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Building Bridges

by Marian Tanau

The second American Romanian Festival, organized by the non-profit organization with the same name, was held in November 2007. The organization has the mission of promoting Romanian and American cultures and music to audiences in the US and Romania by building a virtual bridge, with scholars and artists traveling in both countries presenting their music and ideas. With this second edition the festival succeeded and surpassed its goals, as the participants formed wonderful friendships. The members of the virtuoso Romanian baroque ensemble La Follia formed a wonderful friendship with the Santeiu Family from Garden City, Michigan, as the Santeius, so graciously hosted them in their home, fed them and drove them to concerts during their stay in the US. Thank you so much to this kind and generous family. La Follia gave beautiful performances in Michigan and Ohio, ending their concerts with beautiful Romanian Carols. Another wonderful presence was the participation of the Mayor of the Romanian city of Timisoara, Gheorghe Ciuhandu. The primary sponsors of his visit and lectures were The European Union Center and the Center for Russian and East European Studies at the University of Michigan. After speaking at the prestigious series "Conversations on Europe," the Mayor met with the Honor Students of the University of Michigan. To quote John Cantu, the host of the meeting, "...he held his audience in the grip of his hand. Truly extraordinary ... even by extraordinary standards." Other highlights in the US phase of the festival were the visits of Romanian composer Cornel Taranu and violin professor Maria Clesiu. Composer Taranu, held lectures on Romanian music as well as his own compositions at Cleveland State, Bowling Green and Eastern Michigan Universities, while Ms. Clesiu held master classes, lectures and private lessons at Wayne State University, Bowling Green State University and the Detroit High School for the Performing Arts. She was loved by the students, and her talent was recognized by the teachers and professors, so much so, that we are in the process of applying for a Fulbright grant to bring her to the US for a longer period of time, thus allowing the fruits of her work to ripen. In addition to the events involving the Romanian guests, there were 12 prestigious local musicians from the ranks of the Detroit Symphony, the Universities of Michigan, Wayne State and Eastern Michigan, who performed in chamber music concerts. Maria Hunciag, Cultural Arts Specialist, held lectures on Romanian culture, art and history. The Wayne State University Orchestra performed works by

Toduta and concluded to standing ovations with Enescu's Romanian Rhapsody. One of the last events of the US phase catered to our taste buds. It was the Romanian dinner held at Schoolcraft College, host to one of the premier national culinary institutes. The master chefs prepared the food to perfection and created a menu, which contained a wonderful variety of Romanian food followed by a performance by LaFollia.

Just as the events in the US were tapering off, the Romanian part of the festival was kicking off with a performance of the Barber Piano Concerto by the renowned American pianist Logan Skelton and the Timisoara Philharmonic. This was followed by recitals and chamber music concerts, given by the American musicians Chrstopher Harding, Stephen Lusmann and the Meridian Arts Ensemble as well as by the prestigious Romanian soloists Alexandra Gutu, Sorin Dogariu, Duo Mihailescu and Trio Contraste. The festival broke new ground in Romania, by organizing in collaboration with the Pro Bartok Association, a piano recital at Bela Bartok's birthplace in Sanicolaul Mare, Romania. Logan Skelton, performed works by Bartok in front of a full hall. Audiences traveled from as far as Budapest, Hungary to attend this concert. At some point elderly people who probably saw Bartok at one point, were humming familiar songs with tears in their eyes.

We are looking forward to organizing events for the next festival. We hope in the future to have a Romanian children's choir touring the US, and having the Detroit Symphony Civic Jazz Ensemble travel to Romania. A mini film fest, which will include Romanian movies and will host a Romanian movie director, is also in the plans. We are hoping to bring over a prestigious artist from Romania, one from Serbia to join an American artist, thus assembling the Art Exhibition "Bridges" for the second time. The first time this exhibit took place in May of 2006, in Romania.

The American Romanian Festival seeks continued support in order to carry its mission forward. We would be honored to have new gifts and support. Should you consider doing that, please make and send tax-deductible donations to the American Romanian Festival Inc., 1407 Ferdon Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48104.

Thank you so much to all the donors, sponsors and volunteers who made the American Romanian Festival a great success. Please visit www.americanromanianfestival.org for more detailed information about the 2007 events.

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Meridian Arts Ensemble
Bras Concert at Capitol Hall in Timisoara



Christopher Harding, piano professor at University of Michigan at West University Music Conservatory



Recital at Capitol Hall of the Timisoara Philharmonic



Chamber Music Concert at Eastern Michigan University
From left: Kyoko Kashiwagi, violin, Marian Tanau, violin, Paul Wingert, cello, Eva Stern, viola



Cornel Taranu conducting his composition Prolegomene in concert at Eastern Michigan University



Logan Skelton at University of Michigan in concert at Bartok's birthday place - Sanicolaul Mare



Romania Events I - Logan Skelton - with Filarmonica Banatul Timisoara



From left to Right ; Marian Tanau, violinist, Joel Schoenhals, pianist, Kyoko Kashiwagi, violinist, Cornel Taranu, composer, Eva Stern, violist, Paul Wingert, cellist

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