 seems for many to have been the year zero of theatre. Twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, however, it can be observed that yesterday has still not definitively made way for tomorrow. The paradox is, of course, that theatre only lives in the day today.

Marian Popescu



## Romanian Cultural Institute Events

Romanian theatrical performances and works by Romanian playwrights were greeted enthusiastically by audiences at international festivals and on a large number of European and American stages. “The show is so captivating that you almost want to sell your soul to the devil just to make the succession of grandiose images go on.” (20 August, Lyn Gardner, reviewer for *The Guardian*, on *Faust* at the Edinburgh Festival)

### *Faust* triumphs at the Edinburgh Festival

Director Silviu Purcărete marked his return to the **Edinburgh International Festival** with a production of *Faust*, staged by the “Radu Stanca” National Theatre in Sibiu. The play premiered in 2007, and rapidly became one of the main attractions of the “Sibiu – European Capital of Culture” programme. It won the UNITER award for best leading actress (Ofelia Popii), as well as the award for best stage design (Helmut Stürmer). At the same time, the production was nominated for best play of the year. The five shows performed between 18 to 22 August in Lowland Hall, a hangar outside Edinburgh, were given a warm reception by audiences, and tickets quickly sold out after their box-office release. Silviu Purcărete’s show garnered many positive reviews in the British press, and the critics all agreed that we might even talk of the Edinburgh International Festival before and ... after *Faust*. The BBC broadcast a “behind the scenes” documentary as part of its prestigious “The Culture Show”, and the *The Guardian* devoted a full-length article to the show. Jonathan Mills, the manager of the Edinburgh International Festival, observed that this was “a production of an epic scope rarely seen in the UK, which offered a perfect opportunity for Edinburgh audiences to see the best of Romanian theatrical traditions”. Journalist Charles Spencer, writing for *The*



Ofelia Popii, winner of the Herald Angel Award for her portrayal of Mephistopheles © “Radu Stanca” National Theatre in Sibiu “I would sell my soul to see this show once more. The most amazing theatrical experience of this (or, we may say, any) life, *Faust* (Ingliston Lowland Hall) thrilled and paralyzed the audience, just like hot tar applied directly on the skin. This production staged in a hangar by the airport, fascinated and enchanted most of us, and it also made me sad regarding one thing: I may never see another more impressive and more theatrical event in my life.” *The Observer*, 23 August, 2009

*Telegraph*, said that Ofelia Popii, who also received the Herald Angel Award for her performance, “delivered a tour-de-force as a gender bending Mephistopheles who seems like a man at first, then strips off her costume to reveal both female breasts and a bulging codpiece. Her croaky voice, disconcerting shape-shifting and sheer charisma all combine to create a genuinely disconcerting figure who might really have arrived from some infernal world”. In an interview for *Theatre Today* magazine, the manager of the “Radu Stanca” Theatre in Sibiu talks about the importance of this Romanian theatrical success in the following terms: “I believe this



really is a moment of grace for the Romanian theatre. We have grown accustomed to thinking about triumphs, but on this occasion we genuinely are dealing with an extraordinary performance at the most important festival in the world. *Faust* was the most in-demand show at Edinburgh, and there was a long waiting list for those seeking tickets for one of the last performances. Many important persons attended the show, and as proof of this, I have been getting daily calls from agents and producers with ideas and suggestions for joint projects". Romanian participation at the Edinburgh Festival was supported by the Romanian Government through the Ministry of Culture, Religious Affairs and National Heritage, and by the London branch of the Romanian Cultural Institute.

Silviu Purcărete's success in Edinburgh, as well as that of the actors from "Radu Stanca" National Theatre in Sibiu, joins the series of exceptional productions that marked Romania's presence at **the Spring Festival in Budapest**, 31 March – 1 April, and the **"Black Sea" International Theatre Festival** in Trabzon (Turkey), 2-4 May. The Romanian Cultural Institute supported the performances of the Sibiu theatre through the Romanian Cultural Institute in Budapest and the "Dimitrie Cantemir" Cultural Institute in Istanbul. Thus, while *Lulu* was warmly acclaimed by audiences at the National Theatre in Budapest, productions of *Waiting for Godot* and *Pantagruel's Sister-in-law* marked the tenth international theatre festival held in the famous capital of the Turkish province of Trabzon.

"In Silviu Purcărete's view, the balance between naturalism and expressionism is a very fragile one, and even if he makes use of the comic effects of the text, he never lets the audience be seduced by the easy solutions offered by common humour. The director is also helped by Helmut Stürmer's amphitheatre-like stage props, acting both as a reception and a dissection room at the same time, and by the feminine protagonist's play. Ofelia Popii was acknowledged last year as the best actress of the season for the part of

Mephistopheles in *Faust*, also directed by Purcărete." (*Fidelio online – Budapest*, 31 March, 2009)

#### Young Romanian playwrights on famous stages

Young Romanian directors have been invited by major theatre companies in Europe and the United States both to stage shows previously performed in Romania – such as Radu Afrim's *The Sickness of Family M*, at the Odéon Theatre in Paris –, and to produce plays by Romanian dramatists with the actors of the host company – Radu Alexandru Nica's show *Horses at the Window* by Matei Vişniec at the Trap Door Theatre in Chicago.

On 11-21 June, the Romanian Cultural Institute in Paris, in collaboration with L'Odéon – Théâtre de l'Europe in Paris and the National Theatre in Timișoara/Saltimbanc Foundation supported the performance of *The Sickness of Family M* directed by Radu Afrim. The performances took place at Ateliers Berthier/Grande salle (a former factory redesigned to serve as a unique performance stage) in the presence of a packed auditorium, including some important names in Parisian theatre circles. Theatre critic Christine Sanchez called it: "a show suspended somewhere between poetry and reality, ranking among the top theatrical performances, where drama mixes with joy, where love is born from failure and where nothing, not even death, stops life from following its course..." (<http://www.artictikrezo.com>).

With this project, the Romanian Cultural Institute continued its strategy of promoting Romanian theatre and its potential for international cooperation, with the help of one of the most famous Romanian directors of the moment. Radu Afrim captivated the attention of French audience's yet again, having last year won the Press Award at the Festival in Avignon with Matei Vişniec's *A Paris Attic Overlooking Death*. Again, the performance included in the Off section was made possible thanks to the financial support of the Romanian Cultural Institute.

Radu Afrim also collaborated with the Romanian Cultural Institute in Warsaw on a performance untitled *Plasticine*, staged at the "Toma Caragiu" Theatre in Ploiești, as part of the **"Close Strangers" International Theatre Festival in Poznań** (Poland) on 27 March. Radu Afrim's production, which received the 2006 UNITER Award for Best Director, stirred much enthusiasm on the part of the audience, and was one of the most talked about shows in the festival.

Radu Alexandru Nica was invited by **the Trap Door Theatre in Chicago** to direct the show *Horses at the*



*Horses at the Window* – "Director Nica, a fellow Romanian, gives *Horses* an astoundingly creative, evocative staging. Freewheeling but deceptively precise, Nica's remarkably physical production – as much a dance piece as a play – teeters gleefully on the edge of extravagance. His six cast members commit thoroughly and admirably to the reality of their surreality." Kris Vire, *TimeOut Chicago*, 26 March, 2009

*Window*. The play is a poignant examination of the mental and emotional anguish experienced by those left at home during wartime and, at the same time, an allegory of the silent but powerful way in which society trivialises the idea and the reality of war. Radu Alexandru Nica is well-known in Romania for the attention he pays to "the new realism", a movement in search of the truth in any given play, no matter how absurd it might be. As Brian Kirst observes in the *Chicago Free Press* (9 April): "Romanian director Radu Alexandru Nica rises to the level of his style, described as 'the new realism'. He actively encourages the actors to search for the truth even in the strangest and most difficult fragments of Vişniec's text".

Another young artist supported by the Romanian Cultural Institute is playwright Gianina Cărbunariu. At the beginning of this year, she participated in the **"New Text New Theatre"** event held in Istanbul on 28-31 January, initiated by the VeDST theatre company. The project included a workshop based on the play *Kebab*, with the participation of young actors, directors and playwrights. As a result of this project, the play *Stop the Tempo* was subsequently staged by well-known Turkish director Özen Yula. The show was performed every Saturday by Turkish actors throughout the summer, in one of Istanbul's most fashionable clubs, in the Beyoğlu district. The director describes why he chose Gianina Cărbunariu's play and the prospects of staging other plays by young Romanian playwrights as follows: "I really enjoyed the text in the first place and then I think it is a really good theatre text to talk about the situation of many countries nowadays. In Turkey we have the same kind of situation among youth. (...) I am also thinking about directing plays by Maria Manolescu and Ștefan Peca in the future". Gianina Cărbunariu's play was highly appreciated by audiences and the press, as Özen Yula declares: "The Turkish audience really enjoyed the play and it's been very well received by the press. As actors and director we had many interviews in newspapers and on television. Also,



theatre critics are very much interested in the play. Turkish theatre magazine *Tiyatro Tiyatro* ran a special feature on the play in its September issue”.

In addition, this summer, the Romanian Cultural Institute (RCI) in Paris, together with **Théâtre Studio d'Alfortville**, organised a theatre soirée dedicated to Gianina Cărbunariu. There was a performance of *Stop the Tempo* on 22 June, and a preview of the first act of the play *The War Is Over. What Shall We Do Now?*, in the theatre hall of the Béhague Palace. Among the participants, besides Gianina Cărbunariu, there were also actors from Théâtre Studio – Jean-Philippe Ricci, Aurélie Namur, Florence Janas, Renan Carteaux and



*Stop the Tempo* – “What seemed very fair in the RCI’s involvement in my projects abroad was the fact that it always reacted to the proposals from foreign theatre companies or artists who expressed an intention to collaborate with me. The proposals always came from foreign partners, and the RCI’s support made it possible for me to travel abroad to these events, to publish some anthologies of contemporary Romanian drama that helped to promote the texts abroad, and also to stage the show *mady-baby.edu* at the various festivals to which it had been invited.” Gianina Cărbunariu

director Christian Benedetti. The editors were also interested in the plays *Kebab* and *Stop the Tempo*, which were both included in a volume of contemporary Romanian drama published in January 2009 by the Czech Theatre Institute Publishing House, as part of its “Contemporary Drama” series. The publication was awarded a grant by the RCI through the Translation and Publication Support Programme. The launch event, held at the RCI Prague, was accompanied by a performance of *Kebab* produced by director Vojta Štěpánek at the Strašnice Theatre in Prague.

#### **The Andrei Șerban Travelling Academy**

Director Andrei Șerban and the actors of the Travelling Academy 2009 were greeted with great interest and curiosity by the New York audience present on 5 October at the **Martin E. Segal Theatre Center, City University of New York (CUNY)**, a “must see” event according to *The New York Times*. The performance at Martin E. Segal was accompanied by sequences filmed during the workshop organised by the Academy, together with Andrei Șerban’s comments, a demonstration with the actors present, and the launch of the two-volume illustrated book dedicated to Andrei Șerban: *My Travels: Theatre* and *My Travels: Opera* published by the Romanian Cultural Institute Publishing House.

Frank Hentschker, the executive and events manager of the Martin E. Segal Theatre Center, declared that it was one of the most wonderful nights he had ever organised at the Center, and that he was pleasantly impressed by the diversity of the theatregoers in the audience: members of the academy, theatre professionals and other people interested in meeting the great director on his first visit to CUNY.

Andrei Șerban was also a guest at other events in Europe, with the support of the Romanian Cultural Institutes in Prague, Warsaw and Madrid. On 10 March, the institute in the Czech capital organised a meeting for press and public with the Romanian director and

set designer Adriana Grand, as well as a presentation of the two Andrei Șerban books published by the RCI Publishing House. This double event coincided with the premiere of the opera production directed by Andrei Șerban (sets by Adriana Grand) – *Eugene Onegin*, music by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, staged at the **National Theatre in Prague**. Also in March, the show *Deadly Confession* was invited by RCI Warsaw to participate in the **International Festival of Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant**, held in Łódź. The show, directed by Andrei Șerban as part of his Travelling Academy, initiated by RCI New York, gripped Polish audiences. The play was performed before a packed auditorium for two nights in a row. Leading actresses Ramona Dumitrescu and Andreea Tokai shared the Award for best actress presented by the organisers. Following this success, director Andrei Șerban was invited to take part in the twentieth **International Festival of Contemporary Theatre in Santander**, put together by the Contemporary Theatre of the Cantabria University, RCI Madrid and the National Theatre in Cluj-Napoca. The play *Cleansed* by Sarah Kane, staged by the National Theatre in Cluj-Napoca, was selected to open the festival in an alternative space, the Santander Sports Centre, on 15 and 16 October.

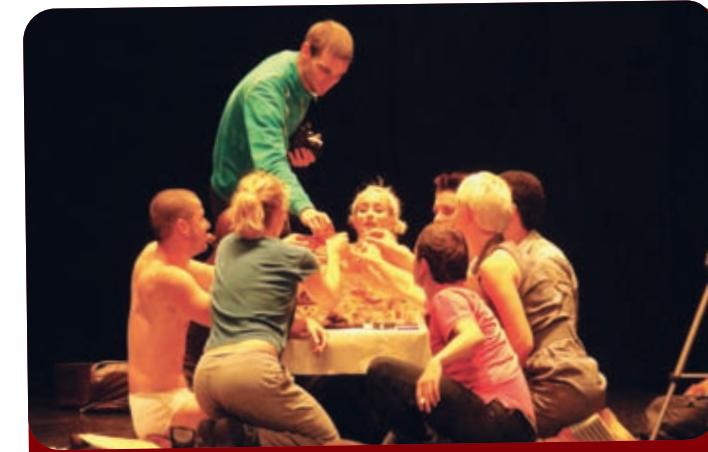
#### **Dance**

Although much of the effort to promote the performing arts has focused on theatre, nor has contemporary dance been neglected. The RCI New York and RCI Warsaw supported two important projects dedicated to this performing art.

The project initiated by the RCI New York, “**POONARC: A Page Out of Order: Not About Romanian Cinema**”, was held in June, and was organised by Yoshiko Chuma and the School of Hard Knocks/ROOT CULTURE. Six performances took place at the Danspace Project in New York. Four Romanian artists were involved in the project: director Theo Hergheliegiu, dancers and choreographers Andreea Duță and Istvan

Teglas, and actor Sorin Calotă. Yoshiko Chuma, the art director of the School of Hard Knocks, and a creative driving force behind the New York dance scene of the 1980s, has, over the length of his career, collaborated with artists from over 42 countries. The multidisciplinary project POONARC (dance/visual/multimedia) brought together artists from Japan, Romania and the USA, and was inspired by recent Romanian films, as well as a hyper-realist train journey from Cluj to Bucharest in 2008. Seven-foot-high metal cubes were used as train compartments, and the dancers wove a series of stories against a backdrop of excerpts from Romanian films.

The RCI Warsaw collaborated with the **Silesian Dance Theatre in Bytom**, one of the most important institutions for choreography in Poland, to stage the dance show *Me, You, Now, Here*, choreographed by Mihai Mihalcea, manager of the National Dance Centre in Bucharest. The show, based on an idea by Mihai Mihalcea and dealing with the present as recorded in the body and movements of the dancers, premiered on 5 July this year at the International Dance Festival, an initiative of the Silesian Dance Theatre. The show is to be presented in Krakow and Kalisz before being introduced into the theatre company’s repertoire.



*Me, You, Now, Here* choreographed by Mihai Mihalcea



## The New Visibility of Romanian Contemporary Art

Maybe it is a paradox or maybe it is merely an injection of normality, but the most recent overview of contemporary Romanian art has come from a critic outside Romania: Jane Neal is a well-known independent British curator, whose writings and reviews (often with the value of verdicts) have been published in prestigious magazines such as *Art Review*, *Modern Painters*, *Contemporary*, *Flash Art* and *Art in America*. Of course, Neal has for a number of years been familiar with the dynamic contemporary Romanian scene. Her first encounter with the Cluj nucleus was (at least) as early as 2005. Published at the beginning of September 2009 in *Modern Painters*, her essay "The New Roman(ian) Order" manages to synthesise a series of the artistic positions taken by my generation, whose common denominator, in spite of the nuances, is identified by Jane Neal as a sharpness of individual perception, which often carries the imprint of a predilection on the part of young artists for irony, cynicism and, why not, conceptual hermeticism and obscure atmosphere. To add to what she says, I would identify here, in spite of somewhat beneficial geographic polarisation, the stabilisation of distinct individual discourses, easily divined in the paragraphs of this 2009 index to the visual arts, with the observation that in the economy of the present text significant names and situations will have been examined far too cursorily. But let us nonetheless review some of the most substantial events of 2009. In my view, two debuts defined the year 2009 as a whole. In February, the Uncredit Pavilion was inaugurated – a centre for contemporary art and culture, the fruit of a lengthy partnership between

*Pavilion* magazine, the Bucharest Biennale and Uncredit Ţiriac Bank. Intended as an independent space for visual, discursive and performing creativity and research, the Pavilion will organise annually three or four international exhibitions, together with a series of events, screenings and educative meetings (similar in format to those of a Free Academy) to reach well-defined segments of the wider public. "Statement" (curator: Lia Perjovschi), "How Innocent is that?" (curator: Eugen Rădescu) and "Exploring the Return of Repression" (curator: Răzvan Ion) are merely the first three such events in this series. In addition, the centre's youthful team have made available a Pavilion Resource Room (with three sections: Documentary, Inspirational, Drop Box), in effect a "non-archive", conceived by Răzvan Ion and Eugen Rădescu. The second initiative would be that created by the E-cart.ro Association. Launched in March 2009, the "Café-bar Manifesto" is a platform of the Department for Art in the Public Space (a spin-off from the "Public Space Bucharest 2007" pilot project), which aims to encourage debate about the public space in Romania



"Public Image" at "Café-bar Manifesto" © Cristian Samoilă

and to catalyse a series of interventions in the urban and social fabric of the city. "Café-bar Manifesto" temporarily occupies various spaces around the city –cafés, terraces, canteens etc. – in order to provide an informal framework for discussions. "Communist hasn't happened... yet!" (Control Club, 18 March); "Genealogies of Post-Communism" (deBuffet terrace, 6 May); "Public Image" (El Comandante, 14 May); "What (else) is to be done?" (UNITER Summer Garden, 13 July); and "Critical Art and its Spectators" (Green Hours, 17 October) were the first sequences in this programme, whose guests include artists, writers, cultural theorists, philosophers, curators, film and theatre critics, anthropologists, sociologists and political scientists.

Believe it or not, this discursive dimension to contemporary Romanian art finds its place only after the certification of a production. And in this sense I don't think it should be the case to negotiate the propulsive role played, alongside a handful of Romanian curators, by a series of institutions (of varying sizes, but equally competitive in the cultural arena) in bringing to the international stage artists who are mainly in their thirties. Initiated and co-ordinated by figures who are both versatile and charismatic, the Periferic Contemporary Art Biennale and Vector Association in Jassy, the Plan B Galleries (Cluj and Berlin), the Andreiana Mihail and Ivan galleries (Bucharest), and the Mihai Nicodim Gallery (Culver City, California) have from the outset consistently taken an interest in recent artistic practices, while lately their discursive and exhibition portfolios have begun gradually to make room for a sequence of Romanian art that made its debut long before 1989 (see Ion Grigorescu and Geta Brătescu).

It was only recently that I received the bold catalogue conceived by Angelo Gioe and published by Silvana Editoriale Milano on the occasion of the exhibition entitled "Sounds & Visions. Artists' Films and Video from Europe. The Last Decade" (curators: Angelo

Gioe and Maria Rosa Sossai), held at the Tel Aviv Art Museum between 6 February and 7 March 2009. This joint venture by the Istituto Italiano di Cultura, Institut Français, Goethe Institut and Romanian Cultural Institute, part of a major series of events to celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of Tel Aviv, presented a selection of the best works of video art from Europe. The invitation went out to artists from twenty-one member states of the European Union, among whom can be found a number of extremely interesting figures in contemporary art, such as Steve McQueen (author of the British Pavilion at the last Venice Art Biennale), Guido van der Werve (whose recordings of hallucinatory performances garnered the most attention at Manifest 7 in Trentino-Revereto, 2008, in the section whose curator was Adam Budak), Haris Epaminonda and Deimantas Narkevicius. Well, in such a tour-de-force of recent video art, the presence of duo Mona Vătămanu and Florin Tudor, supported in the catalogue in question by the contribution of Mihnea Mircan, not only adds another line to their biography as artists (between their participation at



Mona Vătămanu & Florin Tudor, *The Rain*, 2005



the International Biennale of Contemporary Art in Berlin, 2008, the Periferic in Iași, and their individual exhibitions “Dissolving Absolute Structures” at the Kunstverein Ludwigsburg and “Surplus Value” at BAK (basis voor actuele kunst, Utrecht), but is also an indication of the maturity of a discourse that is simultaneously conceptual and metaphorical. 2009 was also the year when Mona Vătămanu and Florin Tudor took part in the “Videos Europa” group exhibition, organised by Le Fresnoy at the Lille International Centre of Contemporary Arts, and at the Frieze Art Fair in London (15-18 October, 2009), in the non-commercial Frame section, dedicated to individual exhibitions (via the Andreiana Mihail Gallery).

It is true that there are still reservations on the part of specialist audiences (and not only) with regard to the participation of galleries at major international art fairs, but this is merely a consequence of an erroneous understanding of the climate that such gatherings generate. The slanted view of fairs is just one of the dysfunctions of those who deliberately situate themselves at the periphery of the current cultural space, while such enterprises as the Frieze Fair or Liste Basel today give more and more room to an entire range of theoretical and even interdisciplinary sessions, receiving an incredible amount of attention from the market for cultural values, and not only that of experts in the art market. The ease with which galleries such as Plan B and the Andreiana Mihail take part in these international competitions has drawn behind it, like a locomotive, the attention of commentators usually quite niggardly in wagering on the “newcomer”, and who have thus taken the time to analyse with care the context of the visual arts in Romania. Also in this respect, and by no means accidentally, Mihai Pop (co-author, along with Adrian Ghenie, and co-ordinator of the Plan B Gallery project in Cluj) was invited by the organisers of the fourth Prague Biennale of Contemporary Art (14 May – 26 July 2009) to propose a series of artworks for an exhibition entitled “Staging the

Grey”. Mihai Pop’s selection, from a segment labelled (whether felicitously or not) “the Cluj school”, included artists Marius Bercea, Andrei Câmpan, Radu Comșa, Oana Fărcaș, Adrian Ghenie, Cantemir Hauși, Victor Răcățău, Șerban Savu and Mircea Suciuc – artists whose attachment to figurative painting has won them major international exposure in recent years. Of these artists, it is perhaps Adrian Ghenie who has made the most significant leap in terms of international visibility: his biography is easily accessible on the Internet, and so here I wish merely to mention his recent individual exhibition at the Haunch of Venison Gallery in London and the current exhibition at the Bucharest National Museum of Contemporary Art (November 2009 – February 2010), whose curator is Magda Radu. However, I should add that the first monograph on Adrian Ghenie will be published this year by Hatje Cantz Verlag, edited by Juerg Judin, with texts by Anette Hüscher and Matt Price. The trend seems clear: young artists are placing themselves in the hands of foreign publishers in order to see their catalogues and books in print, the exception in Romania being the collections launched by IDEA in Cluj.

To linger for a moment on artists from Cluj, we cannot ignore the exhibitions of artist Victor Man: invited to the Boijmans Van Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam, in 2009 for an intervention on the occasion of the gallery’s anniversary, he later held a spectacular one-man exhibition at the Vassivière International Centre of Art and Landscape (February-June 2009), his first in France. “Attebasile” (curator: Chiara Parisi), held in partnership with the Ikon Gallery in Birmingham, showed pieces made by Victor Man in the last two years: paintings, assemblies, objects, drawings and works specially produced for this event – all designed to define the artist’s singular universe, in which the self-referential, memory, and political and national identity become/remain the keywords. The installation presented in Vassivière served to intensify the international attention granted to the artist, with



the result that the Gladstone Gallery in New York invited Victor Man to hold a one-man exhibition shortly thereafter, in May-June 2009.

To return to video art, careful consideration should be given to Matei Bejenaru’s selection for the exhibition held in the FUTURA Centre for Contemporary Art in Prague, entitled “Bad Times. Good Times” (3 March – 19 April 2009). There were screenings and video installations by Ștefan Rusu, Viaceslav Druță, Lučezar Boyadjiev, Cristina David, Vlad Nancă, Aurelia Mihai, Ștefan Constantinescu, Nikoleta Marković, Danilo Prnjat, and Dumitru Oboroc. The interest of the exhibition resides in the elasticity of the way in which Matei Bejenaru imagines a conceptual dialogue between the works of these artists from Eastern Europe. In addition, the exhibition put forward as a theme for reflection critical discourses about the process of contemporary societal transformation in the given context, whose structure set out from contradictory notions (religion/individualism, archaic/modern, rural/urban, nationalism/international openness), which define not only the socio-political and economic climate of the region, but also its mindsets.

At the risk of blowing my own trumpet, I would like to mention that Ștefan Constantinescu and Aurelia Mihai, who both graduated from the Bucharest University of Art in the 1990s, before settling in Stockholm and Hamburg respectively, were both represented at the Periferic Biennale in Iași and only afterwards in Bucharest, in the form of author installations at the National Museum of Contemporary Art (Ștefan with “Thank you for this wonderful day”, from 2007, and Aurelia Mihai with “The Social Being of Truth”, from 2009; curator: Oana Tănase). In addition, in 2009, Ștefan Constantinescu was one of the artists who exhibited, along with Andrea Faciu and Ciprian Mureșan, in the “Seductiveness of the Interval” exhibition proposed by curator Alina Șerban to represent Romania at the 53rd Venice International Art Biennale (June - November 2009). The project, as formulated by Alina Șerban,

set out to bring back into discussion the relationship between the artwork and the viewer, at the same time reactivating a set of notions first launched by theorist Michael Fried. The publication that accompanied the exhibition extended the theoretical register with contributions from prestigious voices in contemporary culture including Mieke Bal, Roann Barris, Hanneke Grootenboer, Catrin Lundqvist, Erika Fischer-Lichte, Dan Lungu, Angelika Nollert, Katalin Timar, Saviana Stănescu, Andrei State, Ovidiu Țichindeleanu and Adnan Yildiz.

However subjective and fragmentary it might be, I hope that the series of events outlined here will arouse the interest of specialists and the wider public and encourage them to find out more about the arts scene in Romania, to understand its pulse and to wager on the most dynamic directions and figures of the moment.

Oana Tănase



Ștefan Constantinescu, *Troleibuzul 92*, 2009  
Romanian Pavilion – 53rd Venice Biennale International Art Exhibition  
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## Romanian Cultural Institute Events

### Romanian artists at the Biennales

Participation in international biennales plays a significant part in making international audiences aware of work by Romanian artists.

Interested in the mainly figurative painting of Eastern European artists, the organisers of the fourth **Prague Biennale of Contemporary Art**, "Expanding Painting 3", held between 14 May and 26 July at the "Karlín Hall" Centre for Modern Art in Prague, invited the Plan B Gallery from Cluj to set up the Romanian section. The Romanian Cultural Institute in Prague supported the participation of the "Staging the Grey" exhibition, put together by Mihai Pop, in collaboration with Jane Neal. Marius Bercea, Andrei Câmpănu, Radu Comşa, Oana Fărcaş, Adrian Ghenie, Cantemir Hauşi, Victor Răcăţău, Şerban Savu and Mircea Suciuc were among the artists whose work was exhibited. The Biennale brought together works by 200 artists from 28 countries, and the main exhibitions were dedicated to painting. The exhibitions at the Plan B Gallery in Berlin were also supported by the Romanian Cultural Institute in Berlin, in both 2008 and 2009, and in 2010 the same gallery will exhibit works by Romanian artists never before seen by Berlin audiences.

2009 marked the **53rd Venice Art Biennale**, one of the most important events in the contemporary visual arts. Besides the logistics it provides each year, the Romanian Institute for Culture and Humanistic Research in Venice (RICHR Venice), together with the Romanian Cultural Institute in Stockholm, contributed to the writing, financing, publications and promotion of the project catalogue for Romania's participation at the Biennale – "The Seductiveness of the Interval" (curator: Alina Şerban, commissioner: Monica Morariu, authors: Ştefan Constantinescu, Andrea Faciu, Ciprian

Mureşan). This year, the RICHR Venice also organised a contest for a residency during the Art Biennale, which was awarded to Mircea Nicolae. The title of the project proposed by the winner of the first stage of the residency was "Glass Globes". The second stage was entitled "Young Romanian Art" and consisted of a series of fourteen one-week exhibitions aimed at promoting young Romanian art during the Venice Art Biennale. Works by the following artists were exhibited: Nicoleta Esinencu, Vlad Nancă, Mircea Nicolae, Michele Bressan, Suzana Dan, Răzvan Botiş, Cezar Lăzărescu, Daniel Knorr, Mihai Iepure-Gorski, Tudor Bratu, Elena Ciobanu, Alexandru Ciobotariu, Tudor Prisacariu, Andy Sinboy, No Limits Missionary, Lea Rasovszky, Teodor Isfan, Michael Baers, Benedek Levente, Dragoş Burlacu, Alexandru Croitoru, Ştefan Tiron, Claudiu Cobilanschi, Elena Ciobanu, Oana Toderică, Alina Andrei, Simion Cernica, Cuzina, Veda Popovici, Alina Samoschi, Dragoş Platon, Claudiu Ciobanu, Jean-Lorin Sterian, Bogdan Gârbovan, Mălina Ionescu, Bogdan Bordeianu, Maxim Dumitraş, Cosmin Năsui and Lucian Muntean. Their works were thematically grouped, resulting in fourteen themes,



Michele Bressan & Mircea Nicolae, *Lipstick* © Mircea Nicolae

or exhibitions, which all had in common the authors' preoccupation – as reflected in the various approaches – with the structural modifications of contemporary society in relation to Romania's recent history. At the end of the residency, Mircea Nicolae's aim was to include the works of the artists exhibited in Venice in the permanent collection of a Museum of Young Romanian Art.

**The eleventh Istanbul International Biennale**, the most important artistic event in the Turkish cultural calendar, was held between 12 September and 8 November. The title of this Biennale was taken from the last song in Bertold Brecht's *Threepenny Opera*, and the curators were the members of What, How & for Whom, a non-profit organisation for visual artists and curators founded in 1999 in Zagreb. "What Keeps the Mankind Alive?" was held at three locations: Antrepo No. 3 (Karaköy), Tutun Deposu (Tophane) and the Feriköy Greek School (Sisli). The first two locations were former factories that have been converted into permanent exhibition spaces. Ioana Nemeş, a Romanian artist invited to the Biennale with the support of the Romanian Cultural Institute in Istanbul, produced a new work in a space provided by the Greek School. Her work, a textual installation, is part of a new and more extended series that commences a dialogue with the locations, urban context and concept of the Biennale exhibition.

Ioana Nemeş was the only Romanian artist to be invited this year to the prestigious contemporary art Volta Show NY (5-8 March, 2009), part of the Armory Arts Week in New York. The exhibition-installation made up of paintings and sculptures presented by the Jiri Svestka Gallery (Prague) at Volta focused on re-establishing a connection between Romanian traditional objects and their lost ritualistic potential. The show subsequently opened in Berlin. During the Volta Fair NY, on 6 March, Ioana Nemeş was the special guest of RCI New York, where she talked about her recurrent themes, the various media between which her work migrates, and



Ioana Nemeş at Volta NY © Ioana Nemeş

the insertion of traditional objects in her current visual discourse.

"My presence there was useful because I had the opportunity better to explain what my sculptures are all about. And the presentation I gave at the RCI NY helped me to meet with art professionals interested in my works. Following that artist talk, I was able to plan exhibitions/projects with the curators there." (Ioana Nemeş)

In Stockholm, Ioana Nemeş was invited (as an artist and one half of the interior design duo Liste Noire), together with Maria Drăghici (artist and representative of La Bomba Studios/Rahova-Uranus Community Center), by the RCI Stockholm to participate in the talks and presentations programme "Supermarket Talks". The programme was held during the **"Supermarket 2009 Alternative Art Fair"** (13-15 February), where the Centre for Visual Introspection in Bucharest, coordinated by artists Anca Benera, Arnold Estefan, Cătălin Rulea and curator Alina Şerban, had its own stand. The Centre presented a project entitled "Ars Telefonica", which took place in Bucharest in the autumn of 2008, with the participation of Studio





Ars Telefonica at "Supermarket 2009"

Basar (Bucharest) and Carl Michael von Hausswoff (Stockholm), among others.

"Supermarket is both a journey and a process, both on the inside and on the outside. I watch this process and I wonder. I listen to art on the telephone (Ars Telefonica) at the Centre for Visual Introspection from Bucharest, I visit the unique art film archive of Filmform, I browse through the books drawn by Trond Hugbo Haugen for the No Cube Publishing House and I learn about the Art in office network." (*Dagens Nyheter*, 14 February, 2009)

#### Romanian artists at international exhibitions

Another successful project was organised by the Accademia di Romania in Rome – "Spazi Aperti VII – re:making worlds/ri:fare mondi" (27 May – 11 June, 2009). Fifty-five international artists were invited to the Accademia to take part in a multimedia exhibition (video, installations, performance, painting, sculpture, architecture, photography, music, dance etc.). As with previous editions, "Spazi Aperti" is the result of a partnership between resident artists of the foreign Academies and Institutes in Rome. This year, the special guest was the National University of Arts Bucharest, which presented works by some of its young talents.

Just two and a half years after its inauguration, the Romanian Cultural Institute in Stockholm "has become an important place on the Swedish art scene". This verdict was delivered by Håkan Nilsson, an art critic writing for *Dagens Nyheter* – the most important Swedish daily newspaper – and can be found in his review of the exhibition that the RCI Stockholm held between 25 April – 28 August at its headquarters – "Visual Playgrounds: Cristina David & Anna Nyberg", curator: Catrin Lundqvist. At the same time, Håkan Nilsson ranks "Visual Playgrounds" among the top three must-see exhibitions in May (*Dagens Nyheter*, 31 May, 2009). The exhibition was conceived for the space available at the RCI Stockholm as a meeting between Cristina David and Anna Nyberg. The two female artists interacted with each other's works, as well as with the space within the institute, turning it into a visual playground. The exhibition also included the film *What Is Image?* produced by Catrin Lundqvist and artist Suwam Laimanee (Chiang Mai, Thailand), which sets out from a text on the significance of images written by philosophy lecturer Marcia Sá Cavalcante Schuback (Södertörn University, Stockholm) for the exhibition catalogue.



Marius Purice at "Spazi Aperti VII – re:making worlds/ri:fare mondi"

#### Romanian artists at international galleries

The support provided by the Romanian Cultural Institute to Romanian artists giving solo exhibitions or taking part in group exhibitions at international museums and galleries was of no less importance this year.

Between 6 February and 14 March, the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw hosted the **first international retrospective of work by artist Ion Grigorescu**.

The inauguration of the exhibition turned out to be a major public event, with around 300 people attending the opening. Likewise, the exhibition also enjoyed extensive media coverage: over twenty articles in the print media and a special report on the public television. The retrospective, held in collaboration with the RCI Warsaw, was conceived by one of Europe's most influential curators, Kathrin Rhombert, the curator of the Berlin Art Biennale, and was hosted by one of the most prestigious exhibition spaces for modern and contemporary art in Poland. The exhibition demonstrated Ion Grigorescu's international value and presented a significant part of the great artist's work: photographs, painted photographs, films, and texts from 1969 to 2008, brought together from various collections in Romania, Austria, and France.

*fair* magazine, a German quarterly publication of art and aesthetics, published in its April 2009 issue a wide-ranging feature on Ion Grigorescu.

The artist, one of the most important representatives of Romanian visual arts in the '70s and '80s, whose activity and contribution to the alternative scene in Romania has been the subject of many exhibitions in Europe over the past few years, this year attended the opening of his first exhibition in North America, on 28 August, at the **Ludlow 38 Gallery in New York**. The exhibition, whose curators were Anders Kreuger (European Kunsthalle Köln) and Tobi Maier (Ludlow 38), was held between 28 August and 11 October, and was conceived as a Ion Grigorescu – Lili Dujourie (Belgium) duo. It featured films and photographs taken by Ion Grigorescu during the '70s. As a result of this



Ion Grigorescu at Ludlow 38 © John Berens

first exhibition in New York, his video work *Dialogue with Nicolae Ceaușescu* was included in the exhibition "Revolutionary Voices: Performing Arts in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1980s". This exhibition, running at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts from November 2009 until March 2010, is part of the series of events organised as part of the "Performing Revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe" festival, initiated by the New York Public Library for Performing Arts, in which the RCI New York is both co-organiser and partner. Present at the opening, curators Marc and Livia Straus chose Ion Grigorescu's works *To My Beloved Bucharest* (video, 1977) and *Self-portrait* (photo, 2007) for inclusion in the exhibition "After the Fall" (19 September, 2010 – 26 July, 2011), together with visual artists from Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Albania, and Georgia. Other works by six Romanian visual artists, including Adrian Ghenie, Șerban Savu, Ciprian Mureșan and Marius Bercea, will be included in the exhibition organised and hosted by the Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art, New York.

Another significant moment in the history of Romanian art that featured Ion Grigorescu as its protagonist, together with Ștefan Bertalan and Florin Mitroi, was a project initiated by the RCI Bucharest





through its Visual Arts Department and entitled “**The Self-Tormentor**”. Held at the “Brancovan Palaces” Cultural Centre in Mogoșoia between 5 April and 15 May, the project had already toured Romania, taking in the Art Museum in Timișoara (25 May – 30 June), the Brukenthal Museum in Sibiu (11-30 August), and the Art Museum in Cluj (16 September – 18 October). It then travelled abroad, to the Klosterneuburg Abbey in Vienna (19 November, 2009 – 15 March, 2010) and to the European Parliament in Strasbourg (15-18 December, 2009). The exhibition aims to provide an anthropological insight into the tragedy of our recent history and is accompanied by a massive 334-page catalogue. Besides reproductions of the three hundred works exhibited, the publication includes written testimonies from the three artists (dating from the 1980s and ‘90s), facsimiles of sketches and drawings by the artists, critical studies on the history of contemporary art, essays on historical anthropology, and a wide-ranging (illustrated) chronology of the material, political and social culture of Romania during the 1980s and ‘90s.

Nor was urban culture neglected. Female artist Flash Rosenberg, in residence for the “LIVE” programme at the New York Public Library, reacted enthusiastically and awarded the online prize for the best and funniest New York event title to “**Very Bad Comics & So-So Music from Romania**”. The event was presented by the RCI New York on 5 June in order to celebrate the first Romanian presence at MoCCA (the Museum of Cartoon and Comic Art Festival). Artist Matei Branea spoke to the American audience about the *Hardcomics* and *Aooleu* publications, thus introducing Romanian comics and the comic art scene in Romania. *Rezistența Materialelor* (Materials Resistance) performed live on this occasion, also for the first time in New York. The participation of *Hardcomics* at MoCCA and the presentation at RCINY were both very successful, and specialised blogs mentioned the Romanian presence at the festival alongside that of publications

from Nordic countries, currently very popular in the USA. MoCCA is one of the largest festivals of its kind in the USA, with the participation each year of over 100 publications from around the world, as well as numerous artists and specialists.

Romanian artists were also promoted via a special issue of *A5 Magazine*, a quarterly publication of contemporary art and culture from Israel, which was launched at the beginning of December 2009, in partnership with the RCI Tel Aviv. Visual artists and also writers were invited to submit works to an international multidisciplinary project called “REMIX (Choose your favourite song. Create your artwork inspired by the song)”, which is the subject of this issue. The publication presents works of visual art and bilingual literary texts (in English and Hebrew), with no limits as to style, genre or technique, submitted by artists from Israel and all over the world.

#### **Romanian heritage in Europe and the United States**

As part of a series of projects dedicated to promoting Romanian cultural patrimony, the RCI New York is supporting and promoting the first North-American exhibition dedicated to the Cucuteni Culture at ISAW (the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, New York University). The objects in “**The Lost World of Old Europe – The Danube Valley, 5000-3500 BC**” exhibition come from more than twenty museums in three countries: Romania, Bulgaria and the Republic of Moldova. On 12 November, for the opening of the exhibition, the RCINY co-organised and hosted a round table discussion, which was open to the public. The speakers were Crișan Mușeteanu, director of the National Museum of Romanian History, and Ioan Oprea, a researcher at the same institution. The exhibition is accompanied by a series of artistic events and meetings aimed at creating a dialogue between the archaeological exhibits on display and the contemporary context of Romania and the partner countries. ISAW has also published a catalogue for the exhibition, in

partnership with Princeton University Press.

The National Archaeology Museum in Warsaw is also interested in the Cucuteni Culture. From September 2009 until January 2010, the museum is holding an exhibition entitled “**Neolithic Art and Religion – The Cucuteni Culture**”, presenting to the Polish public around 500 religious and other artefacts from one of the most ancient and fascinating European cultures. Most of the objects on display have never before been exhibited in Poland. Organised under the honorary patronage of the Romanian ambassador to Poland, His Excellence Gheorghe Predescu, and of Adam Struzik, the Marshal of the Voivodship of Mazovia, the exhibition was put together by the Bukovina Museum Centre in Suceava (in partnership with the Moldova Museum Centre in Iași and the Archaeology Museum in Tecuci) and the National Archaeology Museum in Poland, with the financial support of the Ministry of Culture, Religious Affairs and National Heritage, and the financial and logistic support of the Romanian Cultural Institute in Warsaw.

“**The Colours of the Avant-garde. Art in Romania, 1910-1950**” is one of the most significant heritage exhibitions that Romania has organised abroad in the last twenty years. It was inaugurated at the National Museum of Contemporary Art – the Chiado Museum in Lisbon, where it ran from 26 March to 21 June, and at the Národní Galerie in Prague, from 2 July to 20 September. The selection for this exhibition included 65 of the 106 paintings presented during the event organised by the RCI in 2007 as part of the “Sibiu – European Capital of Culture” programme.

The works come from nine Romanian museum partners of the RCI (the National Museum of Romania, Bucharest; the Brukenthal National Museum, Sibiu; and art museums in Brașov, Craiova, Constanța, Drobeta Turnu-Severin, Galați, Oradea and Tulcea), and together comprise an investigation of the political, cultural and aesthetic conditions that marked the emergence of the local avant-garde and traditionalism,

as well as their evolution until the end of the twentieth century. Starting from the mature expressionist and post-impressionist modernism of works dating from around 1910, the exhibition presents the artistic experiences, at once traumatic and utopian, generated by the First World War. The upheaval caused a break in the rhythm of cultural development, imposing some remarkable figures such as Arthur Segal (the future leader of the Novembergruppe in Berlin), Marcel Iancu (founder of Dadaism in Zürich, together with Tristan Tzara), Hans Mattis-Teutsch (an abstract painter with links to the Bauhaus, Der Blaue Reiter and the avant-garde movements in Romania and Hungary), Corneliu Michăilescu, M.H. Maxy, and Victor Brauner. They are joined by classical-modernist works by Theodor Pallady and militant-traditionalist ones by Camil Ressu, Francisc Șirato, and Ion Theodorescu Sion. “Both the contexts within which the modernist avant-garde tried to impose itself were confronted with a very conservative cultural dominant that led to the creation of two periods in the work of some Romanian and Portuguese artists: a period of proximity to the great centres, and another of negotiation with the potential directions within their culturally oppressive context.” (Pedro Lapa, manager of the Chiado Museum in Lisbon)



Victor Brauner, *Adam and Eve*

## Music and its Romanian Life

Whether we are aware of it or not, 2009 is the twentieth year since the political situation in Romania and the whole of Central and Eastern Europe changed, and the arts have been profoundly marked by these transformations.

Many of the Romanian musicians who have given concerts in Romania this year are now leading figures in the national and international music world, but if in 1989 Eastern Europe had not set out in a new historical direction their professional course would undoubtedly have been very different. Although in the past two decades the greater part of these musicians have, in one way or another, sooner or later, returned to Romanian concert halls, in 2009 such appearances might therefore acquire a symbolic charge.

### Great Romanian musicians of the world on the Romanian stage

In Romania, we have on many occasions listened to soloist performances by violinist Liviu Prunaru, currently concertmaster at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam. In the case of the leader of the world's most outstanding orchestra at this time, his Stradivarius does not represent an exception, but rather an index of normality. Liviu Prunaru – who began his career using a Chinese violin and then continued with other instruments of varying quality, the most recent being an Andrea Guarneri – demonstrated at the Romanian Athenaeum yet again that the sound is the man. In him we found strength, brilliance, intellectual nobility, and a joy in music. And this is why Liviu Prunaru's future appearances in Romanian concert halls, where he periodically performs, should not be missed by any musiclover.

The Belcea Quartet – a constant presence in

Romanian concert halls in recent years, and now in their third year of collaboration with the Romanian Cultural Institute for their residencies at the Romanian Athenaeum – represent another positive note. This time, it is Corina Belcea-Fisher who brings her musical partners to Romania, offering audiences at home contact with the highest level in the art of the quartet in contemporary music (the Belcea Quartet is an EMI exclusive artist). Listening in Bucharest to Bartók, to the quartets of Britten, and to numerous pieces by Haydn or Beethoven, we are struck by the up-to-date interpretative versions, which incorporate a musical science specific to the twenty-first century, through a synthesis of styles and elite performance technique. The Romanian Cultural Institute is carrying on its Belcea project, thereby endorsing one of the few classical music acts of European stature to perform in Bucharest during the period between the biennial Enesco Festivals.

In parallel with their programme of concerts, the members of the quartet have participated in a residency where they have taught master classes to two quartets



The Belcea Quartet © Sheila Rock EMI Classics

made up of young musicians from Romania and the Republic of Moldova.

### Angela Gheorghiu returns to Romania

March saw the international launch of a recording of Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* with Angela Gheorghiu in the leading role. In June, the singer returned to Romania, taking part in a music and poetry event at the National Theatre in Bucharest, while in September the people of Bucharest could listen to her at an open-air concert in Constitution Square held on the occasion of Bucharest Day. The context in which Bucharest was offered these moments of vocal music was wholly exceptional. For this episodic appearance before a home audience, Angela Gheorghiu was joined on stage by another six renowned musicians and actors (Radu Beligan, Victor Rebengiuc, Horațiu Mălăele, Mihai Ungureanu, Gabriel Croitoru and Johnny Răducanu), in a unique setting.

In recent years, Romanians have been able to see and hear her mostly through the media of the CD and DVD. Besides that perfection without which it is impossible to remain centre-stage, Angela Gheorghiu communicates through every vocal inflexion – she transmits, she vibrates, she exists through music. She represents that type of performance that is defined only by comparison with the pinnacles of international music. Nevertheless, she never misses an opportunity to meet once more with the audience of the early years of her career.

The tone of her statements in this respect has remained constant: "I never allow anyone to ask me the question of whether or when I left Romania! I never left Romania. Every opera singer must travel in order to have an international career".

### Synchronism with Europe and the rest of the world

Productions made by Romanians for Romanians still make up the greater part of our musical life. One positive aspect is the increasingly individualised trend

for managers in the field to attempt in one way or another to raise music to the European level.

In a cultural synchronisation of European or at least Central European proportions, the premiere of *Eugene Onegin* at the National Opera in Bucharest was held in March, on the 130th anniversary of the premiere of Tchaikovsky's opera, and simultaneous with productions at the National Theatre in Prague and the State Opera in Vienna. Ion Caramitru directed the Bucharest production, having also staged *Eugene Onegin* in Belfast fourteen years previously.

Without forcing the production in the direction of overt modernism, Ion Caramitru's directing tempers the evolution of the soloists, and above all the pictorial appearances of the Opera Choir, coached by Stelian Olariu (who, as always, delights with the level of vocal performance). The youthfulness of the cast, essential to the energy exuded by the entire production, made an especial impact on the atmosphere.

Another example is the Romanian premiere of the musical *Romeo and Juliet*, created by Gérard Presgurvic, based on the Shakespeare play, at the Ion Dacian Operetta Theatre (the show first opened in Paris in 2001, with audiences of two million in its first year alone, later being staged in Canada, London, Amsterdam, Budapest, Szeged, Moscow, Vienna, Seoul, Taipei, and Monterrey).

*Romeo and Juliet* has become a genuine success in Bucharest too, but not only for reasons of the visual and technical qualities of the show, although these are not to be overlooked. The production is to a large extent similar to the one in Budapest, and artists and technicians from the Musical and Operetta Theatre in Budapest have been invited to Bucharest. The show has countless ingredients for success, with its spectacular costumes and sets and outstanding choreography, all against an exceptionally pleasant and accessible musical backdrop.

*Romeo and Juliet* is at the same time the first rock musical to have been staged by any musical theatre

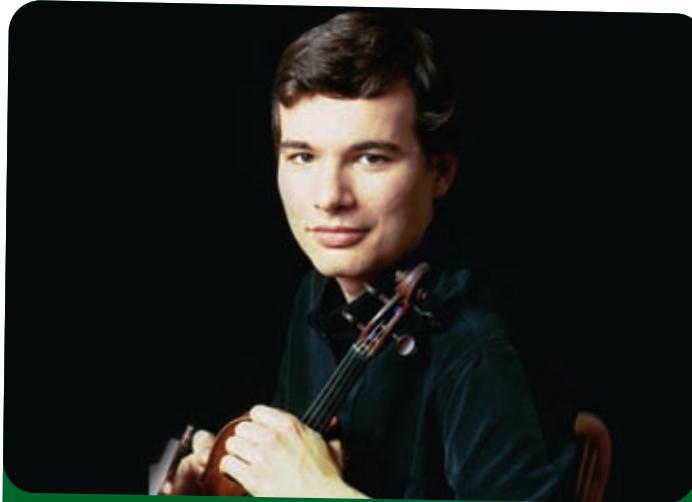
in Romania. But the most convincing aspect at the premiere was the cast, in particular the actors in the two leading roles, George Papagheorghe and Simona Nae, exceptional singers who were joined by dancers and actors to match. This musical has now been seen by more than five million people throughout the world, while album sales have exceeded seven million copies. Bucharest has now entered this circuit.

A different kind of synchronism is reflected by the adoption of "The Met: Live in HD" at the Light Cinema, in one of the auditoriums of the Liberty Centre. In 2009, Romania became the thirtieth country to take up live broadcasts of performances from New York's Metropolitan, starting with the second season of this wholly unique idea, conceived by Peter Gelb, the general director of the New York opera house. "The Met: Live in HD" at the Liberty Centre represents another cinema to add to the eight hundred all over the world that already broadcast these performances, which, in order to compensate for the time difference with Europe, are held at lunchtime in New York.

With the same aim of revitalising relations with audiences, the adoption of a Viennese recipe, with the title Bucharest Music Film Festival, enlivened the centre of the capital with classical music this summer. The summer season, which opened at the end of June, came to a close in Enescu Festival Square in September. The combination of lyrical film sequences with live classical music, and of classical music with jazz, is the essential element of this event, a landmark of summer cultural life in Bucharest. The audience's enjoyment seemed to have been in no way affected by sound problems or the car horns and sirens from the main road that surrounds the area in which the event takes place. The atmosphere was extraordinary, and the general ambience is one that causes us to take heart in the existence of a state of cultural normality.

#### A view from the national perspective

Bucharest is undoubtedly the main musical centre in



Alexandru Tomescu

Romania, but there are remarkable initiatives in other cities too. The problem of visibility remains, however, and this works in the favour of musical events that take the capital as their starting point. But when such manifestations acquire a nationwide scope, things start to change.

Braşov, Oradea, Piteşti, Sighişoara, Reghin, Tîrgu-Mureş, Baia Mare, Cluj-Napoca, Sibiu, Timişoara, Lugoj, Bacău, Iaşi and Bucharest were the destinations in the second Stradivarius tour given by Alexandru Tomescu and Horia Mihail between 15 April and 12 May. The tour was special due to the humanitarian cause to which it was dedicated, namely to raise money for the blind. The enthusiasm of the audiences was in unison in all the cities included in the itinerary. Communicating perfectly with Horia Mihail, his interlocutor at the piano and an authentic soloist in his own right, Alexandru Tomescu has increasingly succeeded in attaining the complex profile of a twenty-first century performer who is involved in both musical and public life.

Alexandru Tomescu, alongside Horia Mihail – who are joined by Răzvan Suma in the Romanian Piano Trio, whose autumn Music On tour is now in its third year – has taken on the role of cultural missionary in a way that no other member of the generation now in its thirties has, to my knowledge, in any other field in Romanian culture. It is a return to those outside culture. If it were taken up by more young people in Romanian culture, rather than limiting themselves to the construction of their own image, we would certainly be able to feel prouder of what is happening from day to day in the arts.

In 2009, classical music festivals, especially in the provinces, constituted a veritable miracle. Now in its tenth year, the Enescu and Music of the World Festival, held in Sinaia in August, comes under this heading. Initiated by cellist Marin Cazacu, the Festival has grown year after year, in 2009 reaching eighteen concerts and recitals in twelve days, taking place all along the Prahova Valley. Another key point in this event was the formation of the National Youth Orchestra, a collective musical enterprise that represents the quintessence of optimism. It is a musical entity that no



Cristian Mandeal © Virgil Oprina



Lorenz Năstureică Hershcowici © Virgil Oprina

few countries aspire to have, and if they do, then let it be comparable to the orchestra we watched perform this summer, conducted by Cristian Mandeal, who has trained the Romanian National Youth Orchestra since its inception.

#### The great Enescu Festival

The scale of the 2009 festival could not have been imagined in 1989. Twenty years on, we see dozens of fabulous European orchestras on the Romanian stage. At their head we sometimes find Romanian musicians: Liviu Prunaru is concertmaster at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw; Bogdan Zvorişteanu is concertmaster of the Suisse Romande Orchestra; in Bucharest Lorenz Năstureică Hershcowici conducted, in the dual capacity of conductor and concertmaster, the Munich Chamber Orchestra; and with the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino the concertmaster in Bucharest was a violinist originally from Cluj, Ladislau Horvath. The Festival in figures: 175 events featuring more than 1,800 foreign performers and more than 1,300 Romanian performers, audiences of around 40,000



concertgoers in Festival Square, and 7,000,000 radio listeners... And the list could go on.

The figures for this marvellous musical September in Bucharest pale in comparison beside the audience in the festival halls, which was to a large extent new, giving us hope in a potential return to classical music on the part of younger people. Unfortunately, however, the reasons why people come to the Festival often depend on the impressiveness of its scale as an event rather than on the music itself.

After every Enescu Festival, we complain that the audience then drifts away from classical music. I think that the solution would be at least to try to "repackage" the Philharmonic and Orchestra Radio concerts in brighter colours, to show audiences the physiognomies of exceptional musicians.

Oltea Şerban-Pârâu

## Romanian Cultural Institute Events

### The Music of Enescu in the World's Great Concert Halls

Having become a rival to the Salzburg Festival (Erica Jeal, *The Guardian*, 19 September 2009), the "George Enescu" International Festival and Competition, founded in 1958, has now reached its nineteenth edition. In March, the Romanian Cultural Institute, as co-producer, supported a tour of major European capitals to promote the Festival, during which there were concerts by celebrated Romanian performers and their guests: Vlad Stănculeasa and Claudia Bara (Salle Flagey, Brussels), Clara Cernat and Thierry Huillet (Palais de Béhague, Paris), Ana Tifu accompanied by Giulio Biddau (Accademia di Romania, Roma), Alexandru Tomescu and Horia Mihail (Unicredit Headquarters, Vienna), Luiza Borac (the Romanian Embassy in Berlin) and violinist Remus Azoitei accompanied on the piano by Eduard Stan (the Royal Academy of Music, London).

Remus Azoitei and Eduard Stan are also the authors of the album *George Enescu: Complete Works for Violin and Piano*. Released by the Hänssler label in Germany, the complete works have garnered unanimous praise from the music critics.

In order to promote the works of George Enescu in an international context, the Romanian Cultural Institute has initiated a tour featuring musicians Remus Azoitei and Eduard Stan. Chamber pieces by Brahms completed the repertoire of each concert, and audiences were thus treated to a veritable feast of European music.

This autumn, the "Enescu-Brahms Encounters" tour took in a number of major European and U.S. concert halls: Konserthuset, Stockholm; Palais des Beaux Arts, Brussels; Rudolfinum, Suk Hall, Prague; Auditorio Nacional, Sala de Camara, Madrid; Royal Library, Black Diamond, Copenhagen; National Concert Hall, Dublin; Carnegie Hall, New York and the Salle Cortot, Paris, to name but a few.

The Salle Cortot is linked to another premiere: this year, Parisian audiences were able to listen to the complete vocal works of George Enescu. The composer's forty-two *Lieder* illustrate a creative period spanning almost twenty years, the earliest, settings of German poems by Carmen Sylva, having been composed in 1898, when he was just seventeen. Arranged into two parts, the event was held at the Salle Cortot on 25 January and at Hôtel National des Invalides on 5 October. The Works by Enescu were performed by major names in Romanian and international classical music: Leontina Văduva (soprano), L'Oiseleur des Longchamps (baritone), Alina Pavalache (piano), Viorica Cortez (mezzo-soprano), Nathalie d'Ornano (mezzo-soprano) and Ruxandra Cioranu (soprano). The concerts were organised in partnership with the Société Musicale Française "Georges Enesco", the Army Museum of Paris, and the Austrian Forum, with the support of the "George Enescu" National Museum in Bucharest.

Soprano Leontina Văduva, who regularly performs on the stages of the Covent Garden Opera House, La Scala in Milan, and the New York Metropolitan Opera, will celebrate the National Day of Romania in a spectacular show at the **La Fenice Theatre in Venice**, alongside violinist Alexandru Tomescu and

pianist Horia Mihail. They will be accompanied by the La Fenice Theatre Orchestra, conducted by Andrea Battistoni. The musical programme will bring together various works: *Overture to the European Anthem*, *Doina* and *I Am Going* by George Enescu, *Ballad* by Ciprian Porumbescu, and passages from operas by Rossini, Mozart, Verdi, Puccini and other composers. On this occasion, at the suggestion of the President of the Romanian Cultural Institute, the Mayor of Venice, Mr Massimo Cacciari, will be decorated with the National Order for Merit, with the rank of Grand Officier, awarded by the President of Romania "in recognition of his exceptional merits in promoting and fostering Romanian-Italian cultural relations, promoting an honest image of our nation, and assisting Romanians in Italy". In partnership with the Romanian Radio Broadcasting Company, the event has been promoted by Rai Radio, the European Broadcasting Union and Radio Romania.

Leontina Văduva has been invited to give a recital at the beginning of December as part of the **Enescu**



Leontina Văduva, Salle Cortot, Paris



George Enescu (1881-1955) "For me Enescu is the Absolute. He has always been profoundly resourceful regardless of the musical genre he has approached. There is yet much to be discovered in his music."

Yehudi Menuhin

**Society** season. The Society was founded in 2007, at the initiative of the Romanian Cultural Institute in London, under the patronage of Her Royal Highness Margaret Crown Princess of Romania, with the aim of promoting the remarkable but little known work of George Enescu in Great Britain. Besides the season of concerts held annually at the Institute, the Society provides grants and supports the publication of the work of George Enescu, as well as books and studies about the composer. During the 2009 season, musicians Yuko Inoue, Kathron Sturrok, Remus Azoitei, Eduard Stan, Nicolae Licareț, Amir Tebenikhin and Jaroslaw Nadrzycki have given concert performances. Beginning in the 2009-2010 academic year, the Society now provides study grants to a student of the Royal Academy of Music. This year, the jury, made up of Noel Malcolm, the historian and biographer of George Enescu, Remus Azoitei, the violinist and teacher at the Royal Academy of Music, and Gabriela Massaci, the Director of the Romanian Cultural Institute in London, awarded the grant to Karim Said.

#### From jazz manouche to “Maria T”

After the inaugural success of the 2008 edition, when an audience of 2,500 gave a standing ovation to Florin Niculescu, Didier Lockwood, Thomas Dutronc, Sansévérino, and Angelo Debarre, Rom Music Productions in partnership with the Romanian Cultural Institute in Paris organised a second “**Tzig’n’jazz**” festival in the Salle Trianon on 26 and 28 May 2009. Romanian violinist Costel Nițescu and accordionist Emy Drăgoi, whom have settled in France, but continue gypsy musical traditions, were the hosts, playing alongside invited guests who share with them the same passion for the legacy of legendary guitarist Django Reinhardt. This year, the Romanian musicians’ guests were accordionist Richard Galliano, guitarists Biréli Lagrène and Stochelo Rosenberg, soloist Anne Ducros, as well as the virtuoso bandoneon player Juan José Mosalini and Giani Lincan (cimbalom), all major

figures in the world of jazz manouche and other styles. The festival organiser Alin Predoi, a pianist who has lived in Paris since 1988, is convinced that this project, besides the quality of the musical performances, will also bring about a change in attitudes: “I want to demonstrate that the negative image of gypsies from Romania is a cliché that needs to be left behind. They can also be agents of modernity, and the cosmopolitan spirit of jazz, based on improvisation and shared passions, perfectly illustrates this reality”.

“We listened to jazz manouche, musette, and ethno jazz on Romanian folk themes, all blended with intelligence and stage presence by Emy Drăgoi and his guests. Then there was tzigán jazz, traditional gypsy music and just plain jazz, with Costel Nițescu moving from one genre to another with astonishing ease. The astounding virtuosity of the two musicians, each engaged in a superb duel with the virtuosity of their guests, drew sincere applause from the audience, who packed the Salle Trianon.” (Oltea Șerban-Pârâu, *Adevărul*, 3 June 2009)

The quintet conducted by Emy Drăgoi, which includes cimbalom player Constantin Lăcătuș, guitarists Christophe Lartilleux and Doudou Cuillierier, and young bassist Juan Sebastian Jiménez, originally from Venezuela, also gave a jazz concert in the Auditorium of the Franco-Portuguese Institute in Lisbon on the occasion of the Francophone Festival. The event was preceded by an evening of jazz manouche, Romanian jazz, and compositions by Stéphane Grappelli, Django Reinhardt and Astor Piazzola, performed by the Emy Drăgoi Quintet at the Onda Jazz Club on 20 March. The success enjoyed by Romanian jazz has encouraged a number of Romanian Cultural Institutes abroad to dedicate major events to the genre: Brussels (the “**Jazz from Romania at the Music Village**” series), Budapest (the monthly “**Locomotive Jazz**” programme), Bucharest (“**Teach me Tonight**”, with Harry Tavitian and his guests), and Vienna (the “**hotROMania**” Festival).

The series of concerts entitled “**Jazz from Romania at the Music Village**”, organised by the Romanian Information Centre in Brussels, opened in February with “Imagine... The Beatles on Jazz”, a recital conceived by Vlad Popescu (drums), Cristian Soleanu (saxophone), George Dumitriu (guitar) and Oliver Gatto (double bass). The following month, besides a concert at the Music Village, the ensemble led by Nicolas Simion played a jam session at the 12th Floor Club in Antwerp and at the Woluwe Saint-Pierre Cultural Centre in Brussels, on 21 and 22 March respectively. The Harry Tavitian – Cserey Csaba Duet continued the jazz series at the Music Village in April. The duet also opened the “**Teach Me Tonight**” programme, which unfolded over the course of 2009 at the Romanian Cultural Institute in Bucharest: a journey into the world of jazz, from the blues to ethno jazz, with the aim of sharing with audiences the joy of music, without being pedantic, but rather spontaneously and naturally, in the way that jazz itself is. Pianist Harry Tavitian, one of the

main figures who have made a mark on the evolution of Romanian jazz, conceived six concerts/lectures with guests from Romania and abroad. The series will conclude with a Christmas concert at the Romanian Athenaeum. These were interactive encounters, open to questions from the audience, and the theme of the concerts was announced on Tavitian’s blog and on the RCI website, in a special section dedicated to the project, in order to allow dialogue with the audience to continue online even after the performances. In the year that marks the twentieth anniversary of the Romanian revolution, Tavitian tells the story of what jazz meant as a phenomenon of resistance during the years of communist dictatorship, as well as how topical it is today in terms of freedom of the spirit, as a response to the pressure of globalisation and depersonalisation.

Another jazz musician who has made a mark on the evolution of Romanian jazz is Jancy Körössy, who was invited to perform in a concert in the Mirrors Room of the Palácio Foz, a renowned architectural monument in the historic centre of Lisbon. Jancy Körössy, the creator of the free style in Romanian jazz, but also the musician who has made his jazz version of George Enescu’s *Rhapsody no. 1* famous throughout the world, was performing alongside Ramona Horvath. “**Jazz Improvisations on Two Pianos**”, organised by the Romanian Cultural Institutes in Lisbon and Madrid (13 and 16 June), got under way with Franz Liszt, continued with evocations of pianists including Oscar Peterson, Erroll Gardner and Bill Evens, and concluded with paraphrases from Romanian folk music.

In April, Jancy Körössy and Ramona Horvath also gave concerts in Berlin, as part of the “**Locomotive Jazz**” programme initiated by the Romanian Cultural Institute in Budapest, in partnership with the Magyar Jazz Federation. In Hungary, there are monthly concerts at the Museum of Commerce and Tourism in Budapest and at the Grand Café Cinema in Szeged.



Harry Tavitian at the “Music Village”, Brussels



Cristina Pădurariu, "Locomotive Jazz" programme

Romanian jazz musicians improvise alongside musicians from Hungary, Slovakia, Germany and Britain. Pedro Negrescu, Cristina Pădurariu, Arthur Balogh, Mircea Tiberian, Lucian Nagy and Berti Barbera, among others, performed alongside Gyárfás István, Cseh Balázs, Márkus Tibor, Kollman Gábor, Stanislav Palúch, Christina von Bülow, and Robin Hilary Ashe-Roy.

This year, too, quality Romanian jazz was a fixture at Porgy & Bess, the best-known jazz club in Austria. The third edition of the "hotROMania" jazz festival, held over the course of four days and organised by the Romanian Cultural Institute in Vienna, brought before Viennese audiences the Marius Popp Quartet, Newsome & Lucian Ban, Sanda Weigl and Orchestra, and the Alexander Bălănescu Trio.

In 2009, celebrated composer, improviser and violinist Alexander Bălănescu gave concerts with his own quartet and with Ada Milea at the Accademia di Romania in Rome, on the stage of the celebrated Södra Teatern in Stockholm, in the elegant Concert Hall of the National Academy of Music in Krakow, and at the Hungarian Institute in Brussels. Over the years, Bălănescu has played with the Michael Nyman, Gavin

Bryars, and Arditti ensembles, and in 1987 he formed his own quartet, with James Shenton (violin), Katie Wilkinson (viola) and Nick Holland (cello). In 2002, he performed at various venues in the United Kingdom, alongside American composer Philip Glass, with whom he also composed a concert for viola in 2004.

The "Maria T" project, inspired by the music of Maria Tănase, is the result of collaboration with video artist Klaus Obermaier (Austria) and was presented for the first time as part of the Art Rock Festival in Bretagne, 2005. The Romanian Cultural Institute brought the show to the Södra Theatre in Stockholm (23 October 2009) and the Festival of Romanian Culture held in Poland (23 April). The Festival of Romanian Culture, now in its second year, incorporates various art forms – music, film, literature, theatre – and also lectures, and takes place in various prestigious auditoria and venues in Krakow.

In 2006, Alexander Bălănescu, together with Ada Milea, adapted for the stage a play called *The Island*, by Romanian surrealist poet Gellu Naum. The show, in English, was commissioned by Oxford Contemporary Music in partnership with South Hill Park and iF06, and the premiere was held at Wesley Memorial Church in



Alexander Bălănescu Quartet at the Hungarian Cultural Institute in Brussels

London. After a sustained international career, the play was introduced to Italian audiences in 2009, as part of the Spazi Aperti project at the Accademia Romania in Rome (27 May). Another text by Gellu Naum to have inspired a show produced by Ada Milea, together with Dorina Chiriac and Radu Brânzaru, is *The Book of Apollodorus*. The adventures of Apollodorus the penguin won enthusiastic applause from audiences in Paris, who watched Ada Milea's performance in the Byzantine Hall of the Béhague Palace on the occasion of the launch of the French translation of the work – *Voyage avec Apollodore* (Editions MeMo). Later in the evening, Ada Milea and Alexander Bălănescu performed *The Island* in the same hall.

Alexander Bălănescu has composed the soundtrack to twenty animation films, countless dance performances, television programmes, and films. The soundtrack to the film *Tabló* (a Hungarian production, on which Romanian actor Ioan Gyuri Pascu also worked), composed by Bălănescu, was performed live on 2 March 2009, at the Hungarian Cultural Institute in Brussels, with the support of the Romanian Information Centre in Brussels.

#### World and Alternative Music

Although classical music and jazz took up much of the musical programmes of Romanian Cultural Institutes abroad, world and alternative sounds were by no means lacking. In April, the Romanian Cultural Institute in Warsaw organised a concert by the Shukar Collective, in the heart of the Kazimierz district in Krakow, right next to the former dwelling places of Oskar Schindler's Jews. The six hundred concertgoers showed their appreciation of the band's characteristically explosive mixture of traditional rhythms, electronic music and drum'n'bass with a lengthy round of applause, transforming the New Square in Kazimierz into a huge dance floor for a few hours. The show was opened by Polish group Transkapela, renowned for their projects that reinterpret in a contemporary context traditional

music from various Polish regions, but also from Bukowina, Maramureş and Transylvania.

In June, there was a celebration of urban culture in New York, with an exhibition of cartoons and electronic music. The exhibition by visual artists Matei Branea and Milos Jovanović, presented as part of the festival organised by the Museum of Cartoon and Comic Art, was complemented by a live performance of electronic music by Lucian Racoviţan and Costin Basica, a.k.a. Materials Resistance. Fanfares Ciocârlia and Shavale were invited to give concerts at the "Night of European Clubs" (April, Berlin), and at the Istanbul Jazz Festival in July. Whereas in previous years one of the main attractions of the Istanbul festival has been the *Jazz Boat*, which makes musical cruises along the Bosphorus, this year the organisers added a *Balkan Boat*, on which audiences could listen to the traditional Balkan music so beloved in Turkey as they sailed between two continents.



"The Shukar Collective are an exceptional group, their energetic music goes well both in clubs and in the open air... in Krakow, their music rose to the heavens." Paweł Zając, [www.etnosystem.pl](http://www.etnosystem.pl), April 2009

## A crisis year?

In Romanian publishing, 2009 has been something of a crisis year, with editorial staff dispersed, acquisitions lists halved, established collections reduced to sporadic appearances, and titles postponed until better times. The figures put forward during a publishers' conference in spring would have crushed any optimistic rhetoric: "Book sales in January and February 2009 fell by almost thirty per cent, publishing houses laid off ten to twenty per cent of their staff, and publishing plans were cut back by between twenty-five and forty per cent." Nevertheless, even in more spectacular years, the books that genuinely deserved to be talked about (i.e. published) were not significantly more numerous. *The Critical History of Romanian Literature* by Nicolae Manolescu, published by Paralela 45 and launched in November 2008 at the Gaudeamus Book Fair, had all the ingredients to become the main publishing and cultural event of 2009. At the end of last year, the entire print run sold out in just a few days. What followed, probably for the first time since 1989, was a waiting list

and rumours of an imminent second edition. After a resplendent launch, attended by a huge audience, at which the long-awaited literary history was presented (by Mircea Cărtărescu) as a captivating read, but also as a sample of "critical ferocity" that "spared no one", there followed a critical debate that has raged throughout the year.

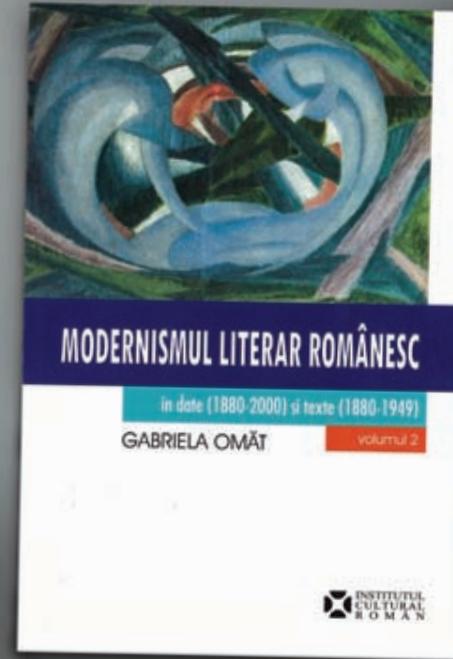
An ambitious but uneven synthesis, *The Critical History of Romanian Literature* has been debated in various tones by critics from various generations. For example, Dan C. Mihăilescu has said, "the cupola of an imposing, life-time's edifice, Manolescu's *History* is at the same time the sum of his weaknesses and the supreme sign of his vulnerability... It is clear that nowhere else in the world today can one come across such a monument built single-handedly over the decades... All the more to be admired is our critic's wonderful self-coronation, as he impetuously and jovially takes responsibility for his subjectivity and injustices, including the minor partis pris" (*Ideii în dialog*, January 2009).

Likewise, according to Livius Ciocârlie, we are dealing with the final history to be written by a single author: "Nicolae Manolescu has proven that it is possible to write a history of literature... by means of a selection of all that still seems to be alive" (*Observator cultural*, March, 2009).

For the most recent generation of critics, however, *The Critical History of Romanian Literature* was sooner "a disappointment", something "improvised as it goes along, do-it-yourself, and slapdash", above all given that "the legitimising theoretical arguments – the recourse to the aesthetics of reception and the argument based on The Western Canon – are improperly employed, and the contextualisation of the position of Romanian literature in relation to the dynamic of European literatures... is quite precarious" (Paul Cernat, *Cuvântul* and *Observator cultural*). Considered to be an "edifice under construction" (Sanda Cordoș, *Alitudinii*), but also a work lacking an architecture



Nicolae Manolescu © Rareș Avram



*Romanian Literary Modernism in Data (1880-200) and Texts (1880-1949)* by Gabriela Omăt

of resistance, in which "the errors are defects, and the defects are effects, logical consequences of a pseudo-historical approach and achievement" (Daniel Cristea-Enache, *Ideii în dialog*) or "an exclusivist and purged history... an a-critical history of the founders, all written on his own account" (Alex. Goldiș, *Cultura*), Nicolae Manolescu's *History* has been the cultural hot topic of the year, not just in the cultural reviews, but also in a literary life that is inflamed and polarised to the point of implosion.

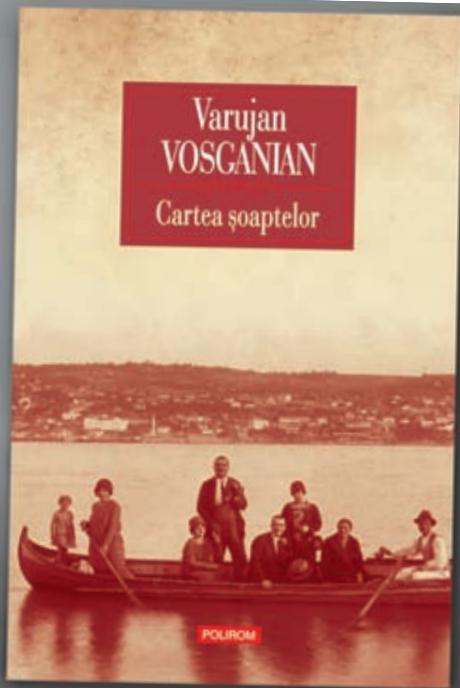
The Observer Translation Project (<http://translations.observatorcultural.ro>), a project to translate

contemporary Romanian authors initiated by the *Observator cultural* review, continued in 2009. The project offers foreign readers interested in Romanian literature a database on Romanian writers, translations of books published abroad, and critical opinions relevant to those books. In addition to the excerpts published in 2008 by this cosmopolitan site (Gabriela Adameșteanu, Ștefan Agopian, Ștefan Bănuțescu, Radu Cossașu, Filip Florian, Norman Manea, Mircea Nedelciu, Mircea Horia Simionescu, Stelian Tănase), which is a complement to the projects of the National Book Centre, in 2009 the translators selected work by Mircea Cărtărescu, Răzvan Petrescu, Dan Lungu, Ana Maria Sandu, Radu Aldulescu, Vasile Ernu and Ion Manolescu.

A detailed presentation of the Romanian Cultural Institute's programmes aimed at promoting Romanian authors abroad can be found on pages 45-53, in the "Framework Programmes" subchapter.

The massive, one-thousand-page *Romanian Literary Modernism in Data (1880-200) and Texts (1880-1949)*, edited by Gabriela Omăt (Romanian Cultural Institute Press), was published in two volumes at the end of 2008, but did not reach the bookshops or begin to be discussed until 2009. Both in terms of chronology and documentation, Gabriela Omăt has achieved the "reconstruction" that Romanian literary modernism needed, and the work has been warmly received in the Romanian cultural press and academic circles. Considered to be an attempt to recalibrate the humanities on firm, historic ground, Gabriela Omăt's synthesis is above all "an indispensable working instrument, a bibliographical item obligatory for any university course in Romanian literature... which reminds us that no serious discussion on the theory of literary movements can dispense with the basic documentation of literary history or contact with the reality of phenomena in the field" (Paul Cernat). Modestly declared by the author to be merely "an opening of the file", Gabriela Omăt's book is a genuine





*The Book of Whispers* by Varujan Vosganian © Polirom

publishing event, which anticipates the publication of Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu's lost novel *The Foreign Woman*, reconstructed by the same Gabriela Omăt. The novel *The Book of Whispers* by Varujan Vosganian (Polirom, "Fiction Ltd." collection) is already regarded as "the great revelation of Romanian prose in 2009", "the most complex novel to have been published in Romania in recent years" (Tudorel Urian), "a book of ethnic identity that is universal in value" (Paul Cernat), and "a compositionally ingenious and excellently written novel" (Daniel Cristea-Enache). *The Book of Whispers* – a novel at the boundary between fiction and memoir – is the personal, committed, and disturbing story of the Armenian Genocide of 1915, as reflected in the memory of the survivors. An autobiographical

book, but also a reconstruction, through the eyes of a child, of both a broader history (full of atrocities) and a narrower history (one that is fabulously oriental), the debut novel of poet Varujan Vosganian is due to be published in Spanish (with the title *El libro de los susurros*) by Pre-Textos in Valencia, which bought the rights just three months after the book's publication. The literary phenomenon of 2009 was without doubt the resurgence of short story. Thanks to collections such as *The Name of the Blackbird* by Radu Pavel Gheo, *The Other Love Stories* by Lucian Dan Teodorovici, *The Tube with a Hat* by Florin Lăzărescu, *SMS* by Bogdan Dumitrescu and *Cinema* by Angelo Mitchievici, the short story has returned to the fore of literary life. This revival of the short story, after many years in which the novel was the dominant genre, was the main topic of the first of the meetings held in the summer of 2009 at the Museum of the Romanian Peasant. On 16 June, a series of public readings from contemporary Romanian literature was inaugurated at the Museum's Peasant Club. With the title "Storytellers from the Avenue", the literary readings, painstakingly prepared by Mirela Florian and presented by Vintilă Mihăilescu, Director of the Museum of the Romanian Peasant, the first guests were two of the best-known young prose writers of today, Lucian Dan Teodorovici and Florin Lăzărescu, who have both recently published collections of short stories. The next public readings were by Mircea Cărtărescu, T.O. Bobe and Răzvan Petrescu. The discussions that followed the readings at the Peasant Club revolved around issues connected to the literature being written in Romania today: novel or short fiction, the "balance sheet of 2000-ism" (on which a substantial file has been published in *Vatra* magazine), the autobiographical and the rejection thereof, the cinematic style in the novel and storytelling, readers' tastes, literary prizes, and humour and the lack thereof in literature. Having commenced in summer, when Bucharest cultural life is mostly dormant, the public readings at the Peasant



"Storytellers from the Avenue": Răzvan Petrescu, Marius Chivu (moderator) and T.O. Bobe © Mircea Struțeanu

Club promise to bring most of Romania's major writers into contact with the reading public.

The year's most discussed collections of essays were *About the Man in the Letters. Mihai Eminescu* by Dan C. Mihăilescu and *The Devil and His Apprentice: Nae Ionescu – Mihail Sebastian* by Marta Petreu. In the letters between Eminescu and Veronica Micle, Dan C. Mihăilescu follows "the nature of the man as portrayed in writing meant exclusively for a single reader". His essay is "a wager on Eminescu for the young, which Dan C. Mihăilescu has won" (Daniel Cristea-Enache), as well as being a critical probe into "the living intimacy of Eminescu the person" (Paul Cernat).

Marta Petreu's book, launched at Bookfest in summer, reconstructs Sebastian's politics using his early journalism, as well as the psychology of the young writer ("which affectively attached itself, like ivy, to Nae Ionescu and Eliade") and the role Ionescu played in shaping his young disciple. The author's conclusion – that Mihail Sebastian "became lost in the labyrinth of the Romanian far-right", being a "child of his epoch, shaped and distorted by his seven years working for *Cuvântul* magazine, the seven years of 'undeserved good fortune' and apprenticeship with his 'master' Nae

Ionescu" – has been greeted by the most (unanimously) virulent critical reception to have been unleashed by any book published in recent years.

In 2009, Humanitas published a remarkable monograph by George Ardeleanu, entitled *N. Steinhardt and the Paradoxes of Freedom. A Monographic Perspective*. The book, which has garnered superlative praise from Romanian critics, has been seen as "a work of research with the felicitous intention of cleansing a 'history' subject to bias and fanatical, partisan abridgement, one implicitly capable of falsehoods with serious consequences upon our understanding of the last century in Romanian culture" (Cornel Ungureanu).

Another important study published this year is *Mihai Șora – A Philosophy of Joy and Hope*, by Leonid Dragomir. Published by Cartea Românească, the book offers an unusual reconstruction of the main arguments in Mihai Șora's philosophy, "with emphasis on the Christian side – the Christian personalism – that has been obscured by the context in which his books were written and conceived, published as they were in Romania before 1990".

Simona SORA

## Romanian Cultural Institute Events

In 2009, the Romanian Cultural Institute continued its policy to promote Romanian literature abroad through its network of Romanian cultural institutes and the National Book Centre (CENNAC). The RCI thus supported the Romanian presence at some of the most important international book fairs, and succeeded in introducing general and specialised audiences not only to the most significant titles

in Romanian contemporary literature, but also to the CENNAC programmes for book promotion: Translation and Publication Support (TPS), “20 authors”, PUBLISHING ROMANIA and “Scholarships for Translators”. The RCI’s participation in this year’s book fairs in Leipzig, Paris, Budapest, London, Torino, Warsaw, Stockholm, Madrid and Frankfurt was in each case accompanied by conferences and debates, and the Institute thus had the opportunity to prove itself as a dynamic institution, actively involved in financing and promoting Romanian contemporary literature.

#### Romanian books at major book fairs

The strategy adopted by the Romanian Cultural Institute toward the translation and promotion of Romanian literature and publishing policy was put into practice in an exemplary way this year at the most important book industry event in Italy, the **Turin International Book Fair**, held from 14 to 18 May. The theme of this year’s fair was “Io, gli altri”/“I, the others”. For the first time, Romania had its own stand, set up by the Romanian Institute of Culture and Humanistic Research in Venice. The stand



Turin International Book Fair

displayed books published in Romania that were representative of the chosen theme. The books featured at the stand were published by: Polirom, Humanitas (and Humanitas Multimedia), Corint, Vinea, Curtea Veche, Paralela 45, Brumar, Ideea Europeană, All, Romanian Academy Publishing House, and the National Book Centre, part of the Romanian Cultural Institute.

On the first day of the fair, the Zonza Publishing House from Milan organised the launch of a project entitled “La Romania incontra l’Italia”, featuring a presentation of the Italian translation of Dan Lungu’s novel *I’m a Communist Biddy!* and Liliana Corobca’s novel *One Year in Paradise*. The Accademia di Romania in Rome, a partner in the project, also organised a launch of Dan Lungu’s novel in the Italian capital. Over the five days of the fair, Romania’s stand hosted ten events, including a workshop co-ordinated by Roberto Merlo, a professor at the University of Torino. The theme of the workshop, “1989 – 2009: Confirmations and Debuts in Romanian literature”, was illustrated by the presence of six of Romania’s most important contemporary writers: Petru Cimpoeșu, Filip Florian, Ioana Nicolaie, Doina Ruști, Ana Maria Sandu, and Lucian Dan Teodorovici. As a result of particular interest in the Romanian participation in the fair, several contracts were signed between Romanian writers (Ioana Nicolaie, Dan Lungu, Doina Ruști, Lucian Dan Teodorovici, Vasile Ernu, Ana Maria Sandu, Florin Lăzărescu, Filip Florian, Mircea Cărtărescu), their translators, and Italian publishing houses. Romania was also invited to participate as a guest of honour at the 2012 Turin International Book Fair.

At the international events to celebrate reading that were held during the **Leipzig Book Fair** (12-15 March), gathered together under the title “Leipzig liest” (“Leipzig reads”), Petru Cimpoeșu and Radu Paraschivescu read excerpts from *Christina*

*Domestica and the Soul Hunters and Guide for the Bad-Mannered* respectively. The German translations of the excerpts were read by Ernest Wichner (author, translator, and manager of the Literaturhaus Berlin), in front of a large audience made up of students, editors, journalists and book lovers.

The twenty-ninth **Salon du Livre in Paris**, the main event in the French publishing calendar, was held between 13 and 18 March. Together with the RCI Paris, CENNAC, which for the first time had its own stand, organised launches for a number of volumes published through the TPS and PUBLISHING ROMANIA programmes. Thanks to these programmes, the following were published in France: the anthology *Des soleils différents* (Editions L’Inventaire, 2008); an issue of *Confluences poétiques* magazine dedicated to “Poètes roumains contemporains”; the novel *Vienne le jour* by Gabriela Adameșteanu, translated by Marily Le Nir (Éditions Gallimard, 2009), as well as other titles. The guests at the events organised by the RCI included Laurent Porée, Rodica Drăghinescu, Linda Maria Baros, Nicolae Prelipeanu, Florin Iaru, Cătălin Partenie, Michelle Dobré, Liliana Nadiu, Yves Michalon, Dumitru Țepeneag, Luis Mizon, Jean Portante, Jean Mattern, Daniel Cristea-Enache and Raluca Sterian-Nathan.

Romania was guest of honour at the 2009 **Budapest International Book Festival** (23-26 April). The Romanian stand was organised by the Ministry of Culture, Religious Affairs and National Heritage, which invited over twenty writers to take part in events. Among the participants were Theodor Paleologu (the Minister of Culture), Varujan Vosganian (the vice-president of the Writers’ Union of Romania), Denisa Comănescu, Mircea Dinescu, Traian Ștef, Vasile Dan, Al. Mușina, Ioan Moldovan, Marius Vernescu, Bogdan Suceavă, Eginald Schlatner, Lucian Dan Teodorovici, and Filip Florian. The RCI Budapest also put together a series of promotional events: a



Salon du Livre, Paris

dialogue between writers Gabriela Adameșteanu and Péter Esterházy, the launch of the “Romanian Kaleidoscope” special issue of *Lettre Internationale*, the contemporary art exhibition “TvMania” by Cluj-based artist Bartha Ciupe Ernő, and the programme “Children drawing a book”, in collaboration with the “We Read” Foundation. Writers Florina Ilis, Ruxandra Cesereanu and poet Adela Greceanu were also invited to the Book Festival by the RCI Budapest.

For the second year in a row, the RCI organised Romania’s stand at the **London Book Fair** (20-22 April), one of the most important events of its kind in the world. The RCI succeeded in creating a representative image of the book market in Romania, inviting thirty-two of the most prestigious Romanian publishing houses. Besides more than eight hundred books in Romanian (Romanian authors, translations from English, audio books, CDs, illustrated books, tourist guides, dictionaries), the stand also displayed titles published abroad through the financing programmes implemented by CENNAC within the RCI.



In the last three years, Romanian literature has been present at every **Warsaw International Book Fair**, where it has benefitted from its own stand, designed by the RCI Warsaw, with a different theme for each separate fair. For the 2009 Book Fair, held in the Palace of Culture and Science between 21 and 24 May, the stand reflected the idea of dialogue and collaboration, with an emphasis on the fundamental partnership at the core of all efforts to promote Romanian literature abroad: the writer and the translator. The stand, designed by artist Arnold Estefan in the form a huge book-shelf, expressed this essential connection visually. Romanian authors translated into Polish over the past few years were introduced to the audience together with the translators who have made the publication of their books possible in Poland. Besides translators Ireneusz Kania, Joanna Kornaś Warwas and Jerzy Kotliński, the special guests were writers Filip Florian and Matei Florian, whose novel *The Băiuț Alley Lads* has already been published by Czarne Publishing House, in the Polish translation of Szymon Wcisło. On this occasion, the RCI Warsaw arranged a mini



LIBER International Book Fair, Madrid

tour to promote the book in Poland, during which the Florian brothers met with the audiences at the Szafe literary Café in Krakow and the famous Chłodna 25 alternative club in Warsaw. The stand also presented titles published with the support of the RCI: *The Great Romanian-Polish Dictionary*, the anthology *6 minutes of Romanian Theatre*, special issues of *Literatura na świecie* and *Lampa* dedicated to Romanian literature, and the illustrated books *Romania: Space, Art, Culture* and *Romania: Country of the Friendly People*.

The RCI was also present at major European book fairs in the autumn, supporting the Romanian presence in Göteborg, Madrid and Frankfurt.

For the third consecutive year, the RCI Stockholm participated in the **Bok & Bibliotek Göteborg Book Fair**, the most important event of its kind in Scandinavia. There were two seminars and two poetry readings, featuring the latest translations from Romanian into Swedish: the volume of poems *leud with No Exit* by poet Ioan Es. Pop (Tranan Publishing House), an issue of *Komma* magazine dedicated to contemporary Romanian poetry, and the novel *The White King* by Romanian-born Hungarian writer György Dragomán (Brombergs Publishing House). An important moment in the RCI Stockholm programme in Göteborg was the presentation of the Marin Sorescu Award with the ceremony being held for the first time during the book fair. The award, now in its third year, is presented to a Swedish writer or artist whose work has enhanced communication between different forms of cultural expression. This year the award was given to Swedish writer and translator Peter Handberg, “for literary activity in which his own short stories, reports and essays coexist naturally with his intensive translation work”, and for “a deeply personal style characterised by rigour and reflection. Since his debut in 1988, Handberg has consistently and painstakingly constructed work in which the exploration of recent European history sets out, from

his personal experience, on the one hand, and on the other, from a deep knowledge of not only political and literary phenomena but also the impact that these have on the contemporary human being”.

“Rumanía in fabula” was the slogan of Romania’s stand, organised with the support of the RCI, at this year’s **LIBER International Book Fair in Madrid**.

Focusing on Romanian prose, the stand displayed over 250 titles published by 24 Romanian publishing houses, and translations financed through the TPS, “20 authors” and PUBLISHING ROMANIA programmes. Seventeen volumes have already been published in Spain with the support of the RCI, and another ten titles are scheduled to be published by the end of 2009. On 6 October, one day before the opening of the book fair, the RCI Madrid and CENNAC organised a colloquium entitled “Romanian Literature in Spain: Identities, Confessions and Cultural Confluences” at the Círculo de Bellas Artes. Writers Gabriela Adameșteanu, Ion Vianu, Dan Lungu, Petru Cimpoeșu and Victor Ivanovici talked about their literary experiences and work before and after 1989, during two sessions suggestively entitled “Being a Writer in Romania Before and After 1989” and “Romanian Literature in Spanish with the Support of the RCI”. Held every year in Madrid and Barcelona alternatively, the book fair is one of the main meeting venues for professionals working in the industry worldwide, which makes it even more significant for Romania to have been invited as a guest of honour to the 2011 LIBER International Book Fair.

Also this year, in mid-October, the Romanian Cultural Institute, via its National Book Center, took part in the **Frankfurt Book Fair**. There were readings organised in partnership with Frankfurter Buchmesse and conferences. The Romanian Cultural Institute Publishing House drew publishers’ attention to books illustrating the work of Romanian artists Devis Grebu, Florin Ciubotaru, Vladimir Zamfirescu, Andrei Șerban, Ion Popescu-Negreni,

Henry Mavrodin, Corneliu Baba, Marin Gherasim etc. There was a reading entitled “Rumänien: Magie und Witz in funkelnder Prosa” at the Internationales Zentrum of the Frankfurter Buchmesse, with the participation of authors Filip Florian and Attila Bartis and translator Georg Aesch. At the same time, the prestigious Suhrkamp Publishing House launched the anthology *Odessa Transfer: Nachrichten vom Schwarzen Meer*, with Emine Sevgi Özdamar (Turkey), Mircea Cărtărescu (Romania), and Katarina Raabe (Suhrkamp Publishing House, Berlin) in attendance as guests at the event.

#### **Celebrated Romanian writers**

The RCI’s participation in this year’s book fairs in Leipzig, Paris, Budapest, London, Turin, Warsaw, Stockholm, Madrid and Frankfurt also included a number of important projects aimed at promoting Romanian literature abroad. The events were organised by the Romanian Cultural Institutes network.

Following the events at the Turin International Book Fair, the FNAC bookshop in Milan hosted the launch of the Italian edition of the novel *Simeon the Liftite: Novel with Angels and Moldavians/Il Santo nell’ascensore. Romanzo di angeli e moldavi* by Petru Cimpoeșu, on 19 May. Published by Castelvechi Publishing House in Rome and translated by Livia Claudia Băzu, the novel has already entered the competition for the Strega Award. The launch was attended by literary critics Alexandru Cistelean and Fulvio Panzeri. The event enjoyed the support of the Romanian Institute for Culture and Humanistic Research in Venice. The publisher’s note states, “The narrative talent of Petru Cimpoeșu, one of the most important contemporary authors in Europe, very much appreciated in Romania and translated into several languages, is here introduced to Italian readers for the first time. His novels published in Romania, *The Accidental Hero* and *Simeon the*



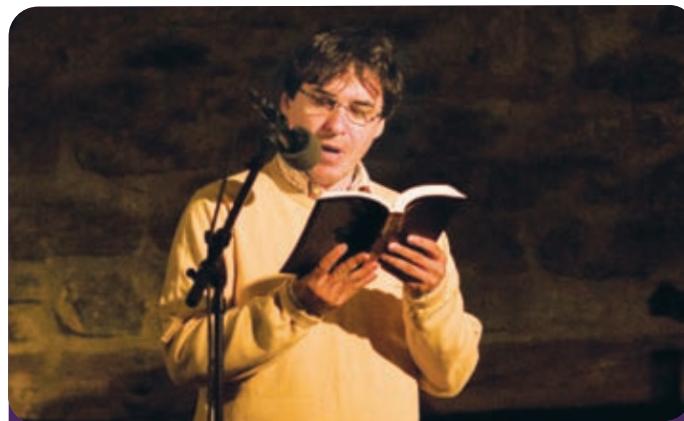
*Liftite*, have received many awards, including the Prize of the Romanian Writers' Union. Outstanding due to its blend of the ordinary and the grotesque, Petru Cimpoeșu's prose is one of the landmarks of Romanian literature after December 1989, freed from communist censorship".

"The novel *Simeon the Liftite*, although deeply anchored in the Romanian reality, manages to focus on themes and anxieties that are experienced throughout present-day Europe. (...) With this novel, Petru Cimpoeșu joins the list of leading names in European literature. (...) His writing is characterised by an ease and irony that emphasise the cutting side of morality and the need for spiritual conversion. The novel says a lot about the character of the Romanian people – which has always been defined as being good, but not entirely lacking in flaws – and about its history. At the same time, it also deals with the uncertainty of a present in which we still have to believe in something." (Fulvio Panzeri, *Avvenire*, 23 May, 2009)

The RCI Paris celebrated the launch of the French version of *The Right Wing*, translated by Laure Hinckel as *L'Aile tatouée* (Editions Denoël, 2009), by organising a series of public debates and readings, inviting author Mircea Cărtărescu to enter into dialogue with French readers and literary critics. An sizeable audience attended a literary soirée dedicated to the author at the Paris Office of the European Commission on 5 October. Over the days that followed, the author was applauded at the Sorbonne and met French readers at the L'écume des pages bookshop on Boulevard Saint-Michel. Gérard Meudal, a reporter for *Le Monde*, talked about the energy of the *Dazzler* trilogy and the extremely vibrant pages that recall the events of December 1989 through fiction. Michel Crépu, a literary critic for the *Revue des deux mondes*, highlighted the intensity of Cărtărescu's writing, which paints an impressive autobiographical,

historical, political and metaphysical fresco. Olivier Rubinstein, manager of the Denoël Publishing House, referred to the Romanian writer's work as a "literary diamond", a writer on his way to significantly enlarging the numbers of his French readers, who were proud to have formed up until now a sort of "secret society". Cărtărescu's fictional universe is one which "anyone can enter but not everyone can take possession of", said author and literary critic Edgar Reichmann, stressing that the Romanian author's prose "deserves" to be read, since it cannot be included in the "entertainment" category of fiction. The seduction campaign of the three literary soirées organised by the RCI Paris ended with the promise of a new novel: "All the doors to the forty stories that make up *Dazzler* are now closed in French, too, after the publication of the last volume of the trilogy in France. Now I'm working on a historical novel, a story set in the nineteenth century", declared Mircea Cărtărescu.

*L'Aile tatouée* is Mircea Cărtărescu's eighth title to be translated into French. The first two volumes of the trilogy have also been translated into German,



Mircea Cărtărescu, International Poetry Festival, Gotland Island, Sweden © Cato Lein

Hungarian, Norwegian and Swedish. The French version was translated by the late Alain Paruit (*Orbitor*, 1999, and *L'Oeil en feu*, 2005, Editions Denoël), and the 2009 publication of *The Right Wing*, translated by Laure Hinckel, means that French is the first foreign language in which a complete edition of *Dazzler* has been published so far.

Mircea Cărtărescu was also invited to the sixteenth International Poetry Festival held on the Swedish island of Gotland. As a preview, a Poetry Salon was held at the RCI headquarters in Stockholm, organised in partnership with the Baltic Centre for Writers and Translators, and with the participation of poet Ioana Nicolaie, Chinese-born Swedish poet and translator Li Li, poet, artist and translator Magnus William-Olsson, and translator Inger Johansson. The debates were chaired by editor and translator Jonas Ellerström. This year's International Poetry Festival was also attended by poets Giannina Braschi (Puerto Rico/New York), Ann Jäderlund (Sweden), Tomi Kontio (Finland), Birute Mar (Lithuania), artists Mikael Lundberg and Agnes Monus (Sweden), and musician Emilio Estrada (Cuba). For this tour, Inger Johansson translated into Swedish excerpts from Ioana Nicolaie's volume *The Sky in the Womb* while Mircea Cărtărescu presented to the Swedish audience poems included in the author anthology *A Happy Day in My Life*.

"Mircea Cărtărescu is currently working on a historical novel, whose action takes place in the nineteenth century, in Greece and Lebanon. Listening to him talk about his work on the novel, I realise I'm sitting in front of a true poet: 'When I write it's like tattooing my own skin, inch by inch. It seems to me I have already covered almost the entire surface of my body, all that's left is my tongue and my eyes', he tells me with a smile." (Jakob Simonson, *Gotlands Allehanda*, 28 August, 2009)

Phillip Florian, who is frequently an invited guest at international book fairs, this year accompanied his

books, translated through CENNAC programmes, to Poland and New York. During the prestigious PEN World Voices literature festival, held in late April and early May, the Romanian Cultural Institute in New York organised a series of literary events to promote the English edition of his debut novel, *Little Fingers*, published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Some of these events were held during the Cărtărescu book exhibition at the RCI headquarters in the American metropolis.

#### Towards a Romanian bookstore in New York

In 2009, the RCI New York launched the "Towards a Romanian bookstore in New York" project. Covering a total of six months (27 April – 15 July and 1 September – 15 December), the programme takes the form of a temporary exhibition of Romanian books, music and films at the Romanian Gallery. There have also been a number of connected events aimed at promoting literature and the arts: "Reading the Tea Leaves", a title inspired by the famous poetry translator Adam Sorkin, presented classic and contemporary Romanian authors; "Revisiting



Cărtărescu book exhibition at The Romanian Gallery, New York

Cărtărescu's *Nostalgia*" had the famous author as guest; "Drama in Times of Revolution" launched the drama anthology *Eastern European Drama in Times of Revolution: Playwrights Before the Fall* (1989), which includes Matei Vișniec's play *Horses at the Window*, staged with great success by Radu Alexandru Nica at the Trap Door Theatre in Chicago; and "The Screenwriters of the Romanian New Wave" introduced Răzvan Rădulescu and Andreea Vălean. A launch was also held for the illustrated book *The Golden Age for Children*, in the presence of author Ștefan Constantinescu, and the English translation of *Inventing the Jew: Anti-Semitic Stereotypes in Romanian and Other Central-East European Cultures*, with the participation of author Andrei Oișteanu, Vladimir Tismăneanu and Moshe Idel.

#### Romanian literature on air

The programme "Romanian writers read by famous Polish actors" aims at utilising the extraordinary power of the media to bring Romanian literature to more diverse and numerous audiences than the relatively few readers of East-European writers. The programme was broadcast by Radio Euro, a station with national coverage, and featured excerpts from Romanian authors Nora Iuga, Adriana Babeți, Dan Lungu and Filip Florian selected together with the host radio editors.

#### Romanian authors published by the University of Plymouth

One of the most important new university publishing houses in Great Britain, the University of Plymouth Press (UPP), will publish between 2009 and 2013 all the volumes included in the "20 authors" programme financed by the National Book Centre. The volumes will include illustrations and cover designs by Romanian artists. Four titles will be launched every year. The first four books to be launched in the UK are *The Cinematography Caravan* by Ioan

Groșan, *Occurrence in the Immediate Unreality* by Max Blecher, *Lines Poems Poetry (a selection of poems)* by Mircea Ivănescu and *Six Maladies of the Contemporary Spirit* by Constantin Noica. According to the English publisher "the partnership between the RCI and UPP is first and foremost a cultural initiative designed to promote the wonderful range of high quality Romanian literature that has yet to be exposed to western audiences. The quality of the translation programme run by the RCI and the National Book Centre means that UPP will publish four titles per year and we feel that they have the potential to win international translation awards." The publishing programme will be accompanied by a complex artistic project, conceived by the University of Plymouth and supported by the RCI. "Romanian Art and Music at Peninsula Arts" comprises a series of exhibitions, film showings and concerts. Between 14 November and 19 December there will be an exhibition open to the public and featuring work by artists Alexandru Rădvan, Florica Prevenda, Anca Boeriu and Florin Stoiciu who also sign the illustration of the first four translations published by UPP as well as projections of the films *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days*, directed by Cristian Mungiu; *The Way I Spent the End of the World*, directed by Cătălin Mitulescu; *The Paper Will Be Blue*, directed by Radu Muntean, and *The War for Independence*, the first Romanian feature film which will be included in the "Re-scoring the Silent" programme at the University of Plymouth.

#### Literature and multimedia shows in Berlin

A gala week of international poetry (26-31 October, 2009), held under the high patronage of the European Commissioner for Multilingualism, Ludovic Orban, brought together poets from around the world to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the foundation of the Lyrikline.org platform, under the auspices of the Literaturwerkstatt. The tenth anniversary of the

Romanian Cultural Institute in Berlin coincided with this event and was celebrated with the "Live Poesie" project. Ten young Romanian poets gave readings from their work, which were then read in German by actress Ricarda Ciontoș. The readings alternated with sequences of video poetry, produced by Andrei Ruse and Mugur Grosu, with musical ambiance provided by electronic band Silent Strike. Poets Ioana Nicolaie, Sorin Gherguț, Rita Chirian, Svetlana Cârstea, Gabriela Eftimie, Constantin Acoșmei, Ștefan Manasia, Vasile Leac, and Vlad Moldovan took part in the event held at the Literaturwerkstatt, which was hosted by Răzvan Țupa.

#### Herta Müller – the Nobel Prize for Literature 2009

The award of the 2009 Nobel Prize for Literature to German writer Herta Müller is of particular significance to Romania. Born in the Banat, Herta Müller has maintained links with the country of her

birth, and over the past few years she has been present at many cultural events in Romania. At the beginning of October 2009, Herta Müller took part in the "Oskar Pastior" International Festival of Poetry, held by the Literaturhaus in Berlin and the Romanian Cultural Institute in Sibiu, where she gave a preview reading from her novel *Atemschaukel*. Herta Müller is, in fact, one of the founders and promoters of the event, and has been present at all the festivals over the years. In 2008, Herta Müller was a guest of the RCI Stockholm at the Bok & Bibliotek Book Fair in Göteborg, together with Mircea Cărtărescu and other young representatives of Romanian literature. In 2007, Herta Müller presented her volume *Im Haarknoten wohnt eine Dame*, translated into Romanian by Nora Iuga as *În coc locuiește o damă* (Vinea Publishing House), at the Romanian Cultural Institute. Several translations of texts of Herta Müller have been published over the years in the Romanian edition of *Lettre Internationale* magazine. Other published Romanian translations include *The King Bows and Kills* (*Regele se-nclină și ucide*, Polirom, 2005, translation and notes by Alexandru Al. Șahighian) and *The Land of Green Plums* (*Animalul inimii*, Polirom, 2006, translated by Nora Iuga). In 2005, Polirom also published a volume of collage poems in Romanian entitled *Este sau nu este Ion* (*Is He or Isn't He Ion*). The prize awarded by the Swedish Academy is of special significance for the whole of Central and East-European literature. Herta Müller's fiction, articles and essays employ a great deal of sensitivity to reflect the traumas of the communist totalitarian regime, which she experienced while living in Romania.



Herta Müller and Mircea Cărtărescu © Cato Lein



# FRAMEWORK PROGRAMMES

## 1989 – Twenty Years After

Central and Eastern European countries have been celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Iron Curtain. The Romanian Cultural Institute has been marking this anniversary with conferences and debates, exhibitions of photographs taken during the Romanian Revolution, plays, and post-1989 films. In this context, the cultural projects of the Romanian Cultural Institutes have also led to a critical examination of socio-political changes in post-communist Romania and to an evaluation of the presence of Romanian culture in Europe.

On 6 and 7 November, the French Senate and the Goethe Institute played host to an initiative of the RCI Paris – an international symposium entitled “**The Public Intellectual in Europe between 1989 and 2009**”. Well-known intellectuals from former communist countries and France debated the changes that have affected the role and influence of the publicly engaged intellectual, in both Eastern and Western Europe over the past two decades. The wide range of speakers included Alain Finkielkraut, Danièle Sallenave, Jacques Rupnik, Marc-Olivier Padis, György Konrád, Tzvetan Todorov, Jens Reich, Predrag Matvejević, Gáspár Miklós Tamás, Antonin Liehm, Slawomir Sierakowski, Petar Selam, Tomas Sedlacek, Boris Novak, Boris Pahor, Miroslav Marcelli, Bohumil Doležal, Ciprian Mihali and Horia-Roman Patapievici. The symposium has triggered the interest of other Central and Eastern European cultural institutions present in Paris, such as the Czech, Polish, Hungarian and Slovakian cultural institutes, the Croatian and Slovenian embassies, and French-Romanian Friendship Group, which is affiliated with the French Senate. The event also enjoyed local media partnerships with newspaper *Libération*, TV France 3 and the *Esprit* magazine.

The Romanian Cultural Institute in Vienna was the sole cultural institution to celebrate the 1989 revolution in the Austrian capital, with a major series of events

entitled “Romania – 20 Years After”. The inaugural symposium “Was it a Revolution After All?” was held in the Hofburg Palace, at the end of March. Taking part in the discussions were writer Mircea Dinescu, political scientists Alina Mungiu-Pippidi (founder of the Romanian Academic Society *think-tank*) and Vladimir Tismăneanu (head of the Presidential Commission for the Study of the Romanian Communist Dictatorship), essayist and literary critic Smaranda Vultur, and dissident Radu Filipescu. The event was chaired by Roland Adrowitzer, a foreign policy specialist and correspondent for ORF Television in Brussels, at the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He has also brought back to light Austrian press articles covering the Romanian Revolution.

The photograph displays and complex installations assembled by Romanian and foreign artists with the help of the Romanian Cultural Institutes have shed more light on the events of December 1989, everyday life under the regime, and the social and cultural dimensions of the so-called ‘Golden Age’.



“Romania 20 Years After”, Hofburg Imperial Palace

Visual artist Michele Bressan, for example, was able to link his socio-urban documentary photographs, taken between 2007 and 2008, with the images captured by his father, Claudio Bressan, in Timișoara during the 1989 Revolution. The pictures formed the basis of the “**ReRevolution**” exhibition hosted by the RCI Paris in April.

A similar project has brought to light the **clandestine photographs taken by architect Andrei Pandele** before 1989. They documented Bucharest daily life, as well as the physical and moral degradation of the Romanian society, which had to endure a severe food crisis and traumatic social and urban engineering projects during the 1980s. The exhibition was hosted by the Gdansk Solidarity Centre in March and the Warsaw History Meeting House in December.

The “**Action 1511 – Brașov**” photographic exhibition followed the same lines, documenting the uprising of Brașov workers on 15 November, 1987. It allowed lesser-known facts to surface and thereby highlighted the severe economic crisis in the Romanian society at that time. The images trace the events, the Police arrests, the brutal Securitate investigations, and the persecution of the workers involved and their families. The exhibition has been organised with the assistance of the National Council for the Study of Securitate Archives and will be open to the public from 18 November, 2009 to 30 January, 2010 at the RCI in Budapest.

The Romanian Cultural Institute in Stockholm collaborated with art bookshop Konst-ig, IASPIS, the Swedish Arts Grants Committee, Labyrinth Press, and Pionier Press on an alternative project meant to (re) visit, document and expand the understanding of the ‘Golden Age’ and its emotional impact on every Romanian. Visual artist Ștefan Constantinescu has drawn on *ego-histoire* data to create a *pop-up* album – **The Golden Age for Children** – covering the last twenty years of the Romanian communist regime. He has thus provided an ingenious and much needed

alternative to conventional historical study methods. Devising his project as a study of social and cultural history, Constantinescu also enlisted the assistance of the Romanian Cultural Institute’s network for a further two installations in Tel Aviv and London, which brought together documentaries, books and paintings on the same theme. The installation displayed at the RCI London reconstructed an imaginary living room from a block of flats in Bucharest. It also combined archive photographs of students in the biology lab and gym, with children’s books, fitted with pop-up autobiographical scenes, and a television set playing black-and-white commercials for the classic Dacia 1300 car. The curator of both exhibitions was Catrin Lundqvist, from the Stockholm Modern Art Museum. In addition, the Romanian Cultural Institutes have also dedicated several programmes to the evolution from censorship to freedom of Romanian theatre, literature and film after the fall of the communist regime, and the place of Romanian culture in the new European architecture.

Throughout the year, the Romanian Cultural Institute in New York took an active part in the “Performing Revolution in Central and Eastern Europe”



Ștefan Constantinescu, *The Golden Age for Children*

anniversary project, a festival focusing on the role played by performing arts in the fall of the communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe. The key event in the festival was an exhibition hosted by the New York Public Library for Performing Arts, called **“Revolutionary Voices: Performing Arts in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1980s”**. Between 18 November, 2009 and 20 March, 2010, the event will explore how the performing arts broke through the barriers of communist censorship and contributed to the dramatic political and social upheaval of 1989. In order to better highlight the Romanian reality of the time, the RCI New York published a pamphlet/paper with short texts about the impact of censorship on the Romanian theatre of the 1970s and 1980s. In addition, video excerpts were shown and the poster for the play *Wasted Morning* by Gabriela Adameşteanu, staged by award winning director Cătălina Buzoianu, was displayed. On behalf of Romania and the RCI New York, rock band Timpuri Noi (Modern Times) took part in the “Rebel Waltz” project – a weekend of concerts given by bands that were forced to perform



Timpuri Noi at „Revolutionary Voices” © Beowulf Sheehan

underground before 1989 (6-8 November). In addition, the RCI NY team has been organising literary events and book launches as part of the main festival. Major anthologies of Eastern European prose and drama, such as *The Wall in My Head* (10 November) and *Playwrights Before the Wall* (16 November), were launched in the presence of poet Dan Sociu and playwright Matei Vişniec. Saviana Stănescu, another playwright who came to prominence after the fall of the communist regime, was asked to give public readings as part of the “NY Thru an Immigrant I or (r) evolution (Flagstories and other personal histories)” project.

Matei Vişniec’s name could also be found on the projects list of the RCI Paris, which invited the “Puck” Puppet Theatre of Cluj-Napoca to give a performance of his play *How to Explain the History of Communism to Mental Patients*. The show took place at the Denis Municipal Theatre in Hyères on 22 May, 2009.

The anniversary international symposium **“1989. 20 Years After”** was organised at the Accademia di Romania, in partnership with the Sapienza University of Rome. University professors from Italy, France and Romania took part in the event, which was held on 10 and 11 November. The Romanian Film Festival was held a week later at the Cinema Nuovo Olimpio in Rome. Films about the communist regime and its fall were shown over three days, including *Tales from the Golden Age* directed by Cristian Mungiu *et al.*, *Cold Waves* directed by Alexandru Solomon, *The Way I Spent the End of the World* by Cătălin Mitulescu, *12:08 East of Bucharest* by Corneliu Porumboiu, and *The Paper Will Be Blue* by Radu Muntean.

Similarly, a Romanian Film Week was held in Budapest, between 12 and 18 October, and in Szeged, between 26 and 31 November. To highlight the two decades that have elapsed since the December ’89 Revolution, the organisers chose the title-theme **“Change of Course – Year 20”**. The festival hosted films by Romanian directors Nicolae Mărgineanu,

Radu Gabrea, Alexandru Solomon, Mircea Daneliuc, Stere Gulea, Gheorghe Preda, Radu Muntean, Andrei Gruzniczki, Corneliu Porumboiu, Radu Jude and Adrian Sitaru. Two more recent films were also shown: *Katalin Varga* by British director Peter Strickland and *Ashes and Blood*, the first film to be directed by French actress Fanny Ardant. The festival was inaugurated by a debate, whose speakers were Alina Sălcudeanu, on behalf of the National Cinematography Centre, Ioana Toma, an associate researcher at the Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca and the Central European University in Budapest, journalists Emil Hurezeanu, N.C. Munteanu, and Liviu Tofan, and Kasza László, one of the best known Hungarian collaborators of Radio Free Europe. The opening night ended with a showing of the film *Cold Waves*, directed by Alexandru Solomon. Last but not least, a photo exhibition was also inaugurated, covering key moments from 1989 and the liberation of Romania and other former communist countries.

#### European Union National Institutes for Culture

Most of the Romanian Cultural Institutes abroad are part of a network of national cultural institutes called “European Union National Institutes for Culture”. EUNIC brings together thirty partner national cultural institutes from the twenty-five European Union states, which participate in transnational cultural projects. In accordance with its aims and goals, the network operates on two complementary levels: managers/directors of national institutes (heads), and subsidiaries of the main institutes (clusters), spread throughout various European cities. The Romanian Cultural Institute joined EUNIC in 2007, followed shortly thereafter by the RCIs in Berlin, Brussels, Budapest, Lisbon, London, New York, Stockholm, Warsaw and Vienna. Moreover, the director of the Romanian Cultural Institute, Horia-Roman Patapievici, was the vice-president of EUNIC in 2009 and will become its president in 2010.

All the Romanian Institutes abroad take an active part in the projects organised by the local clusters, as well as taking on roles in the network. For example, Gabriela Massaci, the director of the RCI London until September 2009, was also the president of the EUNIC London cluster for two years in a row, while Dan Mircea Duţă, the director of the RCI Prague, is the current president of EUNIC Prague. Furthermore, Andrei Țârnea, the director of the Romanian Information Centre in Brussels, became the president of EUNIC Brussels in mid 2009, and Brîndușa Armanca, director of the RCI Budapest, was, in her turn, vice-president of EUNIC Budapest.

The Romanian Cultural Institutes have promoted Romanian culture by organising or participating in the series of events that have been commemorating two decades of democracy in Eastern Europe.

The RCI London took part in a conference entitled **“Solidarity/Solidarities Children of Revolution, 1989-2009”**, hosted by the UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies. In its turn, the RCI Prague initiated a programme called **“Generation ’89”**, a pan-European project funded by the EU. It runs from November 2009 to October 2010 and celebrates the fall of the Eastern European communist regimes. Young people born in 1989 in former communist countries have been invited to join the project. They will hold two-day meetings in Bucharest, Brussels, Prague and Warsaw simultaneously, and will be invited to write a **Declaration of Generation ’89**, a manifesto of those born in a Europe at a crossroads. On 9 November, to mark the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, the EUNIC Brussels cluster, under the guidance of the Romanian Information Centre in Brussels, and the European Economic and Social Committee, launched the “Focus ’89” film and debate project. The films were selected by well-known film critic Louis Danvers and each was presented by the director.

The EUNIC clusters in Berlin, London and Warsaw, in



Romanian Film Week, Budapest

partnership with the local Romanian Cultural Institutes have initiated three major literary projects. The Leipzig Book Fair hosted a dedicated literature forum called “Minor Languages, Major Literatures” for several years now, with various readings and meetings. This year’s forum focused on the Balkans and featured informal dialogues between writers, translators, editors and publishers. Romanian writers Ion Manolescu and Dan Lungu were invited together with the RCI Berlin to this major literary event which took place between 12 and 14 March.

“The Night of European Literature” is yet another literary project shared by several EUNIC clusters. On 13 May, the RCI London invited Mircea Cărtărescu to the British Library to read excerpts from his work *Why We Love Women*. He was taking part in the event alongside Romanian actress Anamaria Marinca and other writers from the Czech Republic, Italy, France, Hungary and Poland. “The Night of European

Literature” was the inaugural event at Book World Prague 2009: International Book Fair held in Prague’s old centre, with public readings from the literary works of the guest countries. In the Maisel Synagogue, actor Jiří Ornest read every thirty minutes a fragment from Norman Manea’s novel *The Hooligan’s Return: A Memoir*, recently translated into Czech by Jiří Našinec.

In addition, “The Night of the Translator” is a complex programme created by the EUNIC Warsaw, in collaboration with the Danish Cultural Institute and the RCI Warsaw. It promotes recent translations of contemporary writers from the countries registered in the programme, on a monthly basis.

Moreover, the Romanian Cultural Institute in Prague launched the first “New Waves, New Ways” Film Festival under the auspices of EUNIC. Between 19 and 25 October, the Czech public was able to watch lesser-known, innovative films from the participating countries: Slovenia, Estonia, Serbia, Latvia, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Romania.

Last but not least, EUNIC Stockholm and Kulturhuset Stockholm organised in April 2009 the “REX – Recent Experimental Short Films” festival. Most of the European short films shown here were also present at other international film festivals, and even won prestigious awards such as the Golden Bear and the César. The winner of the Golden Bear at the 2008 Berlinale – the short film *A Good Day for a Swim* by Romanian director Bogdan Mustață – was also shown at the festival.

#### Intercultural Diplomacy in Warsaw and Venice

This year, the RCI has also co-ordinated two intercultural diplomacy campaigns aimed at facilitating a deeper understanding of ethnic communities marked by common historical tragedies or major cultural exchanges. The Romanian Cultural Institute in Warsaw and the Romanian Institute for Culture and Humanistic

Research of Venice were the project leaders.

An exhibition called “Outstanding Polish-Romanians” was inaugurated in open space at Krakow, Poznań, Sopot, Krynica and Warsaw between June and October 2009. The aim of the campaign has been to highlight several famous Romanian cultural, political, military or medical figures of Polish origins – no matter how remote. The descendants of Poles who were forced to emigrate for political, economic or social reasons and settle in Romania have served their new homeland with talent and honour. Among them were General Henri Cihoski (also a Minister), dancer and choreographer Oleg Danovski, General Victor Dombrovski (Mayor of Bucharest), Maria Lesiecka, a courier for the clandestine National Army, General and mountain troops commander Leonard Mociulschi, composer Ciprian Porumbescu, actor Colea Răutu, musician Teodor Rogalski, painter Octavian Smigelschi, Army physician Gustav Otremba, who also founded several hospitals, and sculptor Andrei Ostap. The exhibition of their photographs and biographies was set up with the assistance of Dom Polski Suceava and the Museum of the Polish Community in Warsaw.

Between 1 and 30 June, the Romanian Institute for Culture and Humanistic Research of Venice participated in the 53rd International Art Exhibition, with a visual campaign entitled “Grandi Romeni a Venezia”. It was aimed mainly at drawing attention to major Romanian cultural figures who have lived and worked in Venice and Italy, but also at stimulating the interest in Romania on the part of Italians, Venetians and international tourists. The famous figures presented in the campaign included Vasile Alecsandri, Corneliu Baba, Nicolae Iorga, Constantin Brâncuși, Queen Elisabeth of Romania (who also wrote poetry under the pseudonym ‘Carmen Sylva’), Emil Cioran, Mircea Eliade, Eugen Ionescu, Gheorghe Petrașcu and George Enescu. The project was supported by the Romanian Cultural Institute and the Venice Town Hall,

and was part of the 2009 strategy of the Romanian Institute for Culture and Humanistic Research of Venice, called “Impronte culturali romene” (“Romanian Cultural Impints”).



“Grandi Romeni a Venezia”



**Directorate General for Romanian Cultural Institutes Abroad**

**Directorate for Assessment of the Programmes of the Romanian Cultural Institutes Abroad**

**Publishing Project Coordinators:** Irina Ionescu, Raluca Doroftei, Ovidiu Dajbog-Miron

**Publishing Project Assistants:** Ioana Leca, Adrian Spîrchez, Angela Toader

**Research:** Valentina Andrei, Agripina Anghel, Raluca Cimpoiaşu, Elena Coteţ, Ecaterina Dimancea-Dumbrăveanu, Cătălina Giugariu, Elena Ignat, Ortansa Ispas, Georgiana Oprescu, Mădălina Tureatcă

**Graphic Design:** Sorin Păun

**Translation:** Alistair Ian Blyth (chapters “Film” and “Music”; experts’ essays for “Performing Arts”, “Visual Arts” and “The Book Market”); Daniela Oancea (Introductions to the brochure; “Romanian Cultural Institute Events” subchapters for “Performing Arts”, “Visual Arts”, “The Book Market”); Brînduşa Ciugudean (“Romanian Cultural Institute Events” subchapter for “Framework Programmes”).

**Copy Editing (Romanian):** Ruxandra Mihăilă

**Proofreading (English):** Alistair Ian Blyth

**Consultant:** Dan Croitoru

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