

Remus Azoitei and Eduard Stan play Enescu at the Romanian Cultural Institute



Enescu Concerts Series 2016/17 – **Remus Azoitei** (violin) and **Eduard Stan** (piano)
Photo: Cristian Drilea

Romanian Cultural Institute, London; Thursday 6th October, 2016

Porumbescu Ballade (1880)

Enescu Impressions d'enfance, Op. 28 (1940)

Fauré Violin Sonata No. 1 in A, Op. 13 (1876)

Ravel Tzigane, M76 (1924)

Almost a decade on from its inception, the Enescu Concerts Series is central not only to the activities of the Romanian Cultural Institute but also performance and wider understanding of **George Enescu's** music in the UK. This latest season got off to an impressive start with a recital given by Remus Azoitei and Eduard Stan, whose traversal of Enescu's music for violin and piano is the recorded benchmark for this crucial aspect of the composer's output; not least in the case of the *Impressions d'enfance* that was Enescu's last major work for the medium.

Completed at the outset of the Second World War, *Impressions* could be described as a suite were it not for the motivic rigour informing every aspect of these 10 vignettes of childhood not merely evoked but recreated by Enescu over the course of a piece no less cohesive than the violin sonatas preceding it. Such was the impression left by tonight's hearing – from the deft stylization of Moldavian street music in *The Fiddler*, through the exquisitely detailed recollections of 'things lived and dreamed' that emerge as the music unfolds, to the *Sunrise* that makes an eloquent and emotionally heightened apotheosis. The often intuitive interplay between the two musicians was undoubted, while the spontaneity with which they rendered Enescu's detailed expression markings confirmed their appreciation of this music's essence.

The account of **Fauré's** *First Violin Sonata* was hardly less impressive. As the composer's breakthrough piece in terms of wider acclaim, it has retained its place in the repertoire and this duo assuredly had the measure of the opening Allegro's darting flights of fancy then the Andante's melodic easefulness over Fauré's favoured barcarolle underpinning. The scherzo had wit and insouciance aplenty, and if the finale can feel just a shade contrived in context, the formal and expressive conviction with which it rounds off this work was never in doubt.

Either side of these works came showpieces with a vengeance. His operettas remain unknown outside Romania, though **Ciprian Porumbescu** (1853-83) lives on through the *Ballade* which emphasizes the 'doina' melodic style that became a mainstay of later Romanian composers. Enescu was doubtless familiar with this piece and also championed Ravel's *Tzigane* which, however uncharacteristic of the French master it may seem, is a rhapsody firmly within the virtuoso tradition and given here with just the right combination of soulfulness and panache.

Azoitei and Stan duly returned for an encore in the guise of the *Bagatelle* by **Ion Scarlatescu** (1872-1922), whose quick-fire virtuosity brought this recital to an engaging close. This new series of the Enescu Concerts could scarcely have been launched in more impressive fashion.

Richard Whitehouse

Remus Azoitei's and Eduard Stan's recording of Enescu's complete music for violin and piano is on [Hänssler Classics](#)

Meanwhile The Enescu Concert Series continues at the Romanian Cultural Institute on Thursday 3rd November, when pianist **Raluca Stirbat** plays **Enescu's** *Prelude & Scherzo* and *Third Sonata*, along with **Franck's** *Prelude, Choral et Fugue* and **Liszt's** *First Mephisto Waltz*. Further details can be found at the [Romanian Cultural Institute website](#)