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Emil Monția – Hearty Transylvanian Folklorist and Carol - Picker

Tiberiu ARDELEAN

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“Hilarion V. Felea” Faculty of Orthodox Theology, Arad
Email: tiberiuardelean@yahoo.com

Abstract

Emil Monția remained in the conscience of the Romanian people as a hearty Transylvanian folklorist, carol-picker, the composer of the wonderful Romance for voice and piano. Together with Tiberiu Brediceanu and Sabin Drăgoi, Emil Montia dug up and spread the true Romanian song. Emil Montia was an intellectual elite who built a personality at the height of his noble mission, never having a border between life and art, permanently seeking to find his major existential meanings in the cultural creation of the Romanian people¹.

Keywords:

Emil Monția, music composer, Transylvania, folklore, carol-songs

I. Some biographic landmarks about Emil Monția

He was born in 6 January 1882, in the day of the Great Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, in an old Romanian village, at Șicula, in a true dynasty of

¹ Marcel PRIESCU, Amalia PURDA, *Șiria și Marea Unire (Siria and the Great Union)*, Promun Publishing House, Arad, 2018, p. 55.

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priests of eight generations. The genealogy tree of his priestly family begun in the 18th century with the priest Dimitrie Montia, and after follows the graduates of the Theological Institute, Isaiah in 1829, Ambrosie in 1842, John in 1858, Florian in 1870 and then the three sons of the latter: Corneliu in 1890, Iustin in 1905 and Coriolan in 1908.

The future priest Florian Montia, raised from a Christian family, with love for the people and the country, studies Theology at the Theological Institute from Arad, between 1866-1870. His intelligence and integrity were his main qualities in the university years. He was part of the management “Speranța” magazine, established by the “Reading Society” of the theologians students, having the name as a “churchly literary sheet of the Orthodox Romanians from Hungary and Transylvania”². His name was known by the bishop of Arad Procopie Ivașcovici. Although he is proposed to stay in Arad, he prefers to return to his homeland, to Sicula. He marries Maria, the sister of the memorandist Ioan Cure from Covăsânț, having a son, Cornel Isaia. He remains widower five years after the birth of his son Cornel, his wife was unable to cope with the complications arising from a cold, which could not be cured at that time. Later, the priest Florian Montia, with the blessing of Bishop Ioan Mețianu, remarries with Maria Demetrovici from Arad, having together five children: Emil, Iustin, Coriolan, Aurora and Aurel.

Being a good connoisseur of the local cultural traditions and animated by the desire to influence the spiritual level to his believers, in the parish house of Sicula, he organizes the “Circle of music lovers and reading”, as a subsidiary of the “Reading Society” of the students from Arad, circle in which youngs and olders loving the reading and singing are engaged³. At these meetings is always present the young 7 years old Emil Monția.

The young Emil, from the desire to stand out in front of his classmates, begins to read from the magazines received from the “Reading Society”. At these meetings, the first connections between Emil Montia and the fiddler of Didianu village were built, who was known in that parts as one of the most famous scribes. Emil, unknowing the musical notes, but endowed with a special native talent, is called to sing in schools from Șicula, Gurba, Chereluș, Cermei, with different instrumentalists from the place.

² Marcel PRIESCU, Amalia PURDA, *Șiria și Marea Unire*, p. 55.

³ Marcel PRIESCU, Amalia PURDA, *Șiria și Marea Unire*, p. 56.

His father, observing the musical talent of his son Emil, especially his attraction to this side of the art, which is the instrumental one, gives the child to Didianu to teach him to play the violin starting in the second grade. He is present since then at all the celebrations organized by the School in Șicula, during the primary and secondary school years, playing solos and violin duets with his instructor, Didianu.

He begins high school in Arad, in 1895, the first two years, and the last ones in Timisoara, where in 1899 he takes his Bachelor's degree. His passion for music makes him continue studying violin, cello, piano, harmony with Czech and German teachers. Returning in Holidays at Sicula becomes an opportunity for understanding, collecting, and interpreting folklore, at a very high level.

His father's wish was for his son Emil to study law⁴, following this path between 1899-1903, in Oradea the first three years, and the last year in Cluj-Napoca. Also in the heart of Transylvania he took his PhD degree in 1905. The diploma is distinguished by the ink calligraphy, in Latin, its authenticity being the seal made of wood, inside which there is red ink, and on which is a string braided in the colors of the Hungarian flag. Arrangements for the National Assembly from Alba Iulia.

Between 1904-1905, he finishes the military service in Vienna, while continuing to study folklore and piano with Eusebiu Mandicevschi, a friend of Brahms and the brother of the great composer Gheorghe Mandicevschi.

Between 1905-1906, Emil Montia practiced law in Tinca, Arad, Lipova. In 1907, he married the well-known pianist, Mărioara Dojec from Lipova. He gives his exam for the profession of law in Budapest, and this year, in 1907, he opens in Siria his own "law court".

“He follows several concentrations in the army, in the years leading up the World War I, and in 1914, he was mobilized and sent to the front of Galicia, where in 1915, he fell as a prisoner to the Russians, having the rank of lieutenant. With the entry of Romania into the war in August 1916, Romanian volunteers were concentrated in the camp at Darnita, near Kiev. Here, for a year and a half, he plays the second violin in the Kiev opera

⁴ Ioan T. FLOREA, *La un veac de la nașterea lui Emil Montia 1882-1982 (A century from the birth of Emil Montia 1882-1982)*, Editura Comitetului de cultură și educație socialistă al județului Arad Publishing House, Arad, 1982, p. 10.

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orchestra, and at the same time takes Russian music lessons from the local conservator's director, Professor Kanevtov. Based on the acquired knowledge and the material gathered in the area, he writes the «Russian Suite» for the orchestra, which is presented in concerts of particular instrumental groups”⁵.

From May 1918, we find him in command of the Corps of Transylvanian and Bukovina volunteers in Iasi, with the rank of captain. On November 14, 1918, by order 327, issued by the central service of the Romanian Volunteer Corps, Emil Montia departs from Iasi, in the interest of service in Transylvania, having to return after completing the mission in Bucharest. During his time in Iasi, he studied composition with Eduard Caudella, the director of the Conservatory in this city. The move to Transylvania aims to participate in the preparation of the Great Assembly in Alba Iulia. Emil Montia is elected in the Great Romanian National Council, founded on the proposal of Vasile Goldis, who was meant to represent the Romanian nation of Transylvania, Banat and the Hungarian Country to all the nations of the world. Returning to Bucharest, after the establishment of the first Romanian government of the whole country, he receives the position of advisor to the Ministry of Agriculture and Trade⁶.

Between 1919-1924, he joined the circles of great musicians from Bucharest and took part in the founding of the Bucharest Opera, of Romanian Composers Society, whose president is George Enescu and secretary, Constantin Brăiloiu. During this period he maintains a direct contact with his brother Aurel, a graduate of the Faculty of Law in Cluj, with his PhD in law from 1914, and with his sister Aurora, both of whom are settled in Bucharest.

In the First World War⁷, from the Galiția front, he got to Russia, prisoner into the Darnița camp, studied in Kiev Russian music and started to work

⁵ Liana PĂUNIN, <https://www.pressalert.ro/2018/11/fragmente-de-istorie-cine-fost-emil-montia-avocatul-aradean-educat-la-timisoara-oradea-si-viena-foto/>, 22 July, 2019, 16⁰⁰.

⁶ Liana PĂUNIN, <https://www.pressalert.ro/2018/11/fragmente-de-istorie-cine-fost-emil-montia-avocatul-aradean-educat-la-timisoara-oradea-si-viena-foto/>, 22 July, 2019, 16⁰⁵.

⁷ Liana PĂUNIN, <https://www.pressalert.ro/2018/11/fragmente-de-istorie-cine-fost-emil-montia-avocatul-aradean-educat-la-timisoara-oradea-si-viena-foto/>, 22 July, 2019, 16¹⁰.

at the folk inspired opera “Ileana”. From 1918 spring he was enrolled in the Transilvanian and Bucovina volunteers corp, at Iasi, and in november 13 1918 he leaves Transylvania to participate at the Great National Assembly from Alba Iulia. At december 2 he was elected member of the Great Transylvania National Council, from Arad part, and in March 1919 he was elected advisor to the Ministry of Agriculture and Trade. He spend the next years at Bucharest, into the circles of romanian musicians, he took part at the formation of the Cluj Opera and the Romanian Composers Society.

In 1927, he gets back to Siria, where he resumes the profession of lawyer, combined with the passion for music. Here, he considers in his world, which is the world of romanian village, where his artistic knowledge can be under the sign of artistic identity of his beloved people. The local beauty associated with forest thrill and birds’ chirp, will charge his noble soul of charm and melody, to the end of life.

II. Emil Monția – illustrious folk-inspired composer

Society of Romanian Composers published in 1927 three collections, with a preface of Constantin Brăiloiu⁸. The other collections remained unedited.

The following collection of 111 Romanian doinas and folk songs arranged for voice and piano, was also unedited. It was dedicated to George Enescu, for his 50th birthday, in 1931.

Monția kept at Siria a relation with great Enescu, who introduced in his concerts repertoire, songs for violin and piano from the compositions of Emil Monția. Remained unedited the collection of “200 doinas and folk song for voice and piano”. Then, as well, remained unedited the collections “21 pieces for violin and piano”, “10 suites of folk songs for large orchestra”, “Beautiful Irina”, “Ballet music”, as well as the 5 works: “Ileana”, “Girl from Cozia”, “Outlaw Cercel”, “Heir” and “Cave in the mountains”⁹.

His first work “Ileana”¹⁰ was conceived by the composer during the Russian imprisonment, when he sang as a violonist, in the orchestra of the Kiev Opera, conducting master classes with the director of the Kiev

⁸ Marcel PRIESCU, Amalia PURDA, *Șiria și Marea Unire*, p. 60.

⁹ Marcel PRIESCU, Amalia PURDA, *Șiria și Marea Unire*, p. 60.

¹⁰ Ioan T. FLOREA, *La un veac...*, p. 19.

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Conservatory. This work ended in the country after the Great Union was built in 1918. The opera “Ileana”, inspired by the life of the Transylvanian village, weaves its dramatic conflict from the antagonistic positions of two families, a situation that breaks two loves: Ileana is the daughter of the rich man, Peter Doria, and Ionel, as a student, is the son of poor peasant Tudor Brusture. The outcome is fatal: Ileana unintentionally marries someone of her social status, and Ionel despairing, committing suicide, throwing himself into a lake. The opera “Ileana” was not fully presented on stage. Fragments of it were presented and performed by the Romanian Opera in Timișoara and was transmitted on several occasions through our radio stations¹¹.

The work that crowns the cycle of Montian compositions is “The girl from Cozia”¹², inspired by the history of the nation, with an interesting theme of love and courage. This was imposed on the musical firmament of the time by its special musical achievement, in a lyrical-dramatic style, of three acts. The booklet of the work is written by Montia, we will play the shield in the following:

“Orphan Irina, the granddaughter of Moș Gavrilă, is the girlfriend of Dorin, the son of Vlad Țepeș, the ruler of Muntenia. The young prince goes to the front of Muntenia army, in war against the Turks, who invaded the country. However, he doesn’t want to take Irina, who insists on participating in the fight with him. In which, the girl wearing the soldier’s clothes of her deceased father, takes part in the war disguised in the soldier Irimie, under the command of captain Udrea. In the decisive fight, Irina kills Pasha, the commander of the Turkish army, when he wants to ride with the horse over Dorin”¹³.

Finis coronat opus of¹⁴ the poem it’s exciting. Muntenia’s lord Vlad Țepeș blesses two weddings: his son Dorin and Irina and his daughter Chira with her lover, Udrea. The author completed the work with Eminescu’s lyrics “Loving in secret”, for the duet Dorin and Irina, and “In the beautiful May” for the Irina-Dorin-Pițiguș trio.

¹¹ Ioan T. FLOREA, *La un veac...*, p. 19.

¹² Ioan T. FLOREA, *La un veac...*, p. 20.

¹³ Ioan T. FLOREA, *La un veac...*, p. 20.

¹⁴ Ioan T. FLOREA, *La un veac...*, p. 20.

In “Radiofonia”¹⁵ magazine from 6 March 1932, new information about the opera “Girl from Cozia” appears, on the occasion of its transmission to the radio station Bucharest: “This is the first audition of an original opera of *longue heleine*”, a work in three acts “Girl from Cozia”, due to a distinguished composer from Banat, Emil Montia. The poem was interpreted by a number of valuable Bucharest singers, of whom we mention: Valentina Crețoiu, Nicolae Secăreanu, Robert Schilton, etc., under the stick of Carlo Brunetti. This opera was presented in 1936, on the Opera stage in Cluj-Napoca, the show being presented by the radio station of Bucharest.

The melodic treatment of the works of Emil Montia is full of romantic grace, in simple language, in which the popular melody or its style abounds, the harmonic and orchestral vesting being the youth of musical classicism.

Other representative works¹⁶:

- Yellow leaf forest, followed by doinas and Romanian folk songs for the piano
- Carols for piano nr. 1 - 44
- Outlaw’s Doina, a suite of Romanian songs and chants for the piano
- Mures Doina for piano.
- Doina vadului, a suite of Romanian songs and chants for the piano
- I was wandering in a garden, carols suite
- Suite of Romanian folk carols
- At the well with the bucket

III. Emil Monția – Romanian carols picker

The composer Emil Montia had a remarkable inclination towards the carols of the Romanian people, especially on those from Arad county. There are two exceptional carols that are included in the repertoire of printed carols, and at the same time in the concert programs of the most famous choirs in Romania, starting with the national chamber choir “Madrigal-Marin Constantin”. These are the carols “Up to the Gate of Heaven” and “Colindă”, in La major.

¹⁵ Ioan T. FLOREA, *La un veac...*, p. 20.

¹⁶ https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emil_Mon%C8%9Bia, 22 July 2019, 16²⁵.

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In the following, we will present some very interesting landmarks regarding the way composer Emil Montia picked and gathered in 5 volumes, the Romanian, old folk carols from Arad county. We refer to the first two, which are titled: Romanian folk carols in 5 volumes, volume I¹⁷, 1938 and volume II¹⁸, 1942.

There are impressive data regarding the way Montia has understood to collect these carols that remain immortal in the conscience of the people, data that we will present in the following: “The carols of these works, says Emil Montia, I have collected personally, on the spot, checking the recording in front of the violin carol singer ”.

Volume I – 4 September 1938¹⁹

- “On the hill with flowers” and “Let us host enter the house” he heard in Siria in 1907 from Gance Gavra, a farmer, orthodox, untutored, who taught them from his parents. Carols ancestors.
- “The Hunters of Pilate” and “At the peony bush” he picked them from Varfuri in 1936 from Ioan Sircuța Onița, a 45-year-old Orthodox farmer and church singer, unaware of musical notes. Carols ancestors
- “Little bird singing” also picked it up in 1936, from the village of Lazuri, from Leuca Maria, farmer, orthodox, educated. Ancestor carol.
- “Three black rooster crows” picked it up in the same year, 1936 from Dumitru Tișca, a farmer, 21 years old and Ioan Trifan, 25 years old, teacher, peasant boy, both Orthodox, book writers and musical notes knowers, originating from Tisa, Arad County. Ancestor carol.
- “Up to the gate of heaven”, “O, what a wonderful news” and “Today Christ was born”, he taught in childhood, from his father, the priest Florian Montia, 40 years old, ignorant of musical notes. Carols ancestors.
- “Carol” and “Star rises above” he had learned since childhood, from the first professor George Crucean, aged 37, Orthodox, unknown of musical notes, a native of Pecica, Arad county. Carols ancestors
- “Sleep heavenly emperor”, “green silk swan” and “deer carol” heard in 1909-1910, in Siria, from Doda Brădean, farmer, 40 years, Orthodox, uneducated. Carols ancestors.

¹⁷ Emil MONȚIA, *110 colinde populare românești pentru voce și pian, (110 Romanian folk carols for voice and piano)*, volume I, Tipografia Diecezana Publishing house, Arad, 1938, p. 24.

¹⁸ Emil MONȚIA, *110 colinde...*, p. 23.

¹⁹ Emil MONȚIA, *110 colinde...*, p. 24.

- “It still asks the saints,” he picked it up from Tălagiu, in 1936, from Gheorghe Igreș, a farmer, 65 years old, Orthodox, uneducated. Ancestor carol.
- “On the Holy Sunday” he heard it in 1936, at the Varfuri, from Paraschiva Sârban, a 70-year-old priest widow, Orthodox, unfamiliar with musical notes. Ancestor carol
- “Dear holy Sunday” and “Tonight good host” he heard them in childhood 1887-1888, in Sicula, from the servant Pusulaica, 60 years, Orthodox, uneducated. Carols ancestors.
- The “wheat carol” picked it in 1899, at Moneasa, from an old jeweler from Sebiș area. Ancestor carol.
- “The Holy Lord when he was born”, he picked it up in Cluj, in 1903, from Alexandru Popovici, a law student, a peasant boy from Banat, Orthodox, unfamiliar with musical notes. Ancestor carol.
- “Lord Jesus Christ”, he picked it up in 1900, from the priest Dimitrie Popovici, from Sicula, 35 years old, ignorant of musical notes. Ancestor carol.
- “How many flowers are on the ground” he picked it up from Hălmăgiu, in 1905, from an old man around Mount Găina. Ancestor carol.

Volume II – 7 February 1942²⁰

- “Oh! powerful emperor” and “Up on the sky at dawn” he heard in Siria in 1907 from Gance Gavra, farmer, orthodox, uneducated, 43 years old. The interesting note of the first carol is the first measure, which is identical to the main reason of the end of the Symphony “Jupiter” by W.A. Mozart. Carols ancestors.
- “Up on the gloomy sky” he picked it up from an old peasant from Draut, in Siria in 1908. Ancestral carol.
- “In the honesty-this house” he recorded it in 1936, in Halmăgiu, from Golea Nicolae, a farmer, 40 years old, book scientist, ignorant of musical notes, orthodox, originally from Hălmăgel, Arad county. Ancestor carol.
- “Bad he was praised” she heard it and recorded it in 1936, in Vârfuri, from Ioan Sircuța Onița, a 45-year-old Orthodox farmer and church singer, unaware of musical notes. Ancestor carol.

²⁰ Emil MONȚIA, *110 colinde...*, p. 23.

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- “Heavy rains have come” also picked it up in 1936, at Varfuri from Ioan Țișca, a farmer, 26 years old, Orthodox, book scientist, ignorant of musical notes, from the town of Tisa, Arad county.
- “The luminous feast” was collected in 1887-1888 from his teacher Crucean, 37 years old, ignorant of musical notes, in the village Șicula, Arad county. Ancestor carol.
- “On the vineyard” he heard it as a child in Șicula, from the servant Pussulaica, 60 years, Orthodox, uneducated. Ancestor carol.
- “Lies-a sick Jew”, picked it up in 1936, from the village of Lazuri, from Leuca Maria, farmer, orthodox, educated, 50 years. Ancestor carol.
- “From the red sun” he heard in 1910, in Siria, from Lazăr Trocar, a farmer, orthodox, ignorant of books and musical notes, 40 years old, from Arăneag, jud., Arad. Ancestor carol.
- “What an evening is tonight” picked it up in Siria in 1923, from Mihai Voluntor, teacher, orthodox, 60 years old, ignorant of musical notes, originally from Banat. Ancestor carol.
- “In the city of Bethlehem” he heard it from a fiddler from the parts of Gurahonț, of Arad county, in 1913. Ancestor carol.
- “There in the valley of Galilee” picked it up in 1910, from Mihai Miculiț, a farmer, from Minișul de Sus, Arad county, 40 years, Greek-Catholic, book scientist, unknowing the musical notes. Ancestor carol.
- “On the hill with the dawn” he heard it in 1939, in Siria from Z. Opușca, 27 years old, farmer, educated, music note ignorant, Bârsa commune, Arad county. Ancestor carol.
- “All the Christian world” and “Towards the evening of the Eve”, he taught them in childhood from his father, the priest Florian Montia, 40 years old, unfamiliar with musical notes. Carols ancestors.
- “Up to the white dawn” picked it up in 1911, in Siria, from Doda Brădean, farmer, 40 years old, Orthodox, bookless. Ancestor carol
- “Up at the top of the mountain” he heard it from Petru Șeran, a farmer and church trustee, book scientist and ignorant of musical notes from Sicula, in 1890. Ancestral carol.
- “Nine great builders” was heard in 1900, at the Old School in Sicula. The melody of introduction, with almost the same text, was heard in 1936 in Hălmațiu, by the teacher Trifan from Tisa and two peasants. Ancestor carol.

- “At the orchard under City” picked it up in 1936 in Vârfuri, from Ioan Trifan, a 25-year-old orthodox teacher, music note writer. Ancestor carol.
- “Three shepherds” picked it in childhood from his father with the refrain: Sunflower, sunflower. Ancestor carol.
- “Up to the gate of heaven” picked it up from Z. Oprușa, 27 years old, farmer, educated, music notes ignorant, Bârsa commune, Arad county. Ancestor carol.

His artistic belief²¹ can be put under the sign of identity with the artistic belief of the people, from whose art he draw all the energy. In the murmur of his songs, this time mourning, the crowd of Sirians led him on his last road to the cemetery on the outskirts of the village. The catapult was carried on the arms by the members of the male choir from Siria, dressed in warm clothes on February 16, 1965. He is buried in the cemetery in Siria.

We will present below, some thoughts of some personalities of the time regarding the great Montia, namely:

- “As a man, Emil Montia was a good psychologist of the interlocutor, he did not miss anything unobserved. As a neighbor, he was jumpy and happy, and as an artist he was the lyrical-likeable temperament, conquered by the gentleness and words of the spirit. It was seen that he adored the popular spirit in sensitive humming and patriotic ascension. His musical creation proves it by all means”²². – Teacher Pavel Galea.
- “Emil Montia was one of those elected who understood that the first duty of a scholar is to serve his people, who thought of him, without thinking of any reward or advancement in any hierarchy. He leaned on the popular museum to develop compositions of high artistic potential, meant to highlight more fully the musical qualities. The followers left this difficult lesson and perfect discretion, the only pure way to serve your nation, guided only by the impetus of true love for the many”²³. Ovidiu Bîrlea – folklorist
- “About Emil Montia I first heard in the years of University studies (1926-1931), and especially during my activity in the Romanian Op-

²¹ Marcel PRIESCU, Amalia PURDA, *Șiria și Marea Unire*, p. 61.

²² Ioan T. FLOREA, *La un veac...*, p. 25.

²³ Ioan T. FLOREA, *La un veac...*, p. 27.

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era in Bucharest (1937-1947) ... big names of the National Opera in Bucharest, such as: soprano Lucreția Enescu, bass George Folescu, performed the most beautiful roles in the compositions of Montia ... His sincere music, like his precious figure, we have a memory of the most beautiful”²⁴. Nicolae Brînzeu – composer.

IV. Conclusions

Composer Emil Montia remains in the consciousness of his nation, an illustrious composer, who managed to discover the Romanian folk songs, the carols of the nation, to become immortal. He had a chosen education, being part of the Montia dynasty, with genealogical roots of 8 generations of priests.

At the “Ioan Slavici” Memorial Museum was reconstructed the composer’s work room, which includes original furniture, piano and other musical instruments, family photos, sheet music, folklore collections, posters of works, patents and diplomas received including from the Royal House of Romania and prizes that illustrates his artistic ascent.

²⁴ Ioan T. FLOREA, *La un veac...*, p. 28.