

### 3. PIANIST AURELIA SIMION - TALENT, CREATIVITY, PERFORMANCE

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**Abstract:** *Coming from a family of musicians, the descendant of a dynasty that traces its roots back to the 19th century, had Lia Oxinoit as a teacher at the pre-university cycle and Ludmila Vaverco at the Gavriil Musicescu State Conservatory from Chisinau. The artistic career of the pianist Aurelia Simion is impressive, ascending, marked by important professional successes realized in concerts and solo recitals or in collaboration with soloists, teachers, students and pupils, with participation in the Musical Olympics, in national and international competitions as an accompanist, member or president of the juries. It is particularly important to highlight the fact that Aurelia Simion, in her artistic ascent, performed on concert stages in the Romania and abroad (Ukraine, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, France, Holland, Austria, Russia etc). Inquisitive spirit, always concerned with learning something new, she also played the harpsichord, celesta, marimbaphone and vibraphone, learned to play the portable organ with pedals, and in the moments when she had to complete the timbral color of the scores as part of the Percussion Ensemble Alternances, led by Constantin Stavrat, played claves, guiro, maracas and other small percussion instruments. Her compositional creation materialized in scores for solo piano, solo instruments with piano accompaniment, arrangements for percussion ensemble. For her academic and artistic achievements, she was awarded numerous awards, medals and diplomas of merit, honor and excellence awarded by various cultural and educational institutions.*

**Key words:** *Aurelia Simion, pianist, accompanists, professionalism*

#### 1. Introduction

Coming from a family of musicians<sup>4</sup>, Aurelia Simion embarked on a path towards a successful professional career in the music world with great love and ambition at the age of only 4 years, when she had the honor of meeting the famous pianist and teacher Lia Oxinoit as her first mentor at the beginning of this thorny path. Only such an experienced teacher was able to identify a rare musical talent in a little girl who dreamed of becoming an actress or dancer to start teaching her piano

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<sup>4</sup> A few words about the family. Mother, Ekaterina Caftanat (1940-2009), teacher of solfeggio and rhythm at the «C. Porumbescu» Republican Higher Music School. Father - Ion Buftuac, a piano tuner and restorer, awarded the title of *Meşter faur* (Honorary Craftsman) by the Government of the Republic of Moldova, came from a well-known family of musicians, whose roots go back to Transnistria, since the 19th century. The ancestor of the Caftanat dynasty was Agapius (Agachi) Caftanat, the son of George and Zoya Caftanat from the town of Rezina, whose family subsequently moved to the village of Pohrebene, Orhei district, and then to the village of Saharna, located on the banks of the Dniester River. Agapy Caftanat learned to play the clarinet while serving in the tsarist army, but here his main passion was the music of the brass band. Having organized such an orchestra, he passed on his passion for music to his sons, Efrim, Mikhail and Vasily, two of them, Efrim and Mikhail, became professional musicians. Efrim Caftanat, clarinetist, was the conductor of the marching band in the First World War, then the conductor of the orchestra of the city of Rezina. Mikhail Caftanat, a graduate of the Warsaw Conservatory as an orchestra conductor, was also a self-taught composer. The sons of Vasile Caftanat, Ion and Mikhail, were also musicians. Mikhail, clarinetist, conductor, pedagogue and famous composer in Lviv and Chisinau. Ion, bassoonist, brass band conductor, teacher and music editor of the «Moldova Film Studio» from Chisinau. The older brother Agapius Caftanat, whose name was Miron, in turn had seven children, but only one of whom, Anton, chose the profession of a musician playing the trumpet. From his marriage to Tecla was born their daughter, Ekaterina Caftanat, who studied at the «Stefan Neaga» Music College from Chisinau, graduating as a choir conductor, and then continued her higher education at the Institute of Arts in Chisinau. (Cf. Simion Aurelia, 2022, The Musical Dynasties of the Republic of Moldova...)

lessons with the help of her former student Angela Neaga. Aurelia Buftac, married name Simion, began her musical education in the primary classes of the «*Eugen Coca*» Republican High School of Music in Chisinau, learning to play the piano first with Larisa Savranciuc, and starting from the 2nd grade with the beloved and appreciated teacher Lia Oxinoit, a tutor whose life was inextricably linked with the art of playing the piano, but also commanding special respect for her appearance and moral qualities.

Although she loved the piano, despite her passion for the art of dance and theater (unfortunately, these two arts remained just her hobbies), for little Aurelia Buftac, learning to play the piano was not easy at first. This was due to the fact that the joyous mood derived from outdoor games and impromptu performances with songs, poems and dances, organized with her friends in a large courtyard surrounded by high-rise buildings, was replaced by the daily monotonous piano practice, which was a painstaking work on honing the technique of performing various musical scales, arpeggios, studies, as well as works from their own repertoire.

## **2. Discussions**

The pleasure of studying music appeared only in the 8th grade, that is, already in adolescence. From that moment, the young pianist's professional ascent began, thanks to the solid knowledge gained in the classes of two piano tutors: Lia Oxinoit at the pre-university stage and Ludmila Vaverko while studying at the «Gavriil Musicescu» State Conservatory. Very important in this regard were the concerts organized by the teacher Lia Oxinoit in various high schools of the Republic of Moldova, where the young pianist, together with her colleagues, had the opportunity to perform in front of an appreciative audience in such towns as Balti, Bendery, Tiraspol, Straseni, etc. a varied repertoire, according to the technical and expressive possibilities at the right time, but necessarily included the creations of talented local composers.

After graduating from the «Gavriil Musicescu» State Conservatory in Chisinau (1981-1986), Aurelia Simion began a prodigious teaching career as a piano tutor and accompanist at the Pedagogical College in Balti, then at the «Gavriil Musicescu» Moldavian State Conservatory, at the «Ion Creanga» Secondary school, at the «Ciprian Porumbescu» Republican High School of Music, at the «Lia-ciocârlia» Musical-Choral Studio at the Palace of Children and Youth Creativity (all of the above-mentioned institutions are located in Chisinau), at the «Octav Bancila» National College of Art (Iasi). From 1995 to the present, Aurelia Simion has been successfully teaching chamber music and piano accompaniment techniques at the «George Enescu» National University of the Arts in Iasi. In more than two and a half decades, she has gone through all levels of teaching, from assistant, lecturer, and then associate professor to university professor, obtaining the title of Doctor of Music in 2006.

The artistic career of the pianist Aurelia Simion is impressive and marked by important professional successes realized in concerts and solo recitals or in collaboration with soloists, teachers, students and pupils, participation in Musical Olympiads, national and international competitions, such as an accompanist at: International Competition for Young Performers of «Eugen Coca» and "Alexei

Stârcea" School of Arts from Chisinau, Orpheus -Balti, Republic of Moldova (2019), Jeunesses Musicales (Bucharest), International Competition of Clarinets and Saxophonists (Iasi), The Open Voice and Choral Contest-Festival "Khay pisnya sklykaye druziv" from Chernivtsi, Ukraine (2018, 2019), Festival of Modern Music and Young Virtuosos (Odessa, Ukraine) and others.

At the same time, it should be noted that for the honesty and objectivity of her assessments, the pianist Aurelia Simion was often co-opted as a member or president of some national and international competitions: the International Competition for Young Performers of Eugen Coca from Chisinau (2010), the International Competition for Instrumental Interpretation of Ioan Goia, Iasi (2015), International Competition for Young Performers Zlata Tkach, Chisinau, Republic of Moldova (2017, 2018, 2019), Competition - International Festival "Khay pisnya sklykaye druziv" from Chernivtsi, Ukraine (2018, 2019), the International Competition "Young Virtuosos" in Odessa, Ukraine (2019), Edward Caudella National Competition in Iasi (2019).

Being a pianist with quick and natural adaptation and versatile artistic expression, Aurelia Simion was invited as an accompanist to the Piano master classes held in Chisinau (18 - 22 September 1992) by Prof. David Shemer from the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance (Israel); in Iasi (May 26-27, 2003) by Prof. Stoyan Karaivanov (horn), Dean of the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts from Plovdiv (Bulgaria); in Iasi (April 27-28, 2004) by Prof. Benjamin Coelho (bassoon), University of Iowa (USA); in Iasi (January 18-20, 2005) by Prof. Giampietro Giumento (clarinet) from Trapani Music Conservatory (Italy); in Iasi (February 22-23, 2005) by Aurel Mark (oboe), the Rector of the "G. Dima" Academy of Music from Cluj-Napoca; In Iasi (December 6-8, 2007) by Prof. Bruno Di Girolamo (clarinet) of the Santa Cecilia Conservatory of Music from Rome (Italy); in Iasi (May 22, 2008) by University Professor Simion Duja (clarinet), Academy of Music, Theater and Fine Arts from Chisinau, Honored Artist of the Republic of Moldova; in Iasi (November 18-22, 2008) by Prof. Hermann Klemeyer, Vice-Chancellor of the Hochschule für Music Würzburg (flute and chamber music); Prof. Peter Tabak (trumpet) from Moscow, Russia (November 19, 2010); Prof. Antonio Tinelli (clarinet) from Matera, Italy (March 24, 2011); Prof. Walter Ifrim (clarinet) from Freiburg, Germany; Prof. Vito Soranno (saxophone), "E.R.Duni" Conservatory of Music from Matera, Italy (May 23, 2012).

### **3. Results**

It is especially important to highlight the fact that Aurelia Simion evolved on the path of her artistic ascent thanks to the experience of performing at various concert venues from the level of the youngest performing musicians to world-class mastery, performing either as a soloist or as part of chamber ensembles and orchestras, pianist who always stands out through her passion for always tackling new scores, in different genres, in company with famous musicians and singers from Moldova and abroad, such as: Petrea Gysca, Horia Dumitrache, Dumitru Sipcu, Doru Albu, Florian Simion, Mihai Ailenei, Emil Vishenescu, Cristian Pintilie, Vittorio Cerasa, Antonio Tinelli, Giampietro Giumento, Vitto Soranno, Andrea Carozzo, Bruno di Girolamo, Yumika Nozaki, Tomoko Shiromoto, Nana Ozaki, Andrew Yu, Jerome Voisin, Chan Kum Kim, Petr Tabak, Konstantin Barkov,

Bogdan Vyrlan, Andrea Lori, Ion Urdes, Elisa Paraschiva Solomon and others, as well as such talented conductors as Michele Santosola, Alexandru Lascae, Hilarion Ionescu-Galati, Sabine Pautza, Gottfried Rabl, Horia Andreescu, Cristian Orasanu and the list goes on and on with many others names of distinguished musicians.

Over the years, Aurelia Simion gave voice to over a thousand scores from the works of pre-classical, classical, romantic and composers of the 20th century, works in which the piano joins strings, winds, percussion or folk instruments, chamber, choral and vocal-symphonic creations from which can be distinguished as a representative repertoire: *B. Bartok* - Sonata for two Pianos and percussion; *L.van Beethoven* - Quintet op.16 for Piano, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon & Horn; *M.I. Glinka* - Pathetic Trio for Piano, Clarinet and Bassoon; Grand Sextet For Piano, String Quartet and Double Bass; *J. Haydn* - Missa Cellensis; *M.F.Kreyn* - Trio for Piano, Clarinet & Bassoon; *R. Schumann* – Piano Quintet Op.44 for two violins, viola and cello; Quartet Op.47 for Piano, Violin, Viola, Cello; *S. Rachmaninoff* - Trio élégiaque No. 1 and 2 in D minor; *K.Reinecke* - Trio Op.188 for Piano, Violin and Cello; Trio Op.274 for Piano, Clarinet and Horn; *Ar. Schoenberg* - Pierrot Lunaire for Piano, voice, violin, cello, flute, clarinet and bass clarinet; *R.Oschanitzky* – Concerto for Piano, Brass & Percussion; *K. Orff* - Catulli Carmina; *F. Poulenc* - Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra in D minor; *G.Rossini* - Petite Messe Solennelle; *A. Vivaldi* - Gloria and others.

In addition to concerts and solo recitals, held mainly in Iasi and Chisinau, as well as on many stages in the country and abroad (Ukraine, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, France, Holland, Austria, Russia, Bulgaria), her inquisitive spirit, always eager to learn something new. For example, Aurelia Simion can play the harpsichord, celesta, marimbaphone and vibraphone, learned to improvise on a portable organ with pedals, and when she needed to complete the timbre coloring of the score as part of the «Alternance Percussion Ensemble», she mastered playing the Cuban clave, guiro, maracas and others small percussion instruments.

She was and is always concerned with initiating and creating something new, such as the chamber band A-TON and Trio Akademic composed of Aurelia Simion (piano), Petrea Gisca (horn), in collaboration with Daniel Paicu, Mihai Ailenei (clarinet) and Ion Urdes (tenor), who performs frequently. Together with her husband, renowned percussionist and university professor Florian Simion, she is a permanent member of the «Alternances Percussion Ensemble», a group that has achieved great success in the country and abroad, to which he attributed his name. Aurelia Simion made numerous arrangements for this ensemble, which were performed in the programs of ongoing solo concerts. She was also the initiator of a series of shows which take place annually at the beginning of March, calling them Mărți-show.

As vice-rector of the «George Enescu» National University of Arts from Iasi, Aurelia Simion suggested naming the UNAGE Interpretation Competition after Edouard Caudell, calling the building on Costache Negruzzi street «Artes», and the gallery in the hall of the «Artes building» to be called Gaudeamus. Also, on her initiative, as department director, two new specializations for students were launched by UNAGE ("George Enescu» National University of Arts): Pan-flute and Accordion.

She also made an important interpretive and compositional contribution to the editions of the Romanian Music Festival, embodied with her participation as a soloist (Concerto for Piano, Brass and Percussion by Richard Oschanitzky) or as part of several chamber and instrumental ensembles, as well as performing her own musical creations. For example, at the 2022 edition, she performed her own creation: *Fantasy on a theme from Romanian Rhapsody no. 1 by George Enescu for Piano*. Among her creations we can also mention: *The Clock for violin and piano*, *The Clock II* in collaboration with Chiril Paraschiv, *Sincerity for Vibraphone and Piano*, *Two Miniatures for Piano: Memories and Nostalgia*, *Accompaniment to Concert Study for Horn and Piano*, in collaboration with Petrea Gâscă, *Codreneasca for piano* by Tudor Chiriac, *Țurai for percussion and piano ensemble*, when she won a silver medal at EUROINVENT (2021).

It should also be noted that the professional activity of the pianist Aurelia Simion on the concert stage for many years has been praised in the pages of numerous specialized publications (Revista Arta), (Actualitatea muzicală a UCMR, Literatura si arta, Chișinău, Moldova literary, Chisinau, etc.), in weekly or daily publications from the country and abroad Cronica, Iasi, Ceahlăul and Monitorul de Piatra Neamt, Monitorul de Suceava, Curierul de seara and Kishinevskie novosti, Chisinau, Der Bote, Nürberg, Germania, Stendaler Volksstimme, Salzwed, Germany, Heidenhaimer Neue Presse, Heidenhaimer, etc.), in national and international radio and TV programs, such as: TV RAI-uno, Italy, Radio Moldova and TV Moldova, Chisinau, Radio Iasi and TV Iasi, Apollonia TV and TV-Life, Iasi, Televiziunea Cernauti, TeleM, Iasi. Ms. Aurelia Simion received the *UAGE Award (2007)* for research and artistic activities, *the EUROINVENT Gold Medal (2011)* for creativity and with special *Diplomas of Merit and Excellence* for solo and accompanist activities at various master classes, festivals, national and international competitions (about 100). In 40 years of professional activity, pupils and students under the guidance of pianist and teacher Aurelia Simion have won more than 100 prestigious awards.

It should also be recalled that Aurelia Simion is the author of four monographs: *"Carl Reinecke. Stylistic aspects and problems of interpretation in his creation"*, *"Anton Rubinstein and the Art of Piano Playing"*, *"Theme with Variations / Poses of Culinary Design"*, *"Make room for a good day - a portrait of the musician and teacher Florian Simion"*. She also has numerous articles published in specialized magazines, but and a rich discography: CD *"La clé de l'horizont"*; Avec le soutien de PRO Helvetia, C&P 2001; L'Association Culturelle et Littéraire *"Tristan Tzara"*, Moinesti (Romania); CD *Chamber music by Viorel Munteanu, vol. IV*; Music Publishing House, UCMR – ADA; CD – *Scaramouche*; CD - *From Classics to Modern*; CD - *On Jazz Meridians*; CD - *Works for clarinet by Iasi composers*; UCMR Music Publishing.

#### **4. Conclusions**

Speaking about the personality of Aurelia Simion, we can only conclude that she is endowed with a talent, she has an inherent desire for creativity, and an extraordinary performance of works by various composers. Mrs. Aurelia Simion is a person completely devoted to piano music, concerts, solo performances, tours and to the constant search, improvement, creation of new methods, techniques of

musical work. This is a musician who is selflessly devoted to live music in general.

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