

Dan Mizrahy

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Bucharest

Romania

Interviewer: Anca Ciuciu

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Dan Mizrahy is a 79-year-old man with a lofty stature and a calm, deep voice. He lives in the house where he was born, which is surrounded by verdure and filled with childhood memories. His study, a bright, large room full of books and posters of his performances, is dominated by the piano. Mr. Mizrahy is a pianist, a teacher, a composer, a member of the Union of the Romanian Composers and Musicologists. Since 1946, he gave numerous recitals and concerts as a soloist of the local philharmonics, playing Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, Prokofiev, and Gershwin. He went on tours to Italy, the US, and Israel. A promoter of Gershwin, he was the first to introduce the entire work of the American composer to the Romanian public; in 2002, the 'Electrecord' Recording Company launched a double CD featuring his performance of Gershwin. As a teacher, he was a founding member of the first secondary music school in the country (today, the 'Dinu Lipatti' High School in Bucharest), he taught at the People's School of Performing Arts (1960-1999), and he was an associated professor at the National Music University in Bucharest (2000). He mainly composed vocal music (lieder, romances, light music, chorals); most of his works were recorded by the National Radio Broadcasting Company. He received many awards and honors for his activity. He wrote an autobiographical book entitled 'That's How It Was', which is due to be published by the Hasefer Publishing Company in the fall of 2005. The following pages comprise edited excerpts from this book and some other fragments that were added after the interview.

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My family history

My paternal grandfather, Avram Mizrahy, was born in 1864 it seems, in Varna [Bulgaria] and came to Bucharest when he was a child. I think he had a sister, Mazal [Hebrew for 'luck']. He owned a small clockmaker's shop on Carol Street. The shop may have been small, but the sign was big, visible from a distance: 'A. Mizrahy - house founded in 1884'! My paternal grandmother, Lucia Sara Mizrahy [nee Rubinstein], was born in 1873 in Bucharest. I met one of her brothers, Moritz Rubinstein, and one of her sisters, Rosa Olivenbaum [nee Rubinstein]; they both lived in Bucharest in the 1930s.

The Mizrahy grandparents had their 'quarters' on Banu Maracine Street [formerly known as Spanish Street, because many of the residents were Spanish Jews - at that time, there were several thousands of them]. My grandfather still spoke Ladino, but the language spoken in their house was

Romanian – without foreign accents, even without inflections. All his five children – Moscu Mizrahy [my father, the eldest], Leon Mizrahi [the only one whose name had a different spelling, because of a transcription error that occurred in the official papers], Suzette Aronescu [nee Mizrahy], Carola Rosman [nee Mizrahy], and Solomon Mizrahy – spoke the literary Romanian fluently. It was in these ‘quarters’ that my father grew up together with his two brothers and two sisters. Both my father’s sisters lived on Banu Maracine Street, on neighboring plots, with a common courtyard. My paternal grandmother died in 1935, and my paternal grandfather in 1940. They were both buried at Bucharest’s Belu cemetery, in the Spanish section.

Leon [pet name Nicu] Mizrahi was born in 1899 in Bucharest. Until he left the country, in 1941, he was a lawyer and the president of the Zionist associations in Romania. I was very close to him. I was still in my early childhood, but I remember he often came to our place; he loved me and brought me presents. He was the one who gave me my first fountain pen with a golden nib and my first alarm clock. It so happened that I immigrated to Palestine at the same time with him and his family. Between 1941 and 1945 I visited him on a regular basis, first in Haifa, where he had built a house, then in Tel Aviv, where he tried to get in business with a diamond polishing workshop. He couldn’t practice law, because he didn’t manage to learn to express himself in Ivrit in such a manner that he could plead in front of an Israeli court. This hurt him. He had a very well shaped personality, his intelligence was doubled by a solid culture, and he was a sentimental nature.

He and his wife, Paulina Mizrahi [nee Hurtig] had four children, who were born at relatively big distances one from another: Emanuel, the Theodor and Angelo twins, and then Daniela. Emanuel Mizrahi [known as Bar Kadmah in Israel] was born in 1932 in Bucharest. He worked as a theater reviewer for many years; he also painted, becoming a well-known modern painter in Israel. He never got married. The Theodor and Angelo Mizrahi twins [known as Zvi and Schmuel, respectively in Israel] were born in 1939 in Bucharest. They were one year and a half when they left the country. Sadly, Angelo caught poliomyelitis in 1947 and passed away at the age of eight. Theodor embraced the kibbutz idea. He has three children, two boys and a girl. Daniela Grunberg [nee Mizrahi] was born in Israel in 1946. She had an impressive career, reaching the top management of the company in charge with the irrigations in Israel. She has three wonderful children, two boys and a girl. My uncle, Leon Mizrahi, died in 1967 in Tel Aviv. His wife died in the early 1990s [in 1994]. Their children love one another deeply and they keep a very nice tradition: every Friday night they get together at Daniela’s or Zvi’s.

Suzette Aronescu [nee Mizrahy] was born in 1901 in Bucharest. She married Felix Aronescu, with whom she had a boy, Mihai Aronescu, born in 1930. Suzette lived at 41 Banu Maracine Street, next to my grandparents. She got divorced in the 1940s and immigrated to Israel in 1950. Mihai Aronescu [changed his surname to Amit in Israel] became an anesthesiologist. He has a 35-year-old daughter, Leora, from his first marriage. Aunt Suzette died in the late 1970s in Holon.

Carola Rosman [nee Mizrahy] was born in 1906 in Bucharest. She married Iancu Rosman and the two of them had two boys: Dan and Lucian Rosman. My aunt was an exemplary housewife who loved to have guests; her stuffed fish was exquisite and all her meals were delicious and abundant. She lived at 43 Banu Maracine Street, between the two Spanish temples. For as long as I was a child, we all went to her place after the [Yom] Kippur fast was over, and she welcomed us with the traditional teaspoonful of preserves. The house she received as dowry, and where she lived until 1951, when she made aliyah with her husband and children, was nationalized. Her son, Dan

Rosman, was born in 1932 in Bucharest. He didn't go to college and worked in an Israeli bank as a clerk until his retirement. He died in Israel in 1998. The other son, Lucian Rosman [known as Ramon in Israel], was born in 1937 in Bucharest and had a glittering university career as a chemical engineer. He worked a lot as a researcher at the University of Jerusalem and he also had contracts in the US, Spain and South Korea. For over 50 years, his permanent residence has been the Sarid kibbutz, which he joined in his early youth. He is married and has three children, two boys and a girl. Carola Rosman died in Israel in the early 1980s. Her husband had passed away earlier, in the second half of the 1970s.

Solomon [pet name Soly] Mizrahy, the youngest brother, was born in 1909 in Bucharest. He was a chemical engineer, just like his wife, Odette Mizrahy [nee Steinbach], who became a PhD in chemistry in Israel. They immigrated to Palestine in 1944. Their only child, Alma Gal [nee Mizrahy], was born in 1946. Solomon was a Zionist and worked a lot for the Sochnut [1](#), being in charge of the integration of the newcomers to Israel. In this quality, he used to be sent abroad, to South America and Europe. He was the most religious of the Mizrahy brothers, he took a very active part in the religious life, but he never covered his head. I remember him at the tomb of my parents, in 1976, soon after my mother's death; he didn't let us hire someone, but read the prayers himself. He lived in Tel Aviv, but died in Jerusalem in 1979, while he was visiting his daughter. She became a PhD in chemistry and worked for the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. She has two boys. She also had a daughter, but she died of leukemia at the age of five. Alma died of leukemia in Jerusalem in 1998. Odette Mizrahy [nee Steinbach] died of cancer in Tel Aviv in March 1998, six weeks after she buried her daughter.

My father, Moscu [pet name Bubi] Mizrahy, was born on 12th April 1897 in Bucharest. He was what they call a 'self-made man.' He went to the Evangelic School, then to the Commerce Academy in Bucharest. Right after he graduated from the former, he started to provide for himself by doing bookkeeping for various employers; he did this all the way through college. In 1924 he was hired as a clerk by a company owned by a very rich family, Marcus Pincas & Co. In just a few years, through hard work and competence, he made it to the top. Over the years, his career developed further: authorized accountant, expert accountant, and PhD in economics in 1935. After more than 20 years, my father changed his employment; he was appointed manager at IRCO [Romanian Crystals and Mirrors Industry] and delegated administrator of the administration board of the Scaeni Windows Factory [located in Scaeni, near Ploiesti].

He was drafted at the end of World War I, went to an officers' school, and graduated as a second lieutenant. After a call-up in 1927, he was promoted to lieutenant. There were some more call-ups in 1939, to Sibiu and Lipova [Arad County] – he was with the 5th Heavy Artillery Regiment. He remained in the army until 15th August 1940, when Jews were kicked out from the armed forces.

My father observed the main holidays of the Hebrew calendar, fasted once a year, on Yom Kippur, didn't eat bread during the eight days of Pesach, and, if he came back from work in time to catch the Friday night service, he went to the temple and read from the prayer book alongside the others. He wasn't devout, but had had a religious education. I have his old prayer books, where he thoroughly marked over the years the time of the Kol Nidre prayer, the time of the shofar, and the time when the service ended. I carry on this tradition and I mark the times when the services begin and end.

My maternal grandfather, David Schonfeld, was born in 1851 in Iasi. He came to Bucharest after the death of his first wife. He worked for over 30 years as the manager of the Filantropia Jewish cemetery in Bucharest. He spoke Romanian and I think he also spoke Yiddish. He died in 1928, when I was two years old. My grandmother survived him by another 27 years.

My maternal grandmother, Rachel Schonfeld [nee Friedman], was born in 1865, during the reign of Cuza [2](#), in Bucharest. She witnessed the instauration of the monarchy, she lived under the rule of all the four kings and she even had the 'luck' to catch the beginnings of the 'people's rule.' As a young lady, she – and other girls from 'respectable families' – had the privilege to collect money for the erection of the Romanian Athenaeum, standing in the Cismigiu Garden, with a basket of flowers in her hand: 'Donate one leu, just one leu, for the stately Athenaeum!' She was a contemporary and a friend of Marioara Ventura [Editor's note: Marioara Ventura (1886-1954): Romanian actress, famous at the beginning of the 20th century, member of the Comedie Francaise]. She had also met her mother. Stimulated by her entourage, she studied drama and the piano. I remember her as a short, neat, stylish old woman with a bright face who worked hard – a mistress of crochet, among other things; this is how she remained until the very last day of her life. She died at the age of 89. Endowed with an uncommon memory, she used to recite to us poems by Eminescu [3](#) with an amazing freshness.

I remember her on the day of 23rd February 1954, when she entered her 90th year, in the sounds of a waltz played by yours truly at the piano. Omama [German for granny] danced with my brother-in-law. Four weeks later, we accompanied her on her last journey. As she departed, she took with her an entire era.

My maternal grandfather had two older children from his first marriage: Iosef Schonfeld and Lisa Zilberman [nee Schonfeld]. Iosef Schonfeld was a hatter and owned a fashion design house in Bucharest, on Lipscani Street [Bucharest's commercial center]. Lisa Zilberman [nee Schonfeld] became a widow during World War I and was left with several children – I think three girls and a boy.

It was in the small house at the entrance of the Filantropia cemetery that my grandparents' three daughters were born and raised: Mina, Henriette, and Annie Schonfeld went to the 'Moteanu' boarding school, where they were taught to treasure the value of money and to earn their existence. They all worked as clerks until they got married.

Mina Solomon [nee Schonfeld] was born in Bucharest in 1896. She worked as a clerk until she married Moritz Ticu Solomon. He fought and was wounded in World War I. He became a sergeant in the Romanian Army. He was a self-made man, an oil man who had a small refinery at the entrance of the town of Ploiesti. He built himself a four-floor apartment house, with two apartments per each floor, in Bucharest, on Sfintilor Street. They were the only ones in the family who had a car and a chauffeur. In the early 1930s they had a Daimler, then a Marmon; I had never heard of this make before and I never heard of it again, but I remember the license plate: 676 B. The ties between the three sisters were very strong. In particular, my mother and Mina were extremely close and this is how they remained until the end of their lives. Marian Solomon, my cousin, was born in 1921 in Bucharest. He left on a small boat to Palestine in 1942 and spent six months in Izmir [Turkey], until the British let him stay in Cyprus, in 1943. After one year and a half he got to Palestine. He never returned to Romania. He went to the Polytechnic in Beirut [Lebanon], spent a few years in France,

and then he settled in Australia, in Sydney, where he became the general manager of some factory. He had two children, a boy, Alan, and a girl, Nathalie. The boy was a sort of young genius of the family; he was Australia's chess champion at the age of 13. In his turn, he has a son, who has recently chosen to become a policeman. My cousin Marian died of leukemia in Sydney in 1980. Mina Solomon died in Tel Aviv in 1986.

Annie Nutzy Segalescu [nee Schonfeld] was born in 1900 in Bucharest. She was the most religious of the sisters, but she had her limits; she didn't wear a wig. She married Eugen Segalescu, with whom she had a son, Gabriel Segalescu, born in 1926 in Bucharest, seven weeks after I was born. She got divorced in 1939 and remarried. She immigrated to France and died in Paris in 1982. Gabriel Segalescu left the country in 1961. When he got the French citizenship, his name became Segard.

My mother, Henriette Mizrahy [nee Schonfeld], was born in 1898 in Bucharest. From the moment I could understand and judge, I realized that the day of 29th March – my mother's birthday – was a holiday in our home. The house was filled with flowers, the phone didn't cease to ring, and, in the evening, when all preparations had been finished, the family gathered with some couples of friends who were as close to my parents as their brothers and sisters. As for the presents, they were my father's 'job.' I remember the 'bestowment' of such a gift, I think this was in 1936 or 1937: In my parents' bedroom, in front of me, and maybe my sister Mira, my father presents my mother a nicely wrapped small package. She opens it and reveals a red-blue box of 'Shalimar' perfume. Delighted, my mother kisses my father and thanks him. He urges her to open the box and try the perfume. On doing that, my mother lifts the top that covered the bottle, which causes an object wrapped in paper to fall on the floor. We rush to pick it up, my mother unwraps it and we are all speechless! My mother is holding the most beautiful brooch that we have ever seen!

Our family's standard of living was the normal one for an intellectual who worked as a higher clerk and supported a wife and two children. We employed one or two maids, usually from Transylvania [4](#), and we also had a governess for a while – until we were seven or eight. As far as our education is concerned, I can say that no resources were spared in order for us to get the best schools and the best teachers. There were no extravagances though! Our parents didn't take the taxi, and neither did we, obviously. Moreover, when my father's streetcar pass expired, he would ride in 2nd class; I remember the ticket cost 4 lei, as opposed to the 1st class ticket, which was 5 lei. I'm pushing the limits of my memory in order to be able to recall one single vacation spent with my father in the 1930s, but I'm afraid I fail. When we were small children, my mother would first take us on vacation to the seaside [at the Black Sea] for a month, then to the mountains for another month – usually to Predeal or Timisul de Sus [mountain resorts in Brasov County]. We stayed at the Excelsior boarding house, later known as Savoy. It belonged to the Pincas Company and my father got a discount, of course.

My parents got married on 31st October 1920. The religious ceremony took place in the fashion design shop of my mother's step-brother, Iosef Schonfeld. The blizzard was so strong, that carriages couldn't enter Lipscani Street. After having lived for three years in rented rooms, my parents, who both worked as clerks, were able to build the house where I was later born; they paid installments to the 'Cheap Housing Society.' When they moved in, my sister was three months. The house was furnished with the best taste: the living room, with two comfortable armchairs and six chairs with identical upholstery, the 'Aubisson' corner, the floor lamp, the splendid bronze

chandelier with twelve arms, matching the two bracket lamps of the same material, which guarded the fireplace. The right-hand rooms were turned into one single room when the house was renovated in 1935. The side towards the street sheltered my father's desk with the adjoining armchair and a superb bookshelf with crystal doors; the side towards the courtyard had the oak dining room set, with an extendable table for 24 people relying on two massive, sculptured legs, a huge sideboard that covered an entire wall, a buffet next to another wall, and, finally, a wonderful crystal cabinet placed in a niche that had been specially added when the house was renovated. The window was made of crystal poured over a drawing inspired by Strauss' 'Wein, Weib und Gesang' waltz [German for 'Wine, women and song'], picturing an elegant lady with a hat sitting at a table in front of a glass cup, with a saxophonist standing next to her. An electrical installation used to illuminate this crystal with a light bulb placed between the exterior window and the crystal.

My sister, Mira Cotin [nee Mizrahy], was born in 1923 in Bucharest. She was a quiet child and a pupil loved and respected by her schoolmates. She had the misfortune of being 'forced' to take piano lessons at the same time with me; the main reason why my parents did that was not because they wanted to secure her musical education, but because they didn't want to give her an inferiority complex. It took seven years of nightmare until our dear parents could be persuaded that Mira and music had nothing in common!

I did something blamable the day my sister celebrated her 17th birthday! I wasn't invited to the 'tea party' given that afternoon and the fact that I was only 14, while she had the 'nerve' of being 17 gave me such an 'inferiority complex'... So I prepared a vial of sulphydric acid whose formula I had just learnt in school with the excellent chemistry teacher Voitinovici, opened all the doors between the laundry room, where I had improvised my little laboratory, and the rest of the house, and went to the skating rink, as it was Saturday... In the evening, when I came back home, my sister was crying because I had ruined her 'tea party.' My parents shut down my laboratory, 'sealed off' my skates, but the smell still persisted in our house... Except for this bad 'prank,' I don't remember any other incident with my sister during our entire childhood.

In college, my sister kept on being a good student and she became a respected physician. She was an obstetrician in the first ten to twelve years, and then she changed her specialization after she left the country, becoming a good internist. In 1952 she married Dan Cotin, a university assistant at the Faculty of Agronomy. My niece, Dina, was born in 1956. She was a beautiful and quiet child, whom I had nicknamed Ghem [Romanian for clew]. As soon as she started uttering words, she nicknamed me Dadi. More than 45 years have passed since then, but I am still Dadi for Dina and her three children. They immigrated to Israel in 1961 together with my parents.

Growing up

My name is Dan Mizrahy. I was born in 1926 in Bucharest. I don't think I had turned four yet when I went to the cinema for the first time. My sister was with me and we were accompanied by Fraulein Mitzy, a Swiss woman who helped our parents raise us appropriately and spoke to us in German. The name of the cinema was Trianon [today Bucharest Cinema] and we saw a silent film starring Charlie Chaplin. It was silent in the sense that there was no talking, but it did have a musical background. They played a very light tune. It stuck with me and, to the general surprise, when I got back home, I sat at the piano, an upright piano, actually, and I... reproduced that tune. I remember my sister called Fraulein, Fraulein called my mother, and my mother called my father, while I, the

'star,' was sitting on the revolving stool and was playing imperviously! Touched to tears, my father drew a second stool and started to accompany me as well as he could.

I started going to school to 'Sf. Iosif' [German school]. This happened in 1932. In 1933, after finishing the 1st grade, they transferred me [because of the events that took place in 1933 in Germany, where Hitler came to power] to School no.31 'Alexandru Vlahuta', a neighborhood school on Scolii Street. When I got to the 4th elementary grade I was admitted to the 1st year at the Royal Academy of Music and Drama. I was nine years and a half... During that academic year, 1935-1936, they opened the Scala Cinema. To advertise it, they offered discount tickets to students. If my memory serves me well, they ran 'Robin Hood' with Errol Flynn. I put on a jacket and a tie, with shorts, of course, placed the lyre on my lapel, the pin of the Conservatoire students, and went to Scala, where I asked for a discount ticket. The window of the box-office was very high, or at least this is how it seemed to me. A hand came out from there and stopped on my head, while a sweet female voice addressing me as 'kid' explained that the discount tickets were not for children and that I would have to wait to become a student before I could take advantage of that favor. With perfect calm, I stretched my arm and laid down my student card in front of her. This was followed by an, 'Oh, please forgive me!' and by the release of the requested ticket. I felt very proud!

So I started the 1935-1936 academic year as a pupil in the 4th elementary grade at School no.31 and as a student in the 1st year at the Royal Academy of Music and Drama. At that time, the academy was still based on Stirbei Voda Street, in an old and totally inadequate building. A year later it moved to Brezoianu Street, a splendid aristocratic house, with large, bright rooms, and with a superb hall where exams were held. I had classes with Mrs. Aurelia Cionca on Wednesday afternoon. Of course, I was by far the youngest student. There were two pianos in the classroom placed one next to the other. The teacher sat at the one on the left, and the student at the one on the right. The keyboards were oriented so as to form a right angle with the chairs placed next to the wall, where the ones who listened sat. Mrs. Cionca's method was to let the student go through the entire piece without interrupting him unless he made serious mistakes. Then she commented on the performance and supported her arguments by playing the piano herself. It was a true delight!

On holidays, I sometimes went with my father to 'Cahal Grande' ['The Great Temple' in Ladino]. It was spectacular. A monumental building, with marble floor and pillars, with lavishing chandeliers and an organ whose sounds magnetized me. They sang traditional tunes at the Great Temple. Josef Rosensteck was at the same time the Romanian Opera's choir master and the organist and choir conductor of the Spanish temple in Bucharest. The main cantor was Alberto della Pergola, an Italian singer hired by the community of the Spanish Jews in Bucharest. The services at 'Cahal Grande' turned into real musical shows that were quite impressive. At that time, the 'master of ceremonies' was Great Rabbi Sabetay Djaen, who had been born in Argentina and had been brought here to fill this particular position, which he did with a lot of stateliness.

When the time of my religious coming of age, the bar mitzvah, drew near, my father wanted to observe the tradition and programmed this 'confirmation' ceremony at the Spanish temple. For this, he hired me a Hebrew teacher named Cohen who taught the Tannakh at the school of the Spanish Jews' community, on Negru Voda Street. Mr. Cohen was rather young, punctual and fair, and came to our place in the evening. He always found me tired after a day of school, homework and playing... However, I obeyed. So, when I turned 13, the ceremony took place; I found myself on

the altar of the temple, where I read various prayers in Hebrew, then I held a speech in Romanian, which had been prepared by the rabbi, committing myself before the rabbi to observe the faith and the precepts of the holy writs. Everyone congratulated me and we had champagne and wafers in the festivity room. Happy and relieved, I went home to change my clothes and went straight to the cinema.

My father, my sister and I would take the Bus No. 45 every morning. It ran on Floreasca Avenue. My father was the first to get off, at C. A. Rosetti [bus stop]. Mira and I got off at the following stop, Batistei. She went to the right, to 'Regina Maria' High School, and I went to the left, to 'Spiru Haret' High School. At 1pm, when I finished school, I rushed to pick her up. We joined our father at the corner of Batistei Street with Bratianu Blvd. and the three of us got on Bus No. 45, which took us back home. Picking my father up from his office in the evening was one of my greatest pleasures. We began our trip at 5 Boteanu Street and looked for delis: cheese at the cheese mongers in Piata Mare, today's Unirii Square, or fresh pastrami at the butchers on Vacaresti Avenue. We often brought home a bouquet of violets, my mother's favorite flowers. The downtown flower girls were a picturesque show at that time too.

One of the reasons why I was a normal child was the fact that my parents never made me feel like a wunderkind. Thus, to the extent of their material possibilities and trying to avoid spoiling me, they made sure I had all the toys a boy could want; these included the balls and the circle, the tricycle, the sleigh, the mechanic train, the sling, the bow, mechanic games and children's games, like 'Mensch argere dich nicht' [German for 'Don't get upset, man'], which I played with my grandmother on Thursday, when she came to visit us at noon... I went ice skating on Saturday afternoon at the Otetelesanu. The cycling track behind our house – which wasn't used at the time and which later became the Dinamo stadium – was the 'kingdom' of my childhood. I used to spend all the spare moments of my summer afternoons there with my friend, Andrei Poenaru-Bordea.

Here is a story that deeply marked me in my childhood. When I was eleven or twelve, my father wanted to surprise me and took me to a boxing match. I had never been to such an event before and I have never been ever since. Moti Spakov, then the champion of Romania in the heavyweight category, was fighting an African. I can't remember who won and it doesn't matter. What matters – and this I cannot forget – is that all around me, scores, hundreds of 'patriotic' spectators were yelling: 'Hit the jidan [offensive word for Jew in Romanian]! Let the jidan have it!' All the years that passed didn't manage to soften the shock I had that night.

Right before I was about to begin the 5th secondary grade at the 'Spiru Haret' High School and the 6th year at the academy, in September 1940, the anti-Jewish laws [5](#) were passed. With them, the wings of my childhood's smooth flight were broken. Mihai Popescu – the secretary of the Conservatoire at the time – called me on the phone and told me to come and hand in my 6th-year student card, as I had been eliminated from the academy. He received me with kind words and, despite the green shirt with baldric which he wore [reference to the Legionary [6](#) uniform], he shook my hand and wished me luck. The expulsion from high school was less spectacular. No one called me or handed me an official notice. I was simply expelled. I kept running around like a hunted prey, trying to find a way out. My sister, in her turn, was about to enter the 7th grade at the 'Regina Maria' High School. She was left outside too. In order to continue our education, we were registered at the high schools that belonged to the Jewish community in Bucharest: it was 'Focsaneanu' for my sister and 'Cultura' [7](#) for me. Several scores of children were crammed into a 20-square-meter

room and had to sit three at a desk, in an inadequate building, first on Zborului Street, then on Sf. Ioan Nou Street. The teachers, who were all Jewish, did their best to make classes look professional. I remember some of them: Fayon – severe and virulent – at math, Kanner – refined and polite – at geography, Mircea Brucar, the pianist, at German.

Of course, we knew something had changed around us from the radio, from the press, and from what we heard from others. We had felt it, at least on the moral level, once we had been expelled from schools. It was a state of tension that kept growing, like a circle that was gradually tightening around us in a threatening manner. It was in that atmosphere that on 21st January 1941, towards noon, I heard the first gun shots in my life. The phones were still working. They were later confiscated from the Jews, just like the radio sets. This is how we found out from my mother's younger sister that the radio station in Bod, captured by the rebels, had announced that a dissident division of the army, led by General Dragalina, was heading for Bucharest. At the same time, the Bucharest radio station was announcing the decisions of General Antonescu [8](#), who was dissociating himself from the Legionary movement, as well as the actions taken in order to annihilate this movement. I remember the exact words: 'From now on, no other uniform than the military and the police.' But in those very moments, the police, which had been divided in two until that day – the regular police and the Legionary police – was fighting fiercely, both at the prefecture, and at the barracks on Geneva Alley, where the policemen, encircled by the Legionaries, were defending themselves. At the same time, the army was trying to conquer the Legionary headquarters on Roma Street. Our house lay at only a few hundred meters from the above-mentioned locations, in a straight line. We could hear the shots coming from there. We kept getting news on the phone about the horrors that took place in the Jewish houses of the Vacaresti and Dudesti quarters. On the evening of 21st January 1941, one of my father's sisters, who lived on Banu Maracine Street, called us to tell us that the Spanish temple 'Cahal Grande' was in flames. We soon found out that, at the beginning of the Legionary rebellion, they had emptied many canisters of gas inside and outside the temple, and had set it on fire. It burnt to the ground. The ruins survived for many years, a testimony of the tragedy that occurred that night.

On the morning of 24th January an army patrol that searched every house rang at our gate. Once in the vestibule, the commanding officer was struck by my father's military mantle that hung on the peg. It was a winter mantle that my father hadn't had the chance to wear. It was cold outside. Acting with undisputable spontaneity, my parents offered the mantle to the young second lieutenant. Surprised and touched at the same time, he accepted it. Then my mother made hot tea. After the routine check, they left. A nightmare was over. But it was a nightmare that would mark the destiny of my entire life. The events of the last months, that had reached their climax in those January days, had carved in me the certitude that those circumstances, that reality, that society were no place for me any longer.

At the 'Cultura' High School, where I was in the 5th grade, I found out from my former desk mate from the 'Spiru Haret', Osias Rolling, about a Palestinian Office. He told me it was in charge of the emigration of the youth to Palestine. But the information was vague, nebulous even. The idea to leave began to yield in my head. In February 1941 things became clear. Two groups of young Jews, 200-300 each, were set to leave one week apart from each other, accompanied by a few clerks of the Palestinian Office. They were to travel by boat to Istanbul, then by train. The two ships were scheduled to leave on 21st March – the 'Dacia' – and on 29th March – the 'Regele Carol I'.

29th March was my mother's birthday and a holiday for the Mizrahy household... So the day of 29th March 1941 came. It was a late winter morning with clouds and thaw. We woke up at dawn. We wished our mother 'Happy birthday!' with voices drowned in tears. She thanked us with the same emotions. My father, who had been discharged recently and had had his dignity of being a good Romanian citizen offended, sought to encourage us and to inspire us with a minimum of optimism. 'Trust me' – these were the last words which he told me on the platform of the North Railroad Station, as I was leaving towards the unknown, towards Palestine. 'Yes, I trust you, but I don't trust Antonescu!' Many years later, my father would still recall this dialogue.

In Palestine

The hours that separated us from Constanta simply flew. The customs. The waiting. The embarkation. When the ship set off the evening was falling. I can't even remember if the sea was calm or not. At dawn we had reached the Bosphorus. The disembarkation. The customs. Apart from the three suitcases and my accordion, I carried a knapsack in whose leather borders I had sewn four bills of 5 sterling pounds. This was the 'total amount of foreign currency' that my father possessed. He had given it to me to get by. We boarded the train in Istanbul. From this point forward, my memory began recording. 3rd class cars. Small, yellow wooden benches crammed in a car without compartments. We were wearing the same clothes we had on when we left. We didn't have access to our luggage, which was stored in another car. We had been ordered not to leave the cars, regardless of how long the train waited in stations. And the train kept waiting... It waited more than it rode. It took four days and three nights to cross Asia Minor in the conditions described above. We reached a station and we saw French soldiers on the platform. We found out we were in Aleppo, Syria. There was a burst of joy. That same evening we stopped in Beirut, Lebanon. To our surprise, we were invited to get off the train and board the buses that were waiting for us, and we were taken to the... hotel! The following morning we found out that we were to enter Palestine by road, not by rail. I remember Beirut was full of lights, that the hotel was located downtown, that many restaurants and bars were open and that... I had no money! On the morning of 4th April 1941, a line of Palestinian buses was carrying several hundreds of passengers, most of them underage, who were coming from Romania, to the 'Promised Land.' At the frontier between Lebanon and Palestine, the British customs officers didn't let us just pass. I still recall my passport with blue covers – on the first page, in the right upper corner, there was a stamp with only one word written in uppercase letters: JEW.

A few hours later, to our total amazement, the buses passed the barbed wire gates of a settlement of shacks, whose name we learnt as soon as we got off: the Atlid Camp! Armed British soldiers, policemen I think, pointed out the areas where the women and the men were supposed to gather separately. That day, soon after this 'separation,' my uncle had a nervous breakdown. He cried like a baby, in despair and helplessness, and I, a 15-year-old boy, was the one who comforted him and encouraged him...

Once we got over the initial shock, we realized we weren't in a concentration camp, but in a sorting camp, and that, after our identities had been checked, we would be taken by the representatives of the Sohnut and assigned to various places. A week later I was assigned to an agricultural 'hostel' – in fact, an agricultural school, 'Ahava' [Hebrew for 'love'] located in the Gulf of Haifa. As for my musical education, merely mentioning it would have caused laughter! 'Ahava' was a unit subordinated to the Alyat Hanoar [Youth's Emigration], based in Jerusalem. Founded by a

venerable lady, born in America and named Henriette Szold, this organization aimed at saving the young Jews from Nazi Europe and training them within the Jewish state, that didn't exist 'de jure' yet, but was solidly implanted 'de facto.' Since one of the priorities of the emerging state was agriculture, many of the young immigrants were directed towards this field. The kibbutzim were, at that time, the real base of the country. More than 80% of the people's food came from kibbutzim. The vast majority of the inhabitants of these kibbutzim were immigrants.

'Ahava' was composed of three to four modern buildings with two floors, which sheltered about 200 children – adolescents to be more precise – that had emigrated from Europe in the last two or three years. Most of the pupils, teachers and the auxiliary staff had come from Austria and Germany. The headmaster was from Austria and his name was Rosenkranz. In the dining room there was a very tired and out of tune upright piano. I remember that on one of the first evenings after I got there, I tried to play Chopin's Polonaise in A major. There was silence all around me and many children came to the room, attracted by the sounds. When I had finished, a gray-haired lady of about 50 years came up to me and addressed me in German, asking me what my name was. She introduced herself and invited me to visit her the following day, after classes, in the house next to the gate. The lady was the headmaster's wife. Her profession: pianist and piano teacher!

It was with excitement and shyness that I went to her place the following day. She had a beautiful concert piano that she let me play. With an austere voice, without any display of exuberance or enthusiasm, she asked me whether I was interested in continuing my musical studies. I showed her my certificates, as well as the splendid recommendation written – in German, fortunately – by my teacher from the academy, Aurelia Cionca. It seems that those papers impressed her. She offered to work with me and, depending on my results, to put in a word for me in Jerusalem, at Alyat Hanoar, so that I may be able to continue my studies at the Jerusalem Conservatoire. You can imagine the excitement that seized me. What I realized in that moment was that I was being given the chance to hope; that, after I had abandoned 'ogni speranza' [Italian for 'any hope'], my fate might change!

In May or at the beginning of June 1941, in the middle of the night, we were woken up by the sirens. We were warned not to turn on the lights and to go to the shelters. Soon after, we were shaken by repeated explosions. In a totally unprecedented act, the German air force was bombing the oil refineries in the Gulf of Haifa, located very close to 'Ahava.' We went to the 'shelters' – actually some ditches one meter wide, ten meters long and, I think, about one meter deep. Some tin barrels filled with sand placed on the two sides of the ditches leaned on one another, forming a sort of 'roof' that protected the ditches. Sometimes the planes came all at once, sometimes they came in waves. At that time of the year, the sky was always clear – there is no drop of rain from April till October – so the 'show' was absolutely fantastic, especially in the nights with a full moon. The searchlights installed along the coastline, all the way to the harbor of Haifa, were lighting the skies, crossing their blue rays and sometimes catching the planes that glittered like aluminum toys.

In that period, when Romania was still neutral, we received postcards from home. [Editor's note: Romania engaged in World War II on Germany's side on 22nd June 1941, fighting in the campaign against the USSR.] They were written in French, in order to escape more easily the British censorship, which was official during the entire war. Those postcards mainly contained news from and about the family. Yet, my father, with his unequalled humor, would slip a joke from time to time... After Romania entered the war – and, particularly, towards the end of 1941 – the direct

correspondence was no longer an option. For a year or two, I still got mail via Turkey, where my father knew a man who got his letters, put them in another envelope, and sent them on to me. Then this way of communication could no longer be used either. The only news we got from one another were the messages sent through the International Red Cross; we were only allowed to send them once every three months and they could not exceed 25 words.

The approval came from the Alyat Hanoar: they agreed to facilitate my trip to Jerusalem, where I was to audition at the Conservatoire, before the end of June 1941. It was the chance of my life, so to speak. I was really supposed to leave them speechless in order to persuade them to create a precedent: taking an immigrant pupil from an agricultural school and supporting his studies at the Jerusalem Conservatoire. The Palestine Conservatoire of Music, located on Jaffa Road, in the very heart of Jerusalem, stretched along one border of Zion Square. I can't say it impressed me by its stateliness. An old house, probably Arabian, with the entrance through a petty side street. I think the entire institution didn't have more than ten rooms. I took the left-hand stairs... At that time, I wasn't familiar with the Fantastic Symphony and its March to the Scaffold. I remember it was very hot that day, and I was wearing a suit and a tie! 'Der kleine Gernegross,' which means something like 'the kid who wants to show off'! [Editor's note: the German colloquial expression 'er ist ein kleiner Gernegross' translates as 'he likes to act big.'] After the exam they decided to admit me to the 1st year at the Music Academy, an upper level of the Conservatoire, as a sponsored student. Half of the scholarship was to be covered by the Conservatoire, and the other half – by the Alyat Hanoar. The Alyat Hanoar was also supposed to support me for the entire duration of my studies, two years. Located in the elegant Rehavia residential quarter, the Alyat Hanoar ran with very few, but very efficient employees. After I had the honor of being introduced to Mrs. Henriette Szold, I was sent to those clerks. After going through a series of formalities, they informed me that I was to move to Jerusalem on 1st September, when classes started, and that I was to live with the Uberal family, in a house located in the same neighborhood, two or three streets away.

1st September 1941 was an important day for me. Loaded with luggage, I 'landed' at 23 Detudela Street. I shared a room with three other boys who were supported by the Alyat Hanoar and were lodged by Mrs. Uberal. The oldest – they were all more than 20 years old – was named Ruven and came from Germany. He studied printing, working for a company in this industry. The second, Arie, a tall, blonde lad who came from Czechoslovakia, specialized in leather products. Finally, the third was, to my pleasant surprise, from Piatra Neamt. His name was Zeev Guthertz. He came from a kibbutz in the north. He had a heart condition and had been transferred to Jerusalem, where he studied accounting. He was to return as an accountant to the kibbutz where he had come from.

We had two evenings with a fixed schedule. On Thursday night, rather late, a Hebrew teacher sent by Alyat Hanoar came. The other evening with a 'fixed schedule' was on Friday. The Uberals celebrated the eve of Sabbath. That night, neatly dressed, we became the guests of the family. Mrs. Uberal's room turned into a dining room and the table stretched from one side to the other. A shining, white table cloth enlightened the entire room. Two tall candlesticks, with the candles lit, created the special atmosphere, and the food was served using the 'festive' covers of the Uberals, which had been saved, along with few other things, from the house they had left in Vienna. The meal was never a feast, but the menu was quite abundant, consisting – without exception – of a soup, usually chicken, a main course and a dessert. What I remember with accuracy is the beautiful challah, the white plaited bread which filled the bread baskets.

I remember my fellow-students from the Conservatoire: Ora Abulafia, the daughter of a rich Argentinian-born merchant, lived in an elegant apartment house located in the vicinity of the Conservatoire, on Ben Yehuda Street. After the war, the Abulafia family moved to Argentina, and they later settled in Brussels. Another fellow-student, Braha Eden, was, at that time, a fair-haired, petite girl with a snub nose. I saw her again twice, when I visited Israel. She became a concert pianist, a teacher at the Rubin Academy, the former Palestine Conservatoire of Music, and she had a great national and international career. Another character that I want and have to evoke is Iosif Fraier. He was born in Iasi and he came to the Conservatoire one or two years after I had got there. He was about 20 years old, had been in Palestine for some time, and was, at the time of his arrival, already formed as a pianist. Tall, brown-haired, with a pointed nose and a beautiful mouth, with extremely big hands, and long, beautiful fingers. Much to our envy, he could easily encompass a tenth, and he speculated this gift of nature in his piano repertoire. A serious, ambitious boy, he studied a lot and he outshone us with his technique. In 1948, a short while after the proclamation of the State of Israel, in the middle of the independence war, a letter from my uncle Soly informed me that Iosif Fraier had perished in the battles fought around Jerusalem. I was and remained tremendously impressed.

The winter of 1941-1942 was not an easy one. The tension that floated in the air was reflected by our material situation. Food and other necessities were becoming harder and harder to get. For instance, in that period, you could only purchase a simple tooth paste if you gave a used tube in return. As for the press, the only English-speaking newspaper was 'Palestine Post,' which cost 10 mils – the equivalent of a falafel. The falafel was a very nourishing and very tasty food. It consisted of small balls of ground chickpeas roasted in oil and served inside pita bread. Various spicy salads were added over these balls: cucumbers, tomatoes, and bell peppers. The falafel machine was in the open air, in Zion Square, a few meters away from the Conservatoire entrance.

I started to earn my living in 1941, giving accordion lessons. At the end of 1942 I began to play every Tuesday evening – from 18:30 to 21 – at a Scottish club reserved for the Scottish troops. I played folk dances and I was surprised to see that the soldiers mastered the technique of these dances perfectly. It was simply amazing to see a hall full of people of different professions who handled the various schemes implied by those dances impeccably. They were warm, open people, and I could imagine how well they felt when dancing to their traditional music. No alcoholic drinks were served in there. They danced and clapped their hands. The moment the club's manager gave me the sign to play the anthem, they all stood up straight. They clapped their hands one last time, then everyone left.

In 1943, when the Alyat Hanoar scholarship expired, I started living 'on my own.' I rented a small room that was modest, but located downtown, and I lived there until the summer of 1944. In 1943 I met a Romanian-born gymnastics teacher. His name was Beny Blumenfeld and he ran a gymnastics club in downtown Jerusalem, on Betalel Street. He hired me to be his repetiteur. [He needed to be accompanied by music for his gymnastics classes.] That same year I had the chance to meet two personalities of the Israeli ballet: Rina Nikova and Hasya Levy. The former was, at the time, about 45 years old, and was recognized as a 'peak' of the Israeli ballet school. An expert in classical ballet, she had started working on the rediscovery of the Jewish traditional dances even before the war, analyzing and updating the ancient Hebrew dance. She also held classes of classical ballet with paying students who took weekly lessons. [Mr. Mizrahy played the piano for

these classes.] I think my fee was 300 mils per hour. If we take into consideration the fact that a meal at 'Palestine Restaurant' or at 'Mitbah Hapoalim' – literally meaning 'workers' kitchen', but translated as 'canteen-restaurant' – cost 100 mils, just as much as an 'expensive' film ticket in the evening, or that a falafel cost 10 mils, as well as the fact that, from the very beginning, I had at least two or three sessions of several hours every week, I think I don't have to explain the material and moral impact that this 'job' had upon me.

In June 1944 I passed my piano graduation exam. I was 18 years and a few months. Now a certified pianist and teacher, I had a few students who came to my place for piano or accordion lessons twice a week. Thanks to the accordion, I also taught rhythmic at a few kindergartens. Moreover, the Conservatoire started to send me some of their would-be students. They paid a fee at the Conservatoire and the Conservatoire, in its turn, was paying me. My psychological and moral state had improved a lot. The obsessive fear about what would become of my family who had stayed in Romania began to fade away [once Romania joined the side of the Allies, after 23rd August 1944] [9](#). I finally got direct mail again. The front had moved away from Romania and was approaching Berlin. The end of the nightmare was drawing near at a fast pace.

Towards the end of the summer of 1944 I rented an apartment with my cousin Gaby Segalescu and two other Romanian-born young men. Although I had been a regular of the 'Mitbah Hapoalim,' I started eating at a Romanian restaurant, 'Margulius.' Although the prices here were much higher than those at the canteen, the food was incomparably better and the company was more pleasant. I began to organize musical soirees at our place. On Friday evening I would have some people from the Romanian colony that I knew over – with or without a special invitation. I played whatever came to my mind – usually Chopin, Albeniz, 'digestible' things. Then we'd chat. There were no treats. But the atmosphere was exquisite! We talked a lot about the dear ones we had left in Romania. Letters had started to arrive regularly. We sometimes got a newspaper, which we rushed to devour. It was with pleasure that we read the ads where old and familiar names of medical practices and restaurants, Jewish ones included, had appeared again. The persecutions had ceased. The people were getting their rights back. Mira had been recognized the education she had got in Jewish schools, including the first two years of college, and she had become a student in the 3rd year at the medical school.

In Palestine, once the European war had ended, the problem of receiving the refugees – especially the Holocaust survivors – was becoming more and more acute. Hundreds of thousands of Jews who were refugees or had been liberated from camps or discharged from the allied armies were in search of a shelter. 'Jidanii to Palestine!' Generations of children had been born and raised with this slogan in many corners of Europe. This was not typical for Bucharest only, as I had imagined in my childhood. But the English wouldn't have them in Palestine. The way they saw it in 1945, nothing had happened since 1939, when they had issued the famous 'white book' with the 'numerus clausus,' limiting the number of the Jews in Palestine to 500,000 and not one single more! The Jewish dissatisfaction with the 'closed borders' began to be expressed in ways that were more radical ways than verbal or written protests. An anti-English campaign was born. In a short while, there were overt acts of violence – more or less organized. Of course, the police didn't just wait. There were house searches, arrests, and 'emergency statuses.'

Like any other rational being, I was horrified by the atrocities that kept being revealed about the systematic extermination of six million Jews whose only fault had been their ethnic origin. I

understood the urgent need of the refugees to find a home in Palestine. I think it was on 27th October 1945 that Gaby, my first-degree cousin, received a telegram from his parents. They told him they had managed to get his repatriation approved and secured him a ticket aboard the 'Transilvania.' The ship, which was carrying Jewish emigrants from Romania, was to lay anchor in Haifa on Wednesday, 28th October. Gaby was tremendously happy. I've already mentioned that I felt devastated. In that moment I realized that this is what I wanted for myself too. A few hours later I went to work, to Rina's, and I found her with a long face. She gave me a hug and... told me that my uncle in Tel Aviv had called. He asked her to tell me to contact him as soon as possible, because... there was a telegram from my parents! He had also told her what it read: 'Transilvania arrive jeudi Haifa. Passage retour paye, t'attendons!' [French: '[The] Transilvania arriving Haifa Thursday. Return ticket paid. Waiting for you!'] My feet became numb with excitement. I started to cry. I was crying because I was happy, but also because I had to part with people I loved...

I had no idea what went on back home. My parents' letters were affectionate, but vague. At only 19 years old and lacking basic political training and culture, I put my feelings first, not my reason... Since we're at it, I can't help mentioning the captain of the 'Transilvania', Commander Maugus. On 30th October 1945, the moment I boarded his ship, which was at anchor in Haifa harbor, he asked me a few routine questions about the ticket, the passport and the likes, and then he inquired, 'Where are you going, young man?' I gave him the conventional answer, 'I'm going home, Commander,' to which he retorted – and I can still hear his words today – 'Home you say, Sir? Don't you know what's going on at «home»? The Russians are there and Communism is kicking in!'

We were assigned to 3rd class quarters. At the embarkation, we were told that the captain had received a radiogram informing him that the ship would be rerouted. Instead of heading straight back to Constanta, he had to do a sort of 'tour' of the Mediterranean in order to pick up Romanian refugees returning from Portugal, Spain, England, France, Germany, Italy, and Turkey. As a result, the journey's duration would extend from two to three days to a few weeks, and we would have to pay for our meals. The 'Transilvania' had a restaurant, or maybe a bar, which had a platform designed for the orchestra in the middle. On it stood a beautiful [Welte-]Mignon cottage piano like I had never seen before. With the captain's approval, I tried it the very first day. It sounded wonderful. The effect on the captain was instantaneous. From that moment until towards the end of the cruise, when the ship got crowded, the captain had me as a permanent guest at his table!

After six days at sea, in which we seldom saw the land, we laid anchor in Barcelona. As soon as the ship was moored, the quay filled with Spanish soldiers with their bayonets fixed. After lengthy negotiations, the only one who was allowed to disembark in order to arrange for the ship to be supplied with water and take care of other emergencies was Commander Maugus. I soon found out that the ship and its passengers were Communists to the eyes of the Spaniards! At first, this amused me, then it filled me with indignation; eventually, I began to get used to this new position and to resign myself.

The following day we stopped in Marseilles. Things were different here. The frontier authorities came aboard and informed us that during the ship's stay in the harbor, we were free to get off and go wherever we felt like... I was struck by the stir on the quays. I soon found out that German prisoners were working to rebuild the harbor's installations. We felt neither hatred, nor compassion for them. We felt nothing. A storm at sea caused the ship to leave Marseilles six days after its arrival; we had been scheduled to linger for only two days. The passengers who boarded the ship in

the French harbor included Romanian diplomats from France and England, as well as a part of the BBC's Romanian staff.

Two days later we reached Naples. We weren't allowed to disembark there. We were to take in new passengers by the hundreds. I remember the stir of authorities, luggage, and smugglers who dealt with all sorts of liquors and cigarettes. The ship filled with refugees, many of whom had been liberated from German camps. We reached Istanbul on 20th November. We only stayed for a couple of hours. Among the few passengers who boarded – six or so – were my cousin, Paula Dragusanu [nee Feldman], her husband Silviu, and their son Miky, aged one year and four months. They had left Palestine a few months before and were waiting to be repatriated from Turkey. That same night the ship set off. The following day, on 21st November 1945, we reached Constanta.

After the war

I lived the moment I had awaited and dreamt of for four years and eight months. I embraced my parents who were waiting for me on the quay. In Bucharest, at the station, there was Mira, together with several uncles and aunts. I wasn't returning 'home,' but to 14 Dr. Felix Street, where my parents had been living for about two years. Our house, requisitioned by the National Romanianization Commission in 1941, still served as the headquarters of the 8th Precinct police station. When the house at 14 Dr. Felix Street was bombed in 1944, my parents took refuge at the place of my mother's older sister, Mina Solomon. I had come back to Bucharest, but not home. I was a guest and, to be frank, I didn't mind that situation one bit at the time. The guest of my own parents. For days in a row, people kept coming over, mostly to see me: our relatives, most of whom were still in the country – my father's sisters and my mother's sisters with their husbands and children, my cousins –, my parents' friends, and, most of all, people whose relatives were in Palestine and who came to me to collect letters from the loved ones. All I can remember is that I had to thoroughly schedule – by the day and by the hour – all those who called to announce their visit.

From a social point of view – or, to be more accurate, from an 'economical' one – the situation in Romania looked totally different from the one I had kept in my memories. I had left a prosperous society and I regained an impoverished one. The limousines and carriages driven by cabmen dressed in velvet had been replaced by army trucks packed with Russians with 'balalaikas' [nickname given to the Russian machine-guns, which resembled that instrument]; the fancy ladies who used to go out for a walk on the beautiful avenues downtown had been replaced by war invalids with crutches who sold 'Nationale' or 'Marasesti' cigarettes with yellow paper and stinking tobacco. The buses were gone. As for the overcrowded streetcars, I avoided them for months. I didn't go out often and, when I did, I walked, because I abhorred the law of the fist that seemed to govern that means of transportation. I had bought a bag of lemons in Haifa, planning to give them to my closest ones instead of presents. My folks, more practical than I was, realized the potential of the 'treasure' I had brought and began to sell them to various acquaintances in the apartment house. A lemon bought me a taxi ride. At first, I could afford that. After the lemons were finished, I walked.

Once I realized the full extent of the situation, I understood that I had let go 'the bird in the hand'... Moreover, the conversations with my father made it clear to me that he didn't include emigration among his future projects. 'I'm a Romanian officer' – that was his supreme argument. It's funny

how I can still hear his words in my head today. At that time, at the crossroads of 1945 and 1946, my father was a hopeless case. Unfortunately, Mira, my dear sister, shared his point of view. What's interesting is that in her student environment, many of her fellow-students, not necessarily Jewish, flirted with the idea of emigrating more and more seriously. And so did some members of my family or friends of my parents. But the ones that really mattered, my closest ones, were hopeless. It's not by accident that I didn't mention my mother here. She was the most flexible. Her only wish was for the four of us to be together, not separated.

One of my priorities was to get my degree from the Jerusalem Conservatoire recognized in Romania. It only took one visit to the Bucharest Conservatoire to solve this issue. I was immediately received by the rector, whose name was... Mihail Jora! [Mihail Jora (1891-1971): Romanian composer and conductor, professor, founding member and chairman of the Romanian Composers' Society. Creator of the Romanian lied and ballet ('La piata' – 'At the Marketplace', 'Intoarcerea din adancuri' – 'The Return from the Deep', 'Curtea Veche' – 'The Old Court' etc.).] This encounter had a tremendous impact on me. I hadn't met him in person, but I had seen him in concert, conducting or accompanying at the piano, and I had listened to some of his works. We talked a little. He asked me to tell him about the years I had spent in Jerusalem, about my teachers, my studies, my piano repertoire etc. He recognized my degree on the spot and asked me whether I was interested to attend the two-year post-graduate course. In my turn, in a moment of great courage, I had the nerve to tell him that I would be happy if he accepted me as his private student. He asked me what I would like him to teach me. I gave him this simple answer: 'Music!' The proof that he liked my answer was that he... said yes! For about five years, I frequented the maestro every week. He took them one at a time: harmony, forms, orchestration, counterpoint, and, last but not least, composition. I can still see him today, playing his out of tune piano, a red Steinway, which he refused to have tuned, claiming that a tuned piano would cause him to lose his inspiration! He had a dry and very personal sense of humor.

I distinctly remember the evening of 30th December 1947. I was on the streets of Predeal and I heard the loudspeakers connected to Radio Bucharest broadcasting the abdication declaration of King Michael [10](#), followed by the proclamation of the People's Republic. It was with total silence that the passers-by received those two announcements. Their faces were visibly grave and worried, while some of them made futile attempts to disguise their sheer sadness. It wasn't a surprise for anyone. But the date they had chosen might have been unexpected. We later realized that 'The Party' didn't want to give the King another chance to address his traditional New Year's Eve wishes to the people. I had been familiar with King Michael since he was a child. I can even remember the coins of 5 lei with his face as a child imprinted on them, then the countless pictures and newspaper stories about his schooling and upbringing. I remember him after I returned to the country, from the newsreels; no matter under what circumstance he was shown on the screen, the whole audience would burst out applauding. It was their only way to protest against the new realities imposed by the regime.

Around New Year's Eve 1947 I met Edmond Deda at a party in the house of the Carasso family, on Barbu Delavrancea Street. [Edmond Deda (b. 1921): Romanian composer, conductor, pianist, and vocal soloist; he composed music for variety shows and films.] The rest came by itself: met me, liked me, hired me! The following day or the following week – I can't remember which – I started to work for his conservatoire, 'The American Music Conservatoire'. Deda's school was in the house of

Theodor Rogalschi, on General Manu Street, which later became Lt. Lemnea Street, then changed its name back to Gen. Manu Street after 1989, where Deda had rented two rooms and a half, plus a lobby. The teaching body was very scarce – only three to four teachers. There was an old man from Cernauti, Salter, who taught harmony, and was later replaced by Ion Dumitrescu who, if I remember correctly, also taught ‘theory and solfeggios’; Sandu Fieraru, a jazz pianist, taught the history of jazz; Deda, a jack of all trades, taught singing and jazz (vocal and piano), was a corepetitor, and played with Fieraru in parallel. Finally, I was ‘the classical piano teacher’ – a bombastic title which actually meant that I had to teach the ABCs of music. From a material point of view, the money I earned there meant nothing. Inflation was booming; prices changed from one day to the other and a streetcar ticket cost 30,000 lei. So it’s understandable why the tuition fees cashed at the beginning of the academic year couldn’t cover the teachers’ salaries for the following nine months, not to mention the utilities or the cost of heating by firewood.

I finished the post-graduate course in 1948. That very summer, the education reform [11](#) caused the course to be closed, so I was left only with a graduating certificate instead of an actual diploma. Listening to the advice of other members of my profession, I joined the Instrumentalist Artists’ Trade Union, which was, at that time, a part of the Federation of Artists’ and Journalists’ Unions. Thus I acquired a certain social status – a thing that was becoming more and more important in that period.

I have beautiful memories from that period [1946-1949]. My assiduously going to the concerts and rehearsals of the Bucharest Philharmonic had a serious influence on my musical education. I had the chance to listen to memorable concerts, such as the cycle of Bach’s sonatas and partitas for solo violin, played by Georges Enesco. I also saw him at the premiere of Khachaturian’s Concerto and I watched him as a conductor, accompanying Pablo Casals or Yehudi Menuhin. When he played Bach’s concerto for two violins with Menuhin, the orchestra was conducted by Mihail Jora. Constantin Silvestri also conducted many concerts in that period and the rehearsals that he led were genuine lessons in music. I attended them as if they were regular Conservatoire classes. Whenever I could, I brought along the partitions of the pieces they rehearsed and, if the partitions happened to be mine, I wrote comments on them according to his indications. I also remember his recitals at the Athenaeum, at least two of them: he entered the stage, sat at the piano, and asked the public to give him a theme on which to improvise. It was spectacular!

I continued to study and to make progresses. The Radio Company scheduled me repeatedly; the Artists’ Trade Union scheduled me to perform in people’s athenaeums, as well as at the Romanian Association for Strengthening the Ties with the Soviet Union – most of the major soloists played for them, in the Fantasio Hall on Batistei Street. After 1948 I had small recitals scheduled by the Music Department in the Arts Ministry. All these made me practice and continuously broaden my piano repertoire. At the same time, I attended the specialization course at the Conservatoire and I took private lessons with Maestro Jora. I had also started my teaching activity at Deda’s conservatoire.

In 1948 I got my ‘1st category concert soloist’ certificate. Another important event of that year was our return to the old house on the street that is now called Turbinei Street. So we came back home!

At the beginning of 1949 – in February, to be more precise – the radio announced a contest to fill five vacant positions of ‘sound masters.’ The average that I got after the commission examined me placed me in the first position. I was 23. Shortly after the results were made official, I was visited

by a 'comrade' named Katzenstein, who introduced himself as the 'head of personnel of the Romanian Radio Broadcasting Company.' After a formal handshake, he told me he was in charge of 'running a check' on me before I could be hired for the position that I had already earned through the contest. He called me to his office and he actually investigated me! Katzenstein's verdict was: taken into consideration the fact that I had left for Palestine with my uncle, counsel Leon Mizrahi, former president of the Zionist organizations in Romania, as well as the fact that I had returned, while he had stayed in Israel, I may have returned as his agent or... in order to make Zionist propaganda in the People's Republic of Romania! Because of that, I was not trustworthy and I could not be hired by the Romanian Radio Broadcasting Company... I think it's worth mentioning that ten years later, Comrade Katzenstein, recently dismissed from the Radio Company because he had filed for emigration to Israel, could be seen in Sf. Gheorghe Square, selling the 'Informatia Bucurestiului' ['Bucharest's Information'] newspaper!

I met Aurelia Sorescu in the summer of 1948. Two years later she became my wife. She was 20, I was 24. It was a love match, of course. In the theatrical world her name was well-known thanks to the success and publicity attained by her performances in 'Insir-te margarite' [by Victor Eftimiu] and 'Wedding of Kretchinsky' [by Alexander Sukhovo-Kobylin] – at the National Theater – as well as in the film 'Mitrea Cocor,' shown extensively in all the major cinemas in the country. I spent my vacations of 1954 and 1955 as 'prince consort,' attending the shooting of 'Si Ilie face sport' ['Ilie Exercises Too', 1954], and of 'Alarma in munti' ['Alert in the Mountains', 1955]. We were married for 13 years. The divorce was pronounced in 1963. We remained friends until the last day of her life, 21st January 1996.

In 1950 I met Helena Uberal again. She was the lady at whose place I had lived between 1941 and 1943, while in Jerusalem. In 1950 I got a call from Ehud, her oldest son and my former chess partner on the Friday nights of that period. He was speaking from the Athenaeum Palace Hotel. His name was no longer Uberal, but Avriel. In Hebrew this name is spelled using the same consonants as Uberal, but the dots representing the vowels are different. He informed me that he was the new ambassador of the State of Israel to Romania, but that he 'didn't have time to meet me.' It took me a lot of time to understand how wise that decision of his had been. However, he told me that his mother was to come to Romania soon and that she wanted to see me! From that moment, it felt like a holiday in our house. From the day she arrived until they left the country, in April 1951, the weekly visits of Mrs. Uberal became a habit. Of course, she rode in the legation's car. The driver either waited for her or came back to pick her up. We never visited her. I only met Ehud once, at the legation, when I went to inquire whether I still kept my quality of 'permanent Palestinian resident' after the creation of the State of Israel. He presently sent me an official letter informing me that this quality was maintained; moreover, he announced to me that the legation of the State of Israel was offering me and my wife a laissez passer [French for a document that allows you to cross a border, a check point... like a passport, a permit] to return to Israel, 'provided that the Romanian authorities had nothing against'... This letter, together with my expired passport bearing the stamp that proved my 'permanent resident' quality, was confiscated by the Securitate [12](#) during the search they conducted at my home on 3rd May 1951 at dawn, the day of my arrest. Actually, to be precise, I was 'invited' to give a written statement...

I was taken to a concrete room with no windows, lit by a light bulb placed in a niche in the wall. It was a passage room, because it had two doors on opposite walls. I checked my watch. It wasn't

even 9am. I stood on a bench. There was an incredible silence. Not a sound. After a lot of time, an hour or so, the door to my left opened and a sergeant entered. He was wearing his summer uniform, felt slippers, and a cap. He looked at me for a moment, then he headed for the door to my right. Before he opened it he smirked at me, 'You must be thinking if you're in for this one or the other...' He calmly opened the door and left. I believe it was at that moment that I began to realize... The so-called 'written statement' for which I had allegedly been brought in was a lie.

I found out I was at the Ministry of Internal Affairs. At 5am a corporal would open a small metal hatch in the door and just say, 'Wake up!' Then they took us to the toilet; of course, they made us wear dark glasses every time. At 6am they brought us a sort of coffee. At about 12am they gave us lunch: soup and a sort of second course, usually pearl barley, as well as a loaf of bread which weighed 350 grams it seems. After 6pm they brought us 'dinner' – a second bowl of pearl barley. At 10pm we had to 'turn in.' Located at the second level of the basement, the cells lacked any natural ventilation. In the very hot days of that summer we were often forced to touch the door with the tip of our nail – the only way in which we were allowed to signal the guard – and beg him to let some fresh air in, lest we should suffocate. The light bulb was lit all the time. After a while we noticed that the 'life span' of a light bulb was approximately 24-25 days. When it burnt out we could relax for a few minutes, until the guard, who checked every cell through the hatch all the time, saw it and replaced it. And the nightmare began again...

The entire 'guilt' that was being set up for me revolved around the people I knew at the Israeli legation. 'Cosmopolitanism' was intolerable for the 'new society' that was being built. Speaking other languages than Romanian and Russian was unwanted and dangerous. People had been arrested only for having a subscription to the French, or English, or American library. 'The x or y library group.' One of my fellow-inmates from Jilava [Penitentiary] was a gentleman named Manolescu whose only 'guilt' was that he had repaired a refrigerator at the Israeli legation... I was also told of a waiter who was in the same situation. One of my friends in Bicz, Dr. Costel Constantinescu, had been to a 'party' at the Turkish legation and was in the same 'group' with actor Ovidiu Teodorescu, arrested for the same reason.

On 19th October 1951, in the morning, the guard opened the door and said, 'M. D., get your things and let's go!' We rode for about half an hour, in which time we weren't allowed to talk. When the doors of the van opened they didn't make me wear the glasses, so I could read on the gate in front of us 'Fort no. 13 Jilava.' I suddenly remembered the words 'Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch'entrate' [Italian, quote from Dante's 'Divine Comedy': 'Abandon all hope, ye who enter']... We were taken by some guards dressed in police uniforms and escorted through a series of dark corridors lit by dim light bulbs sunk in the brick walls. We reached a larger room; after they stripped us to the bone and inventoried our things again, they allowed us to get dressed and take a part of our things to the cells with us. Once the formalities were over, a guard escorted me through other corridors, equally dark and damp, to 'room 20.' Massive wooden doors with latches and locks bordered the corridors. No sound came from behind those doors. Yet, there was one room at the end of a corridor that was different: if you passed by its door you could hear the sound of heavy chains. My new fellow-inmates told me that was the room of 'those who were condemned to the death penalty.'

After 14 months, on 17th December 1952, in the morning, I was taken out of my cell and escorted to a room where there were several guards and inmates. They returned the few possessions they

had taken into custody, such as my suitcase and my vanity bag. Then, without making us put the glasses on, they made us get on a van. After a one-hour ride we got off in front of a barbed wire gate, which guarded – I was to find out soon – the entrance to the Ghencea Camp [Editor's note: Camp for sorting inmates founded by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Bucharest]. Surrounded by guards, who were wearing Securitate uniforms this time, we were walked into the courtyard. It was snowing lightly. We were ordered to line up, strip to the bone, and place our things in front of us. Everything on the ground was white and I was terribly cold. I was escorted to a certain shack – there were many of them – which, I was to find out, sheltered about 330 'occupants.' The shack's leader, an inmate himself, pointed to a bunk bed where I was to 'reside.' We were allowed to walk around the camp freely during the day. We could go from one shack to another and we could communicate with the other inmates. In general, I got sympathetic looks as soon as they found out where I came from and how much time I had spent underground...

Towards the middle of January 1953, a commission of officers from the Ministry of Internal Affairs gathered us on the field in the middle of the camp, where the 'counting' took place every day, and read us a sort of communique; they were offering us the chance to 'rehabilitate ourselves through labor.' They needed volunteers for a 'labor colony'; the benefits included: visits, parcels, postcards. Without hesitating, I stepped forward and requested to be signed up immediately. Of course, there were others who did that too, but not too many. In my hopeless naivety, I didn't realize that the call for volunteers was a bluff. The games had already been made and the lists of those who were to be sent to labor had been approved in advance. On 21st January 1953, in the afternoon, a large group of 'volunteers' and 'non-volunteers' traveled by van to a place outside Basarab station, where a prison rail car awaited. After a trip that lasted for an interminable night, we reached our destination. I remember a high barbed wire gate; we walked through it into a large courtyard and we stopped in front of a shack. We soon found out we were at the military unit number I don't know what, also known as the Bicaz Labor Camp.

In that period they were building a dam in Bicaz. It was designed to block the flow of the Bistrita River; a part of it was to be deviated, and the other part was to be collected in a reservoir. We, the inmates, had to carve several terraces on the two slopes that bordered the river, at various levels. The highest level was – as far as I remember – 550 meters. The terrace at this level stretched for about 200-300 meters and it was three to four meters wide. It had a very narrow track on which ran small carriages of 0.3 cubic meters, I think. 'Ran' is actually too much, because they had to be pushed by hand. The inmate's work consisted of carving the rock with a pick or with a shovel, loading the carriage, pushing it all the way to the end of the terrace and unloading it by tilting it. This operation had to be performed ten times in one shift. I was assigned to a brigade that worked on the left bank of the river, at level 550. We were in the night shift and began working at 7pm. In my mind, those endless trips to the work site and back – especially those in winter – are all the same. They were horrible. First of all, we walked in the dark. We had to cover the distance of four to five kilometers marching – not a cadenced or a forced march, but still, a lively one. We were five in a row, flanked by armed soldiers. 'Keep the lines tight!' was the eternal leitmotif. Talking was forbidden. However, there was whispering. The road was difficult. We walked on trodden snow, sometimes on ice and glazed frost. No matter in what shift you worked – there were two 12-hour shifts, from 7am to 7pm and from 7pm to 7am – it was dark when you arrived and when you left.

Two or three days after I had arrived in the shack, a man was set to be released. I don't know his name and I don't think I knew it then. I had to use all my persuasive skills to make him promise he would write my folks that I was all right and I was in Bicaz. I told him that my parents hadn't heard from me since 3rd May 1951. I gave him the name and the address. He memorized them, he promised he would write, and he did! God bless him! Out of caution, my folks didn't keep the postcard, but they told me the man had signed Puiu. A few days later, on returning from the work site, I saw my father in front of the gate. He had uncovered his head in the blistering cold so that I could recognize him. He had gone to the gate and requested for permission to see me. He had been told to wait. And the poor man waited standing until we came back from the work site. I knew our time was limited and we had to make the best of it. I inquired about the essential things and I learnt that all my folks were alive and well, including my grandmother, who was 88. The second piece of news was that my sister Mira had got married two months ago, on 6th December 1952. There had been an official ceremony at the city hall, then a religious one, at home. My father showed me the picture of my brother-in-law, Dan Cotin, university assistant at the Faculty of Agronomy. He also told me that my wife [Aurelia Sorescu], drama student in the 4th year, had played in a film called 'Mitrea Cocor'; that Gaby, my first-degree cousin and milk brother, had got married two months after my arrest; that my father-in-law, 'Nea Ilie', like I used to call him, had been arrested 'administratively' six months ago and was working at the Canal [the Danube-Black Sea Canal]...

One day, while I was working, a Securitate second lieutenant approached me when I was alone. He addressed me with, 'Good afternoon, Maestro'. I was speechless. A Securitate second lieutenant smiled to me! I felt the whole world was spinning around me. In almost two years of imprisonment I had only heard insults, from 'enemy of the people' to 'bandit', and, out of the blue, an officer in uniform called me 'maestro.' He told me he was from Iasi and that he had been to a concert I had given as a soloist of the 'Moldova' Philharmonic. His name was Crisan Talisman. He was on a call-up and was in charge of the camp's paper work. He told me I had been convicted 'administratively' and that, if I wanted details, I could request to access my file in order to find out what my situation was. He shook my hand and left. I was so excited I couldn't put my thoughts together. I didn't say anything to anyone. That same evening, when I returned to the camp, I did what he told me and I got to his office. He welcomed me smiling, invited me to sit down and took out my file. It was then that I learnt the Ministry of Internal Affairs had the right to issue 'administrative' sentences for those who hadn't been tried, and that those sentences came in multiples of six, ranging from six to 60 months of imprisonment. My own administrative sentence was for 24 months. But, once those 24 months expired, on 3rd May 1953, instead of being set free, I was 'bestowed' with an extra 36 months!

On 29th August 1953, on a Saturday evening at about 9:20pm, the phone rang [in the house at 1 Turbinei Street]. A female voice asked to talk to 'comrade' Henriette Mizrahy. Using few words, she said she was calling from the Presidency of the Ministers' Council in relation to my mother's petition and that she was being invited for an audience. If she agreed, a car would pick her up in a few minutes. According to my parents' account, in less than five minutes after the conversation ended, a large, black car was waiting for them outside. The car stopped at the Ministers' Council and they were accompanied to an elevator. A huge room with a desk in the back. At it, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej [13](#), prime minister at that time, and Iosif Chisinevski, prime vice-president of the Ministers' Council at that time. Gheorghiu-Dej told my mother, 'Listen, Madam, half an hour ago I

received this petition together with your son's photo.' It was a photo of me and Mira taken at our place after a concert at the Athenaeum and I was still wearing my frock. 'How is it possible, Madam, to have such a son and not come to me to tell me he has been suffering for such a long time? I get people from all the corners of the country, peasants and such; and you, who live in Bucharest, can't get to me?'

Keeping her cool, my mother searched through her purse a little and took out a number of registrations that proved how many petitions she had filed in the years that had passed since my arrest. On seeing them, Gheorghiu-Dej turned to Chisinevski, 'You see, my dear, it's true. Before you get to God, the saints eat you alive.' Then he addressed my parents, 'Tell me where your son is at this moment.' They told him. 'Is he all right?' They told him about my leg accident. They didn't know about the pulmonary congestion. [Editor's note: In his book, Mr. Mizrahy elaborates on several health problems from that period.] The next second Gheorghiu-Dej picked up the phone and asked to speak to the Internal Affairs minister. He was told he was not in his office. They put him through to one of his deputies, named Tanasescu. My parents tried to describe to me the conversation that followed as accurately as possible: 'Pay attention. In the Bicz Labor Camp there is a young pianist named Dan Mizrahy. I want you to call Bicz this instant and have them inform him he is free. Have him accompanied home by an unarmed officer dressed in civilian clothes. And I want you to confirm that the order has been carried out.' Then he hung up. This way of controlling a man's life and fate, this way of doing whatever one pleases – be it good or bad – through the simple push of a button, all the misdeeds committed for scores of years under all sorts of regimes, right wing or left wing, may seem like fairy-tales to a generation that didn't live with them.

I still have my release paper. I quote from memory: 'The said M. D., son of M. and H., arrested on 03/05/1951, according to warrant no. ... [unfilled], convicted to 5 years of imprisonment by court sentence no. ... [unfilled], in order to be reeducated. Released on 30/08/1953, on telephone order of Comrade Minister Tanasescu. Skills acquired during detention: working with shovel. Conduct: «good».'

The night of my arrival home, 30th/31st August 1953, was an unforgettable one. We all laughed and cried. Everyone spoke at the same time. Then, towards dawn, something extraordinary happened. I realized the Forster upright piano had been placed in my bedroom. Not caring about the late hour or my mother's desperate signs, I sat at it and... played the first part of Tchaikovsky's Concerto no.1! That's right. A miracle had happened. I sat at the piano and played for the first time in the last 851 days! And something else happened. When I stood up, I asked with the most natural voice, 'What about my slippers? Where are they?'

My wife and I were invited to Dr. Petru Groza's [14](#) office. He wanted to meet us. 'As a president,' he told us, 'I have the right to grant pardons. But, in order to pardon someone, that person has to be convicted first. Nedelcu told me you hadn't been tried. [Editor's note: Professor Nedelcu, a retiree and a former schoolmate of Petru Groza, listened to Mrs. Aurelia Cionca's plea and handed Groza the petition signed by Mr. Mizrahy's mother.] During a reception given at the closing of the international youth festival, I approached Chisinevski and told him: «You see, we award young artists from all sorts of countries, and keep our own in prisons!» - «What do you mean, Comrade President?», inquired Chisinevski. So I told him about you. And I handed him the petition.' That audience lasted a lot longer than we had expected. Happy the 'scheme' to get me out from Bicz had succeeded, Groza suddenly opened the left side of his desk and took out a pile of files which

he placed on the desk saying: 'See, this is what I do all day. Granting pardons. All these files are petitions for pardons. Whenever I can, I approve them. My predecessor, Parhon, said he wouldn't have anything to do with this and that he trusted the penal system. Well, I don't!'

Around the middle of fall of that extremely eventful year, Sergiu Comissiona, conductor and artistic manager of the CCS ensemble at that time, invited me to be the soloist of the symphonic concert he was preparing to conduct at the end of January 1954. I started practicing with Mrs. Cionca again; we rehearsed Bach's Concerto in F minor at two pianos. Slowly but surely, I got back into my 'old' shape. At the same time, I was rehearsing pieces for recitals. The day of my 'reentering the arena' was drawing near. The concerts on 30th and 31st January were a milestone in Bucharest's musical life. Initially, only one performance had been scheduled on Sunday, 30th January, at 4:45pm. Facing an unexpected demand for tickets, they decided to schedule a second concert on 31st January. Moreover, on the eve of the concert, they even decided to have a third performance on 1st February. Despite the bad weather and the difficult traffic, the hall was overcrowded. In the honor row at the balcony sat President Petru Groza accompanied by his daughter, Mia, whom I think I met on that occasion. Maestro Jora, who had come back after a five-year ban, got endless standing ovations when finishing his suite 'Cand strugurii se coc' ['When Grapes Become Ripe']. The general enthusiasm was absolutely contagious.

On 20th December 1954 I gave my first recital at the Romanian Athenaeum. It was a very important moment in my career as a soloist. My program included no less than eight composers: Scarlatti, Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Ravel, Enesco, Prokofiev, and Gershwin. In a time when censorship was at its peak, they didn't weigh only words, they also weighed music. Georges Enesco's music wasn't officially banned, but it was... omitted. The heads of the censorship couldn't eliminate him from the draft of my program - 'Toccata' from Suite op. 10 - all they could do was reluctantly approve him. My 'act of bravery' was later described in Lucian Voiculescu's book 'Oedipe' ['Oedipus'], in a chapter where he mentioned the 'bold ones' who had the guts to play Enesco's music during his self-imposed exile. Finally, we get to the other George in my program, Gershwin. Well, things were not at all simpler with him. The reason why the Radio had 'banned' me in 1948 was my allegedly playing a kind of music that was 'unwanted by the audience.' In other words, they were referring to George Gershwin. Nevertheless, after a few years of imprisonment, Dan Mizrahy included in his program for a recital at the Romanian Athenaeum, under the aegis of the State Philharmonic, the one and only 'Rhapsody in Blue.' In the day that followed my recital the afternoon newspaper 'Informatia Bucurestiului' published my photo on the front page, together with a few eulogistic words.

The school gave me a warm welcome - the principal, my old colleagues, and many other new ones who had been appointed while I had been away. The building couldn't cope with the number of students and teachers, so they had been given a second one, on Lipscani Street; it actually belonged to the 'Ciprian Porumbescu' Conservatoire, but they had temporarily given a number of classrooms to the 'Intermediate Music School.' One year later the school moved to Principatele Unite Street, where it still functions today, under the name of 'Dinu Lipatti' Music High School. In the five years that followed my career went up. Invited as a soloist by the local philharmonics, invited by the Radio Broadcasting Company to play in concerts and give recitals, I got to be known nationwide.

On 3rd November 1958 my family – my parents, my wife, my sister, my brother-in-law, my niece, and I – filed a request for passports in order to emigrate to Israel. Two weeks later, my wife was sacked from the theater; on 27th November, in the morning, the principal of the intermediate music school called me and informed me – with an embarrassed voice – to prepare my teacher card and hand it to the cleaning woman who was on her way to my place. She was bringing a memo informing me that my contract had been terminated, based on an article that labeled me in such a way that no one would ever hire me again. Some managers limited themselves to a simple notification, like in my case; others called people to their office like in Reli's case; and there were institutions, like the Romanian Opera, where they put on full-scale union and party meetings in which the applicants were 'exposed' as traitors and enemies of the people and were hooted out of the hall – this was the case of the couple Robina, a ballerina, and Sergiu Comissiona, a conductor. Other colleagues told me that the ones who were fired from the Radio hadn't had an easy time either. Our situation was very serious. We became outcasts. Some of our former colleagues, the cautious or fearful ones, avoided being seen in our company, because one 'didn't look good' if seen with the outcasts.

So I had to start all over again! In those wretched times, not having an employment meant that you were a tramp, which was a legal offence. Theoretically speaking, any man who was fit to work but who wasn't employed could be seized in the street and sent to whatever workplace the authorities wanted. We heard a rumor about a cooperative association, 'Munca si arta' ['Work and Art'], specialized in tailoring, which was about to found an orchestra! We all rushed in to catch a position there. I went to their address and I learnt that the rumor was true. They were indeed forming an orchestra, and it looked rather strange: 'classical' instrumentalists together with instrumentalists specialized in light music. Many strings, few winds. A band like Mantovani, which was a famous band at the time, larded with wind instrumentalists. I was told the pianist's position had already been given to Miani Negreanu and that the only one available for me was '2nd accordionist.' I remember the violinists Lucian Savin, Rhea Silvia Starck, and Mircea Negrescu – they had all been leaders of the symphonic orchestra of the Romanian Radio Company; I remember Mendi Rodan, the 'aces' of light music – Alphredo Thomas and Joe Reininger, conductor Edgar Cosma, who was now a corepetitor, and, finally, composers Fritz Wanek and Arminiu Cassvan, who now copied notes. Prestigious names covered the violas and cellos department. The 'scope' of this ensemble was to work with the 'Electrecord' Recording Company. Composer Richard Bartzler was appointed to be our conductor. He was very polite – too polite, I would say. He was actually embarrassed because he got to conduct so many musical personalities whose tragedy he knew. He was also a true professional and was very demanding. The material profits from the recording sessions were practically nil. Our 'fee' was 3 lei per minute of recording, which meant that a 'long' piece got us 15-20 lei per person... But the important thing is that we all had cooperative member certificates and we had regained a certain social status.

My wife, Aurelia Sorescu, lived her tragedy and humiliation without seeing any chance to get to do something even remotely related to her profession. Various acquaintances of hers – some of them placed in pretty high places – started suggesting to her to give up the idea of leaving the country. To file for 'cancellation.' This term was becoming popular – it was the term that could give us the right to live again. Of course, she asked for my opinion. I couldn't say no. I wouldn't have had any arguments. She had reached the limits of her physical and psychological strength. The question was whether I should abandon the emigration plans too – making common cause with her, just like

she had done back in fall – or wait and see what would happen to her before I make a decision. We both agreed on the latter. She was moved from place to place, until they found her a position at the ‘L. S. Bulandra’ Theater, the former Municipal Theater. Encouraged by the results of her ‘cancellation,’ I was naive enough to think that the same thing would happen to me too. But I was wrong. My first dream had been to teach again. The answer was trenchant: ‘There’s no room for him in education anymore. He can go play in pubs!’ I couldn’t be a soloist either. With or without that cancellation, my name could no longer be printed on any poster. I had no way out. And I couldn’t access the higher hierarchy. Petru Groza was dead and Gheorghiu-Dej was the new head of the state. It was obvious that I couldn’t go to him. The man had ‘rehabilitated’ me, and I had applied for emigration in return...

At the beginning of December 1959 I was told – I can’t remember by whom – that baritone Barbu Dumitrescu, manager of the Operetta State Theater at that time, wanted to see me. I rushed to him. We knew each other – we had taught in the same music school. He received me at once and told me – in few words – that he wanted to help me. He offered me a position as a 3rd class rehearse pianist starting 1st January 1960. Out of respect, Barbu Dumitrescu assigned me to the vocal soloists’ section. 3rd class rehearse pianist was a position that didn’t require higher education and didn’t involve public appearances as the one who accompanies. The first condition – education-related – affected my salary, which was much lower than the one of the ‘master corepetitors,’ while the second was actually a benefit. The fact that I remained ‘banned’ and could not be featured on any poster – not even on concert programs, as you will soon see – kept me away from the chores that the operetta soloists had to endure: they were forced to attend various political celebrations – 1st May, 23rd August, 30th December, 8th March – to give public recitals for local culture halls, union events, factories and such, not to mention the tours and the radio and television appearances.

I was put in charge of preparing Gherase Dendrino’s operetta ‘Lisistrata.’ Days of real artistic fulfillment followed. First of all, I liked the music. The tunes were beautiful and many of them later became hits; they were well harmonized, with modern, catchy rhythms. The cast was mostly composed of first-class soloists. I can’t forget the working sessions with Ion Dacian, ‘the prince of operetta.’ [Editor’s note: Ion Dacian (1911-1981): one of the best known Romanian tenors; he performed Romanian and international operetta.] He came to my booth with an English punctuality and sat next to me as a ‘disciple.’ With an embarrassing politeness, he addressed me as ‘maestro.’ Noticing I didn’t feel comfortable when I had to make comments on his performance, he asked me not to spare him at all; he told me that he deeply respected my professionalism. So I had to comply. More than 40 years have passed since then. The Operetta Theater, located on the Dambovită River’s bank, in the building which sheltered the Romanian Opera during the war and the ‘Regina Maria’ Theater before that, was demolished. Many artists of that period are no longer among us. They departed and took their memories with them. Still, a miracle happened! In 2001 the former Operetta State Theater, which had become the ‘Ion Dacian’ Operetta Theater and was temporarily located in one of the halls of the National Theater, was renamed the ‘Ion Dacian’ National Operetta Theater. On that occasion, I became an honorary member of this prestigious institution.

On 1st November 1960 I got transferred to the People’s Arts School. The opportunity had come for me to return to teaching! The salary criteria for corepetitors and teachers were the same – they

included education, seniority and teaching degrees. I agreed with Principal Benea to start working in the afternoon of 1st November. But as the end of November drew near, the clerks couldn't register me on the payroll because my 'appointment' hadn't arrived yet. The holidays were close. The principal asked me to stop coming to school until my appointment arrived. So I became unemployed again. I had become a 'case.' The members of my profession knew what I was going through. Some of them, especially my former colleagues from the Operetta Theater, felt sorry for me. Others just passed me by indifferently.

On 21st January 1961, towards noon, while I had a corepetition session with one of the Operetta Theater's soloists at her place, I got a phone call at home. They wanted me to contact the school's deputy principal as soon as possible. I called her and suddenly my legs felt numb. 'Hello, how are you, Comrade Mizrahy? We're looking for you and can't find you. Your students are waiting for you to come to school. Your appointment has arrived...' I lingered on that chair for a few moments, unable to utter one sound.

From a professional point of view, the period that followed was beautiful and serene. I did my job with enthusiasm. I had earned my students' trust. They came to my classes with pleasure. They studied, made progresses, and everyone was happy. Of course, the skills of my disciples were generally way inferior to those of the piano 'majors' from the music high schools. I used the term 'generally' because - like I said - some of them grew to become professional musicians, and good ones too. Over the years, they kept adding to the list. However, they were the exceptions. Still, what remains important to me is that at least 90% of the students had come to learn to play the piano out of love, by their own will, and sometimes out of passion; they hadn't been 'steered' by their parents, they hadn't been forced in any way.

So I had been rehabilitated as a teacher, but I was still forbidden to play as a soloist. The first one who was willing to take the bull by the horns was conductor Henry Selbing, manager and prime conductor of the State Philharmonic in Sibiu at the time. He called me and, at my request, sent me a written invitation informing me I was scheduled to play Bach's Concerto in F minor and Gershwin's 'Rhapsody in Blue' as a soloist of his philharmonic on Wednesday, 22nd February 1961 at 8pm. This invitation was an act of great courage. At the end of 1958 the Ministry of Culture had sent a memo with the list of 'banned' conductors and soloists to all the philharmonics, and it was still valid.

Armed with the written invitation I went to the Music Department of the Ministry of Culture. The newly appointed manager was Comrade Mauriciu Vescan, whose 'maiden name' was Wechsler. An accordionist by trade and a major union activist at the beginning of the communist era, he had climbed the political hierarchy to become a manager in a ministry. He held me the 'standard' speech about 'war and peace,' 'capitalism and socialism,' 'patriotism and cosmopolitanism,' and many other slogans used and proliferated by the Party activists of the time. After I let him recite his 'poem,' I replied, within the limits of decency and politeness. My position was slightly different from the one I had had during previous audiences. I had been 'rehabilitated,' and by the 'Party' itself too. I told him that, since the application for emigration was not a crime, there was no reason for him to address me as a felon. Besides, more than one year before, I had withdrawn my application and I had resumed my teaching career. The fact that the philharmonics began to invite me as a soloist again proved that my activity in this field was valued and even necessary to the fulfillment of the concert quotas. He continued to groan and mumble. Eventually, he muttered something like

‘Well, let them have you then. But I, for one, would never invite you!’

At the beginning of March I was in the house of composer Mircea Chiriac when I got a call informing me that the emigration approval had arrived for my parents and my sister with all her family: husband, daughter and mother-in-law. I interrupted the rehearsal, apologized, mounted my scooter and went home. I read the documents. They all bore the mention ‘urgent.’ Difficult moments and days followed. My parents were the ones who were leaving now, planning to spend the last years of their lives in peace. In the evening before the departure they both came to my bedroom. Without saying one word, the three of us let our tears burst. We sobbed for a long time.

The most painful memory from those days is the arrival of the new lodgers, who had been sent by the SGL [the housing authority]: a family of three – father, mother, and daughter – the S family. They were assigned the upper floor – my room, Mira’s room, which had become my parents’ bedroom, the hallway – and were granted access to the bathroom, to my grandmother’s former room, to the kitchen, and to the basement. We got to keep the bedroom, the study and the service room, which we obtained after lengthy negotiations. Of course, the front door was used as an entrance, so everyone passed through our living room. Here’s a sample of conversation with the S. family: ‘Mister Dan! You and your wife take 14 showers every week; Mrs. Adela, our cleaning woman, takes one. This gives us a total of 15. Now, the three of us only shower once a week, on Saturday. This gives us a total of 3. Which means that we should pay 5 times less than you pay for the water!’

It was always said that the ‘regulation’ of the housing space was generated by the increase of the cities’ population. But this increase was not the result of a natural growth. The main cause of the population boom in the major cities was the migration of the peasants, determined by two factors: the confiscation of their lands and the massive industrialization process. In a society led by the ‘working class,’ which was privileged through laws and decrees, the normal relationships between people changed, and everything was turned upside down: the values hierarchy, mentalities, politeness, respect, conceptions – civilization in one word.

I tried to adapt myself to the new situation as much as I could; this process wasn’t fast and it wasn’t easy. I focused on my profession. As time went by, I began to receive invitations from various philharmonics; they weren’t as frequent as they had been before I was banned, at the end of 1958, but they did help me reenter the circuit. In 1961 I was invited to Targu Mures, a city where I always played for a full house; in 1962 I went to Arad, Oradea, Sibiu, Oradea again, Focsani, and Targu Mures again. My repertoire consisted of five different concerts that I used in different combinations. Other philharmonics came: Ploiesti, Craiova, Iasi, Galati, Cluj etc.

For many years, my professional activity was split in two: a pianist in the morning and a teacher in the evening. In my 50 years of teaching I always scheduled my classes in the afternoon, so that I could study the piano in the morning. I thoroughly adhered to this schedule most of the time. My return to stages of Bucharest took place rather late, after 7 years of absence. It so happened that I had two concerts just eight days apart: one at the Athenaeum, with the cinema symphonic orchestra conducted by Paul Popescu, the other one at the Radio Hall, with the symphonic orchestra conducted by Mircea Cristescu. Getting to the ‘Enesco’ Philharmonic was more difficult. I only had my ‘debut’ with this orchestra in the summer of 1970.

At the beginning of the 1963-1964 academic year I was appointed the head of the Instruments Department of the People's Arts School in Bucharest. I held that position for 20 years. At the time of my appointment the department only counted a few people. In the 1970s, their number had increased to 37 professionals who taught no less than 17 different subjects.

In the spring of 1964 the 'Electrecord' Company invited me to record 'Rhapsody in Blue' and George Gershwin's Concerto in F, accompanied by the cinema symphonic orchestra conducted by Paul Popescu. It was a professional challenge and a totally unexpected proposition. Of course, I accepted on the spot. Although, judged individually, most of the instrumentalists were top quality, the recording of the rhapsody was a professional test of great difficulty. First of all, it was about the style. Symphonic jazz was totally new to them. The piano was extremely old and worn out and it occasionally made us surprises. The nails that fixed the chords sometimes gave in during the recording. The first one to notice this was our excellent sound master named Fredi Negrescu. My cooperation with him was impeccable, both during the recording, and during the processing, when I sat next to him in his booth and we decided on the final version of the LP together. As years went by, the 'Gershwin' record became a success. For many years in a row, about 30 I believe, it was reedited and it sold like hot cakes every time.

One month after the record was launched – an event that was mentioned in the press and on the radio – the cinema symphonic orchestra, conducted by Paul Popescu, organized a 'smashing concert' at the Athenaeum. The program comprised two composers: Stravinsky and Gershwin. The former was represented by the 'Symphony in Three Movements' and 'The Firebird', and the latter – by 'An American in Paris' and 'Rhapsody in Blue', with me playing the piano. Seven years and a half had passed since my last performance on the stage of the Athenaeum. On entering the stage I actually got standing ovations; that night I felt that Gershwin was not the only one whom the audience loved... 'The Ostracized,' 'The Banned,' 'The Unwanted' of the authorities of the time was rewarded with generous and warm applause by the Bucharest audience, who wanted to show that the seven to eight years of my absence had not gone unnoticed.

On Tuesday, 24th September 1964 I got married to Elena Cecilia Mizrahy [nee Dimitriu]. Cici [affectionate for Cecilia] was born on 22nd May 1933 in Bacau. During the war she lived with her family in Cernauti until 1944, then they stayed in Abrud for a few months, and finally got to Bucharest. After graduating from the Conservatoire, she started to teach canto at the same school where I worked, the People's Arts School. She worked there from 1959 until the year of her retirement, 1999. She was interested in the art of singing, had a beautiful soprano voice, and proved to be an extremely good teacher, with remarkable achievements in this field.

Cici is a part of me. She's a component of mine, and I probably am one of hers. We usually think alike and, when we don't, we respect each other's point of view. We have the same sense of humor. She has been a very good travel companion throughout the 41 years of our marriage. She's an excellent cook – and I'm not being subjective here, for all our friends admit she is. She has never had racial prejudices. Without denying her religion – she's a Christian-Orthodox – she embraced the traditions that I am fond of; she is familiar with the Jewish holidays and their meaning. During our countless trips to Israel, she learnt many words in Hebrew, to the great surprise of my relatives who live there. She is very discreet and very picky when it comes to choosing her friends. But, once you are among her true friends, she is totally devoted to you.

The year 1966 was extremely generous to me. First of all, there was the joy of having my parents home again. Then there was the absolute Romanian premiere of Gershwin's second rhapsody for piano and orchestra. Another important accomplishment was my getting the 2nd teaching degree, after an exam I passed in fall. My parents arrived on Friday, 10th June 1966, at 3pm. The reunion was superb. There were no tears or sighs. We were all cheerful and behaved naturally, irradiating a contagious good humor. They embraced Cici with the warmth of two parents who see their daughter again. Of course, they had already got to know one another from the photos and the weekly letters, to enjoy one another's humor and to value one another. Those were great moments. What followed is what I consider to be the happiest vacation of my life. And I think I am not mistaken too much if I say that they felt the same about it. In the three months that followed we tried to offer them everything they had been missing for the last five years. The day before they left I had the inspiration to record their thoughts. My father tells about how he swam with me in Floreasca Lake, Snagov Lake, the Black Sea, in Ocna Sibiului, Tusnad Lake, Sf. Ana Lake, Codlea pool and I don't know where else. His story is followed by my mother, whose charming laughter was caught on tape forever. At the end of the recording there's a tune played by four hands: Moscu and Dan Mizrahy playing 'A travers les bois' [French for 'Across the Woods'] – a worthless salon piece with which we used to have fun in my childhood. Today this worthless piece is priceless to me...

My parents returned during the 1968 vacation. The invasion of Czechoslovakia [see Prague Spring] [15](#) caught us all in Bucharest. In the panic of those days, we were seized by all sorts of thoughts. My parents were scheduled to return on 30th August 1968 and we figured we should try to arrange for them to leave earlier. Another option was to try to cross the border to Yugoslavia. But we realized we didn't have passports and that my parents – who were old and had illnesses – could not undertake such an adventure. I can't remember whether or not we tried to change the plane tickets. I remember one of the last days we spent together. We drove to Giurgiu. On our way we met many Czechoslovakian cars returning from Bulgaria. Everyone greeted them and encouraged them. My father reached the end of his life that same year. He died in Israel.

Encouraged by the fact that things relatively loosened up in Romania after the invasion of Czechoslovakia, we decided to take our chance and, on an April day, we applied for a visit to our relatives in Israel. Filling the forms was a nightmare. There were many pages with questions that required unequivocal answers. According to the custom of the time, a few weeks after we submitted the application, Securitate officers dressed in civilian clothes visited the school and our neighbors, including the ones who were living in the same house with us, in order to 'collect information.' They inquired whether we were 'trustworthy' people, who frequented us, whether or not we had sold things from the house and so on and so forth. Our application was approved in June. At the beginning of July, right after the summer vacation started, we left. The days that followed felt like a dream. Faces of people whom I hadn't dared hope I would ever see again were right before my eyes: my family, my friends, my acquaintances, my former colleagues. Shortly after we arrived we went to the wedding of my first-degree cousin, Daniela Mizrahi, daughter of Nicu, my father's brother. Daniela was born in 1946, one year after I had left Palestine. I dare say that, the bride and groom aside, we were the stars of that evening. We were pampered, courted, fondled, and, most of all, assaulted with questions. The truth is that we were in fact among the very few tourists who had ever come to Israel from the SRR [Socialist Republic of Romania].

I was 43 in 1969. At that time, our 'fortune' was limited to a Trabant, and a piano. [Editor's note: Trabant was a famous automobile brand formerly produced by East-German carmaker Sachsenring. A very popular vehicle in the former socialist countries, Trabant cars had a bad reputation but were quite reliable and affordable.] We were just beginning to claim our house back – it had been taken by the State in 1963 – and our chances to achieve that were extremely low. When we left for Israel our school principal pledged for us. If we didn't come back we could cause him problems. However, weighing my promise on the one hand and all the nasty things that the totalitarian regime had made me endure, and which I already described in detail, on the other hand, wasn't I entitled to break my promise? Yes, I was. Still, I thought that our departure as tourists – a couple with no children – became a precedent in the SRR; it was an experiment for the regime. Our failure to return may have had a negative impact on all the other 'tourists' like us, who could have been prevented from leaving because of us. We kept considering the pros and cons in those vacation days. But we turned down the offers – among them, a piano and a canto class at the Jerusalem Rubin Academy – and came back on the scheduled day.

At the creation contest 'Crizantema de aur' ['The Golden Chrysanthemum', a popular romance competition] held in Targoviste in 1969, my romance 'Batranul tei' ['The Old Linden Tree'] was awarded the 2nd prize. For the edition of 1970 I wrote two songs – 'Inserare' ['Dusk'] and 'Monedele' ['The Coins']. The latter was awarded the 1st prize. In 1971 I wrote a light tune inspired by Tania Lovinescu's lyrics. It was sung by the great singer Doina Badea and recorded by the Radio Company. The 'entertainment' orchestra of the Romanian Radio and Television Company was conducted by Sile Dinicu. It was my first light song and it was called 'Daca' ['If']. In that summer I composed a second one, called 'Chiot' ['Shout'], based on the lyrics of Mariana Dumitrescu. Again, it was recorded by Doina Badea, but Cornel Popescu did the orchestration and conducted this time. I entered the [1971 edition of the] 'Crizantema de aur' with 'Romanta toamnei' ['The Autumn's Romance'], based on the lyrics of Tania Lovinescu. This time, at my request, the lyrics were cheerful, expressing the joy of meeting the fall and its flowers 'in thousands of colors' and culminating in a declaration of love addressed to the chrysanthemums. The result? 'The Special Prize of the Composers' Union'! It was the third year in a row when I came back with an award from Targoviste. 'Pas mal'... [French for 'Not bad'] In the fall of 1972 the romance 'Primul fior' ['The First Thrill'], based on the lyrics of Constanta Campeanu and my music, got the 1st prize. In 1972 I also found the time to write the cycle 'Fours songs for soprano and piano,' based on the lyrics of Mariana Dumitrescu.

In 1973 we were allowed to spend our vacation in Israel again. Although we were no longer a 'premiere' there, we were just as pampered as we had been the previous time. Each and every cousin invited us over and took us out. Festive meals at my parents' sisters and brothers, tickets to the Israeli philharmonic, conducted by Zubin Mehta, walks through the old and new Jerusalem, invitations to my former colleagues and friends – among them, the same Haysa, who not only hadn't given up persuading me to accept a teaching position in Jerusalem, but was even offering me a whole department this time!

In 1975 I wrote several light music tunes. It was in that year that were born 'Noptilor' ['To the Nights'] and 'Floarea dragostei' ['The Flower of Love'], based on the lyrics of Alexandru Mandy. I have many important memories from that year too. From a professional point of view, it is worth mentioning that I managed to perform in public, playing the integral of the pieces for piano and

orchestra by George Gershwin in the same concert. It consists of 'Rhapsody in Blue', the Concerto in F, the 2nd Rhapsody, and 'I got rhythm.' The event took place in Arad on 20th and 21st April, with Eliodor Rau conducting. As the local press pointed out, that was an absolute premiere – and not just a national one, but possibly an international one. None of the critics, musicologists and other experts, and none of the reviewers who were up to date with the specialized international publications had heard of such a performance so far. Anyway, what's certain is that the event was an absolute premiere in Romania. In the years that followed, I did it repeatedly with various orchestras in the country. I quote, from memory, of course: Brasov, Iasi, Satu Mare, Timisoara, Oradea, and, eventually, Bucharest after 1989. In some cities like Arad or Timisoara I played 'The Integral' for three or four times; in others like Iasi or Satu Mare I played it twice and I also went on tours to the neighboring cities: to Piatra Neamt with the Iasi orchestra and to Baia Mare and Sighet with the Satu Mare orchestra.

The light tune 'Care din doua?' ['Which of the Two?'], composed using a less common rhythm – 5/4 – entered the [national] music competition in Mamaia in 1976. Its lyrics are very funny. It's a comparison between 'the old love,' which is 'unmatched' and 'leaves a heavy trace,' and the 'new love,' which 'is worth as much as two' and 'one can't live without it.' The lyrics were written by H. Malineanu. I'll quote some more, as I think it's worth it: 'Veche sau noua, care din doua? E o intrebare, nu? Nu pentru mine c-am ales bine, dragostea mea esti Tu' ['Old or new, which of the two? It's a question, isn't it? Not for me, for I have chosen well, my love is You']. That was the only time I participated in the light music competition. It was a world I didn't belong to. But I did continue to write light music and took pleasure in it too: 'Drum implinit' ['Completed Way'], 'Vers de dragoste' ['Love Verse'], 'Leac pentru iubire' ['Cure for Love'], and 'Cainele granicerului' ['The Frontier Guard's Dog'] – which were all based on the lyrics of Eugen Rotaru – as well as the romance 'Lumini si umbre' ['Lights and Shadows'], based on the lyrics of Malina Cajal, date back to 1976.

Our stay in Israel in 1976, after my mother's death, was sad and difficult. We stayed for the last time in my mother's apartment, surrounded by memories and feeling excited every time we touched one of the small things that used to belong to her. I kept a constant weekly correspondence with my parents from the moment of their departure to Israel until my mother's death. Out of inertia, I continued to exchange letters with Mira until her husband died in November 1995. Then my sister replaced the letters with the phone calls. If, until 1995, a phone call was a real event – and had only been used to announce the death of a relative or to check on us after the 1977 earthquake and sometimes for anniversaries – Mira turned it into our most common means of communication. Needless to say, because of the great difference between our material standards of living, the one who makes the calls, sometimes more than once a week, is her, not us.

In 1977, the year of the earthquake, my professional activity, except for the teaching part, was affected by this catastrophe. All my contemporaries – the citizens of Bucharest in particular – can remember those horrifying and interminable moments. The courtyard in front of the garage was covered with bricks from our neighbors' shed, which had collapsed almost entirely. We left on foot. The streets were full of people who were walking around looking for their close ones, just like we were. We passed the apartment house at 58 Sahia Street, today's Jean-Louis Calderon Street. A pile of debris covered in a cloud of dust stood where the building used to be. Universitatii Square was in total darkness, so we couldn't see the ruins of the 'Dunarea' apartment house. We tried to

cross the square to get to the apartment house at 3 Ion Ghica Street, where Cici's mother lived with her husband. The street was blocked by the debris from the building on the other side: the corner of Ghica Street and Bibliotecii Street. In that apartment house used to live Doina Badea with her husband and her two little children, young pianist Tudor Dumitrescu, poet Veronica Porumbacu and many others... We were impressed by the silence that reigned over the whole city. Our house looked as if it had been bombed. On the upper floor, everything was damaged, except for the bathroom. Bricks, debris, bits of glass. In the room of my childhood – which had become the guestroom – the stove had simply exploded and the scattered terracotta pieces blocked the access door.

At the beginning of July 1978 we left for Paris by car! My cousin Gabriel Segalescu sent us an official invitation and we were able to get all the necessary papers approved. The minimum amount of money necessary to get the visas for a trip by car was \$100. Once we got the passport and the bank certificate, we obtained the visas from the embassies of France, Germany, Switzerland, and the Benelux countries: Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg. We didn't need visas for Hungary and Austria. Those were days of accumulation... The return trip felt longer and sadder. We were realistic people and we knew perfectly well what we were leaving behind and what we were going back to. The 'fantastic trip' had ended...

In August 1979 we made an unexpected trip to Israel, to attend the wedding of my niece, Dina [nee Cotin]. It took place in a huge hall specially built for such occasions, with lots of people – about 200 – food, drinks, and fiddlers. The religious service was performed under a canopy placed in the middle of the hall. Then there was dancing and music and fun. At the request of my sister and my brother-in-law, I stood by the entrance with Jack Rotaru and I collected the presents, which I stored, together with the attached business cards, in the adjoining room. However, most of the guests brought cheques, according to the local custom. Unlike the Romanian weddings, where the party lasts till dawn, the wedding parties in Israel are incredibly short. The whole thing – the ceremony, the speeches, the more than abundant meals, the singing and dancing – doesn't exceed two or three hours.

1980 remains a capital year in my career as a soloist. It's the year of my first – and only! – tour as the soloist of a symphonic orchestra. In 14 days I gave 13 concerts which included two of Gershwin's pieces for piano and orchestra: the Concerto in F and 'Rhapsody in Blue.' The orchestra that accompanied me was the 'Moldova' State Philharmonic conducted by Ion Baciuc, and the country we toured was Italy. The tour was organized by a Polish-Argentinian-Jewish-Italian agent and pianist named Valentin Protchinsky. We started in San Marino and went through: Sondalo in the Alps, Pescara, Sulmona, Frosinone, Campobasso, Lecce, Lamezia Terme, Cosenza, Messina in Sicily, San Severo, Bari, and Foggia. As you can see, there's almost no 'famous' city. However, in all these places, the concerts were held in perfect concert or opera halls, with excellent pianos – Steinways most of the time – in front of educated audiences that filled the halls entirely. I had some unforgettable evenings. My companions were nice people. They had gone touring many times and had developed all sorts of 'habits.' One of them was to go in the morning to marketplaces no one else knew and buy cheap things – blue jeans, skirts from the same fabric or other items of clothing – which they sold when they returned to Iasi. Another arrangement consisted of the following: several colleagues gave up their entire allowance and donated it to one of them, a different person in every tour; when the tour ended, the one whose turn had come to collect the money could afford

a more serious investment, like buying furniture or a refrigerator, or even pay an advance for a new apartment. It was impressive!

The year 1980 brought another major event in my professional life. Seven years after I had applied for admission to the Composers' Union, a clerk called to inform me that my application had been approved and to invite me to pass the admission exam on 13th October at 9am. It wasn't a simple formality, but a real examination. It consisted of three tests: composing the music for a tune – vocal and piano – based on a poem of my choice from a volume by Ion Brad; orchestrating this composition for a band of my choice; a harmony exam where I had to harmonize a given bass and a given soprano with four voices. For those who are not familiar with these terms, it was about two separate tests involving composing a song on four voices built on a given theme that could not be altered. On the day of 13th October 1980 I officially switched from 'amateur' to 'professional' composer.

At the end of December 1982 the Great National Assembly 'voted' in favor of a law compelling all the artistic institutions to finance themselves. It was horrible. It involved theaters, operas, philharmonics and... people's arts schools! For the 22 years that I had spent in that school I had been the only piano teacher. In the 1981-1982 academic year a young composer had showed up in our school; thanks to a powerful connection – which remained unknown to me – he had been appointed piano teacher. But as the piano classes diminished, there was only one full-time piano teacher position left; the workload had to be divided between the two of us, and we got part-time jobs. One week later, on 30th December, when we went to school to pick up our salary, Cici was handed an envelope containing the... termination of her contract. We returned home horrified. New Year's Eve was the next day...

I am getting to the year 1983. It was a sad year. Once the vacation was over, I went to school on my regular day and to my regular class. For the first time in 19 years, I was going alone. Another situation that was hard to bear was the new distribution of the students in the timetable that had been reduced to half. The 'leading comrades' found a quick solution: they increased the teaching quota from 18 hours to 26 hours a week; therefore, half a quota was 13 hours. They also invented the 45-minute class and made the teacher give up the break between two consecutive classes. This way, they considered the problem solved. Of course, it wasn't so. Having 45-minute classes around the clock was an inadmissible thing. Interrupting a student in the middle of a sonata by Beethoven because the time had expired would have been a sacrilege. So I worked the same days, the same hours, with the same students, but I only got half of the salary. Towards the end of March I got a phone call from the principal of the 'Dinu Lipatti' High School whose 'founding member' I had been 34 years ago and where I had been kicked out in November 1958; pianist Lavinia Coman offered me a part-time job as a rehearse pianist at the strings department. I gratefully accepted her offer. On 1st April 1983 I was employed as a part-time corepetitor at the 'Dinu Lipatti' Music High School. When the 1983-1984 academic year started, they gave me back my full-time job at the People's Arts School.

In June 1985, the Composers' Union sent me on a seven-day visit to Moscow and Leningrad with light music composer Dan Beizadea and musicologist Ianca Staicovici – such cultural exchanges were common at the time. It was a very interesting experience and a present I hadn't even dreamt of. The visit was excellently organized and we had the best conditions, except for the train trips from Moscow to Leningrad and back; we traveled by night in a so-called berth. We spent four days

in Moscow and three in Leningrad and we saw interesting places, met Russian composers, and visited museums – including the Hermitage in Leningrad and the ‘Pushkin’ Museum in Moscow – while attending a concert, an opera or a ballet every night.

1985 and 1986 were extremely rich in concerts. I look over the concert agenda – 18 symphonic concerts: Iasi, Arad, Satu Mare, Sighetu Marmatiei, Targu Mures, Sibiu, Timisoara, Cluj Napoca, Craiova. What strikes is the frequency of the concerts held in the same city in the same year – three times in Arad, Timisoara, and Oradea, twice in Craiova. If I were to add the educational concerts, which – in most of the cases – preceded the ‘real’ concert and had a relatively large audience, the total number of concerts would double. Looking over the programs, I find ‘The Integral’ six times. For the rest – with few exceptions – I played at least two of Gershwin’s pieces. For the State Philharmonics – which had switched to self-financing – any concert that could bring about profit was a business opportunity not to be missed. ‘Gershwin Festival’ or ‘The Gershwin Integral’ secured a full house. The public, who had been deprived of attractive TV shows – although the entire Banat and a part of Western Transylvania were tuned in to the Yugoslav and Hungarian TV stations – craved for American music, and Gershwin was and still is a prominent representative of this music.

In 1987 the Composers’ Union sent me to Berlin – East Berlin, of course – with my younger colleague, composer Calin Ioachimescu. I was shocked by the abundance that I found in the ‘red’ Berlin and I tried to compare it to the poverty that waited for me back home. I knew the cause of this incomparable abundance enjoyed by the citizens of East Germany: the Russians were trying to compete with the money pumped by the Americans in West Germany. I was amazed by the variety of sausages from the groceries, as well as by the large array of beers. In Bucharest, whenever they ‘brought’ beer in some alimentara [grocery] – a thing that only happened every now and then – a huge queue would form in the street and the people of the neighborhood would rush home to get ‘returnable bottles.’ The cinema near the hotel ran the film ‘Out of Africa’ starring Meryl Streep and Robert Redford. The last performance began at 10pm. In Bucharest, the cinemas closed at 9pm. By night, streets were lit as if it were day; in Bucharest we had dim light bulbs on every other pole... Moreover, I remember the flight back, which took place after night had fallen, in perfect visibility. After we flew over East Germany, a part of Czechoslovakia and Hungary, we knew we had reached Romania when we couldn’t see any city lights...

As for the daily life in those years, the knife was beginning to reach the bone. Everything became a problem – from the daily necessities to comfort. In order to pay the external debt the regime had decided to impose drastic internal savings. These ‘savings’ involved driving the local population to starvation and restrictions in power, thermal energy and fuel consumption. There were times when, in order to buy a loaf of bread, you had to show your ID card to prove you lived in Bucharest, lest the peasants should buy bread to feed their animals, God forbid! The butcher’s stores sold pig hoofs, bones and chicken tacamuri. The ‘tacamuri’ were claws, wings, and heads of slaughtered poultry. In order to purchase a 1-kilogram pack of meat you had to stand in line the night before, hoping a truck would come in the morning and they would ‘bring’ meat. Whenever a store sold meat, a queue formed out of the blue and the verb ‘to sell’ was replaced by the verb ‘to give.’ ‘What are they giving here?’ – ‘They’re giving meat.’ I remember a joke from that period. An American passes by such an interminable queue and asks in surprise: ‘What is going on here?’ – ‘They’re giving meat,’ the reply comes. And the American goes: ‘Oh, in that case, I think I’d rather

buy it.' Here's another one, more 'subtle.' A man standing in a queue to buy meat is cursing violently: 'Damn him! To hell with him and his entire kin! May he rot in hell!' Two civilians seize him, take him to the police station, and hand him to the lieutenant who's on duty. 'Who are you cursing?' he asks him. 'Hitler... He is the one who brought us to this pitiful state, isn't he?' Shocked, the lieutenant releases him at once. The man reaches the door, then turns to the lieutenant and asks him: 'Excuse me, Sir, but who exactly did you think I was cursing?' The bottom line: people started to have guts. As for the sense of humor, they had never lost it.

In the Bucharest cinemas an American film was a very rare thing. When they did run such a film, it was only to show the racism in the US or the 'fight for peace' or the poverty in some God-forsaken places in the desert or the mountains. However, Bucharest was full of videotapes brought by various people from abroad. It wasn't illegal, but it wasn't done in broad daylight either. Without this circuit being clandestine, it had a certain touch of discretion. In the latter half of the 1980s the Bulgarian television became the 'new fashion' in Bucharest. People, us included, would install special antennas, persistently trying to catch an American or European show or film or a concert. The Bulgarians also had a second channel, specialized in culture. This is where I watched – among other things – Verdi's 'Requiem' sung by Mirela Freni and her husband, Nicolae Ghiaurov, as well as 'Rhapsody in Blue' performed by Alexis Weissenberg, my former fellow-student from Jerusalem, whom I hadn't heard of for over 40 years. The Bulgarian television had become so popular, that certain apartment houses posted its weekly program at the entrance. The inhabitants of Timisoara caught the Yugoslav and Hungarian TV stations; in Iasi they caught the television from Chisinau; Oradea caught the Budapest television and so on and so forth.

The year 1989 didn't seem to be any different from the previous. It was on 20th December, when Ceausescu – who had just returned from Iran – appeared on TV, surrounded by the vice-presidents of the State Council, with the tricolor in the background, and announced the proclamation of the state of emergency in Timisoara that we realized we were living truly historic days. We watched a part of the rally that took place the following day – a Thursday. At 12:30pm, after the first interruption of the broadcast, we had to go to a warehouse of the Jewish Community on Negustori Street to buy the kosher meat ration that the Community sold to us once a month. While we were crossing Republicii Avenue at the crossroads with Armeneasca Street, we heard a powerful explosion. We later found out that it had been produced by the petard that had caused the rally in Palatului Square to fall apart. The news was confusing. We didn't know anything about the events in front of the Intercontinental Hotel and in Universitatii Square and Romana Square. On Friday morning an unscheduled television broadcast announced the proclamation of the state of emergency in Bucharest and throughout the entire country. They ran patriotic songs and folk dances. We turned the TV off. Towards noon our friend Geta Coman called us and told us to turn the TV on. We complied and it was then that we learnt that the impossible had become reality. A saying had been running for a few months: every Romanian keeps a bottle of champagne in the fridge. No one explained it, but everyone knew what it meant. However, the euphoric moments at noon were followed by the shots in Palatului Square, today's Revolutiei Square in the afternoon, then by the sporadic shots that could be heard all night, even in the vicinity of our house. News began to arrive about people killed on the street like actor Horia Caciulescu, for instance; helicopters that didn't belong to the army began to rotate at low altitude; we got contradicting news about the capture of the Ceausescu couple; there was shooting at the Television Company and at the Defense Ministry. In other words, life was far from being back to normal. Teams of

armed volunteers wearing tricolor badges were patrolling the streets not knowing what and whom they were after. I remember the television speakers and other employees, who came on air and apologized, asserted their position, blamed the others, and exculpated themselves: actors, composers, military, people who wanted to 'step in front'.

For several years the opinion that 'nothing has changed' could often be heard. It was fueled by people who weren't necessarily ill willed, but whose horizons were rather limited. In my opinion, they were wrong. In the first year after the [Romanian] Revolution [of 1989] [16](#) there was a joke. What were the Romanians before the revolution? Penguins standing in the cold and applauding. What about after the revolution? Dalmatians: the more black spots they had, the louder they barked... If I am not mistaken, this is the only political joke that I heard after the revolution. Once the winter vacation was over schools were opened again and we began our classes. People returned to their daily routine. The pictures of the 'genius of the Carpathians' were taken down from the walls; the word 'comrade' disappeared from the vocabulary, together with other terms that we were happy to get rid of: 'activist,' 'sectorist' [police officer in charge of law enforcement and population registration in a certain district], 'the collective work,' 'on duty'...

In 1991, 45 years after my 'debut' as a collaborator of the Romanian Radio Broadcasting Company, when the decision to end my soloist's career had already been made, I requested a scheduling of the 'Integral of the pieces for piano and orchestra' by George Gershwin. In an unprecedented gesture, the Television asked me to introduce the pieces in the program myself. They came to my place with all their equipment and filmed me in various corners of my study – for each introduction they used a different setting. They told me the whole concert would be broadcast on television. At my suggestion, in order to prevent the audience from getting bored during the breaks between the four pieces, they installed two monitors in the hall, so that the audience could watch the TV program. Moreover, during the intermission, they broadcast an interview that Yvona Cristescu, the show's editor, had done with me at the Radio in the break of the general rehearsal. They also ran short fragments from that rehearsal. So, for two hours and a half, there was an 'all-Mizrahy show' on radio as well as on TV.

At the crossroads of 1997 and 1998 I went on a tour organized by Lory Walfisch to the US. It included five lecture-concerts on George Gershwin in five colleges and universities in five states, and two recitals in Washington DC, at the State Department and at the World Bank. 1998 wasn't a relaxed year at all. Soon after we came back, tenor Florin Diaconescu held a recital of arias from operas in the foyer of the National Opera. He included a few lieder in his program – three by Valentin Teodorian and three by me. His wish was that I accompany all these lieder. A few months later I resumed the role of 'accompanying author' at the launch of my volume of songs and romances at the 'Muzica' store. This volume was a personal thing, as well as a professional ambition. In the years that had passed since I had written my 'Bătrânul tei' I had composed 34 other romances. On 27th June 1998 the launch of the album 'Eu te iubesc, romanta' ['I love you, romance'] took place.

In 1998 was the Gershwin centenary: 100 years since his birth. The Radio Broadcasting Company made me a very nice and honoring invitation. They offered me their concert hall in November, letting me organize a 'Gershwin evening.' The poster of the concert read: 'Gershwin Centenary – Dan Mizrahy and his guests.' The names of the guests followed. The announcer was Florian Lungu. 'Mosu' ['the old man'], as this refined and profound specialist in jazz likes to be called, and I had a

fruitful dialogue on stage. Sitting at a table in a corner of the stage, with a microphone in front of him, he participated in my entire program. Our dialogue included biographical data about Gershwin, the presentation of the program, going to musicological analysis at times, and humor. The audience was warm, receptive, participating, and they welcomed the spontaneous jokes with applause. I played nine pieces in first public performance. Another 'detail' that shouldn't be neglected is that, from the end of August until Christmas Eve, our house went through a renovation process! It looked like a real construction site: scaffolds, bricklayers, tinsmiths, carpenters, house painters, and debris, a lot of debris... In the morning I practiced at the cottage piano of my friend and neighbor, Stelian Popescu. In the afternoons when I had classes at school I stayed in the classroom after the workday was over and I invited my young collaborators, including the members of the 'Contemp' quartet, there. They came in the evening and we rehearsed. Other times I rehearsed with the vocal soloists in some empty hall of the Philharmonic. I remember the evening of the concert – dressed in my tuxedo and wearing my lacquered shoes, I stepped through the debris trying to keep myself clean...

In November, at the request of the Romanian Radio Broadcasting Company, I started to record the nine piano pieces that I had played in first public performance. During the recording sessions I also learnt the tenth ('Jassbo Brown'), which I had received in the meantime, thus securing the Radio archive with everything George Gershwin had written for piano and orchestra, as well as for solo piano. Three years later these recordings were included on a double CD edited by 'Electrecord' with the support of the Radio Company. One of my dreams came true: I recorded all the works composed for piano by George Gershwin.

The 'Haim and Sara Ianculovici' Foundation in Haifa awarded me the diploma and title of 'Laureate emeritus' for the year 2000 and invited me to come to the bestowment ceremony in April. I found out along the way that this foundation had been created a few years earlier by a couple of Romanian-born Jews who had settled in Israel in 1950. In the last decade of the 20th century they became a sort of Maecenas [patron of arts], supporting young Israeli artists and awarding personalities of science and art from Israel and Romania. I learnt that among the 1999 laureates was Academy member Nicolae Cajal [17](#). In 2000 they also awarded literary critic Zigu Ornea [Ornea, Zigu (1930-2001): Romanian literary historian, editor, editor-in-chief, then manager of the Minerva and Hasefer publishing houses] and philosopher Henry Wald [Wald, Henry (1920-2002): Romanian philosopher of Jewish origin; he wrote studies on epistemology, logics, and semantics.]. The concerts I held on 28th and 29th June 2000 in Jerusalem had, of course, a special meaning for me. 59 years after I had first set foot in the 'Holy City,' I returned as a soloist of the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, having my friend, Sergiu Comissiona, at the conductor's rostrum. Another important factor, emotion-related, was my family. Six of my first-degree cousins were still alive at that time, scattered throughout the Israeli cities. They all came, together with more distant relatives who lived in Jerusalem or in other places. Dina – my niece – took a lot of photographs in the concert hall and in my booth, capturing the moments of that evening.

When I turned 75 [in 2001] the Romanian Composers' and Musicologists' Union and the 'Enesco' Museum organized a celebration for me in the auditorium of the Cantacuzino Palace. Important personalities of the musical institutions were present. The Romanian Radio Broadcasting Company was represented by its CEO, Andrei Dimitriu; Cristian Mandeal and Nicolae Licaret came on behalf of the Philharmonic. There were many other personalities of music, composers, singers, and

teachers. The entire management of the Federation of the Jewish Communities in Romania, led by Academy member Nicolae Cajal, also attended. Speeches congratulating me and rendering me homage were held by: Dumitru Capoianu, who was also the host of the program, musicologist Octavian Lazar Cosma, vice-president of the Composers' Union, composer Anton Suteu, secretary of the Composers' Union, pianist Ilinca Dumitrescu, custodian of the 'Enesco' Museum, soprano Eugenia Moldoveanu, composer Laurentiu Profeta, musicologists Luminita Vartolomei, my former student from the People's Arts School, and Elena Zottoviceanu, and, in the end, by pianist Lory Walfisch, who had crossed the ocean for the occasion. She also read a message from Sergiu Comissiona. Dan Iordachescu, Florin Diaconescu, Liana Podlovski, Camelia Pavlenco, and Geanina Munteanu sang some of my creations. I accompanied them on the piano. They also played recordings of my songs performed by my wife, Cecilia Mizrahy, by Corina Chiriac, Doina Badea, Valentin Teodorian, and by the 'Voces Primaverae' choir. I felt happy and excited when I left.

Regardless of my daily agenda for the past 25 years, I always attended the Purim festivities, first as a pianist, then as a composer. My name was – without exception – in all the programs; I wrote songs for soloists, for the children's choir or for the big choir, which were accompanied by myself or by a band with my orchestration. Except for the 'Purim' song –music and lyrics by H. Malineanu – that became the closing tune for all the yearly celebrations, all the other songs were performed once, then forgotten. Among those who signed these 'one time only' songs were composers Misu Iancu, Elly Roman, H. Malineanu, Richard Stein, Edmond Deda, Alexandru Mandy, Aurel Giroveanu, Vasile Timis, Laurentiu Profeta, Dumitru Bughici.

My nationality is Jewish. I was raised knowing this and, even if I hadn't known, I would have found out along the way. As far as I'm concerned, I was taught not to be ashamed of my ethnic origin, but not to brag about it either – just take it for what it is. I happened to be born in Bucharest and to bear the name Mizrahy. This stands for 'eastern' in Hebrew. My parents were born in Bucharest too; I, my parents, and my parents' parents spoke Romanian. I was taught to think in Romanian, to feel in Romanian, and to play like a Romanian. This is probably why – or this is partly why – over the years, I found it difficult to understand the reason why I was ostracized or, in the 'happier cases,' only marginalized – more or less overtly – on the sole grounds of my ethnic origin.

I loved to play and I have always found pleasure in playing. I loved the stage and respected it. Looking back – in no anger – I realize once again that I could have accomplished more than I have, especially in terms of my soloist's career, as well as in composition. As for my teaching activity, it was my 'daily bread' for more than 50 years – the duration of my career in the arts public education. After my retirement I continued to teach piano with the same thoroughness and enthusiasm for an extra 15 years. So my three professions – composing, playing and teaching – coexisted for more than three decades. Yes, I admit it today: there was room for more...

Glossary:

1 Sohnut (Jewish Agency)

International NGO founded in 1929 with the aim of assisting and encouraging Jews throughout the world with the development and settlement of Israel. It played the main role in the relations between Palestine, then under British Mandate, the world Jewry and the Mandatory and other powers. In May 1948 the Sochnut relinquished many of its functions to the newly established

government of Israel, but continued to be responsible for immigration, settlement, youth work, and other activities financed by voluntary Jewish contributions from abroad. Since the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989, the Sochnut has facilitated the aliyah and absorption in Israel for over one million new immigrants.

2 Cuza, Alexandru Ioan (1820-1870)

The election in 1859 of Alexandru Ioan [Cuza](#) as prince of both Moldavia and Walachia prepared the way for the official union (1861-62) of the two principalities as Romania. Cuza freed in 1864 the peasants from certain servile obligations and distributed some land – confiscated from religious orders – to them. However, he was despotic and corrupt and was deposed by a coup in 1866. [Carol I](#) of the house of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen was chosen as his successor.

3 Eminescu, Mihai (1850-1889)

considered the foremost Romanian poet of his century. His poems, lyrical, passionate, and revolutionary, were published in periodicals and had a profound influence on Romanian letters. He worked in a traveling company of actors, and also acquired a broad university education. His poetry reflected the influence of the French romantics. Eminescu suffered from periodic attacks of insanity and died shortly after his final attack.

4 Transylvania

Geographical and historic area (103 000 sq. kilometre) in Romania. It is located between the Carpathian Mountain range and the Serbian, Hungarian and Ukrainian border. Today's Transylvania is made up of four main regions: Banat, Crisana, Maramures and the historic Transylvanian territory. In 1526 at the Mohacs battle medieval Hungary fell apart; the central part of the country was incorporated into the Ottoman Empire, while in the Eastern part the autonomous Transylvanian Principality was founded. Nominally Transylvanian belonged to the Ottoman Porte; the Sultan had a veto on electing the Prince, however in reality Transylvania maintained independent foreign as well as internal policy. The Transylvanian princes maintained the policy of religious freedom (first time in Europe) and recognized three nationalities: Hungarian, Szekler and Saxon (Transylvanian German). After the treaty of Karlowitz (1699) Transylvania and Hungary fell under the Habsburgs and the province was re-annexed to Hungary in 1867 as part of the Austrian-Hungarian compromise (Ausgleich). Transylvania was characterized by specific ethno-religious diversity. The Transylvanian princes were in favor of the Reformation in the 16th and 17th century and as a result Transylvania became a stronghold of the different protestant churches (Calvinist, Lutheran, Unitarian, etc.). During the Counter-Reformation and the long Habsburg supremacy the Catholic Church also gained significant power. Transylvania's Romanian population was also divided between the Eastern Orthodox and the Uniate Church (Greek Catholic). After the reception of the Jewish Religion by the Hungarian Parliament (1895) Jewish became a recognized religions in the country, which accelerated the ongoing Jewish assimilation in Transylvania as well as elsewhere in Hungary. After World War I Transylvania was given to Romania by the Trianon Treaty (1920). In 1920 Transylvania's population was 5,2 million, of which 3 million were Romanian, 1,4 million Hungarian, 510,000 Germans and 180,000 Jews. According to the Second Vienna Dictate its northern part was annexed to Hungary in 1940. After World War II the entire region was enclosed to Romania by the Paris Peace Treaty. According to the last Romanian census (2002) Hungarians

make 19% of the total population, and there are only several thousand Jews and Germans left. Despite the decrease of the Hungarian, German and Jewish element, Transylvania still preserves some of its multiethnic and multi-confessional tradition.

5 Anti-Jewish laws in Romania

The first anti-Jewish laws were introduced in 1938 by the Goga-Cuza government. Further anti-Jewish laws followed in 1940 and 1941, and the situation was getting gradually worse between 1941-1944 under the Antonescu regime. According to these laws all Jews aged 18-40 living in villages were to be evacuated and concentrated in the capital town of each county. Jews from the region between the Siret and Prut Rivers were transported by wagons to the camps of Targu Jiu, Slobozia, Craiova etc. where they lived and died in misery. More than 40,000 Jews were moved. All rural Jewish property, as well as houses owned by Jews in the city, were confiscated by the state, as part of the 'Romanisation campaign'. Marriages between Jews and Romanians were forbidden from August 1940, Jews were not allowed to have Romanian names, own rural properties, be public employees, lawyers, editors or janitors in public institutions, have a career in the army, own liquor stores, etc. Jewish employees of commercial and industrial enterprises were fired, Jewish doctors could no longer practice and Jews were not allowed to own chemist shops. Jewish students were forbidden to study in Romanian schools.

6 Legionary

Member of the Legion of the Archangel Michael, also known as the Legionary Movement, founded in 1927 by C. Z. Codreanu. This extremist, nationalist, anti-Semitic and xenophobic movement aimed at excluding those whose views on political and racial matters were different from theirs. The Legion was organized in so-called nests, and it practiced mystical rituals, which were regarded as the way to a national spiritual regeneration by the members of the movement. These rituals were based on Romanian folklore and historical traditions. The Legionaries founded the Iron Guard as a terror organization, which carried out terrorist activities and political murders. The political twin of the Legionary Movement was the Totul pentru Tara (Everything for the Fatherland) that represented the movement in parliamentary elections. The followers of the Legionary Movement were recruited from young intellectuals, students, Orthodox clericals, peasants. The movement was banned by King Carol II in 1938.

7 Cultura Jewish High School in Bucharest

The Cultura School was founded in Bucharest in 1898, with the support of philanthropist Max Azriel. It operated until 1948, when education reform dissolved all Jewish schools and forced the Jewish students to attend public schools. It was originally an elementary school that taught the national curriculum plus some classes in Hebrew and German. Around 1910, the Cultura Commercial High School and Intermediate School were founded. They ranked among the best educational institutions in Bucharest. Apart from Jewish children from the quarters Dudesti, Vacaresti, Mosilor or Grivita, non-Jewish students also attended these schools because of the institutions' good reputation.

8 Antonescu, Ion (1882-1946)

Political and military leader of the Romanian state, president of the Ministers' Council from 1940 to 1944. In 1940 he formed a coalition with the Legionary leaders. From 1941 he introduced a dictatorial regime that continued to pursue the depreciation of the Romanian political system started by King Carol II. His strong anti-Semitic beliefs led to the persecution, deportation and killing of many Jews in Romania. He was arrested on 23rd August 1944 and sent into prison in the USSR until he was put on trial in the election year of 1946. He was sentenced to death for his crimes as a war criminal and shot in the same year.

9 23 August 1944

On that day the Romanian Army switched sides and changed its World War II alliances, which resulted in the state of war against the German Third Reich. The Royal head of the Romanian state, King Michael I, arrested the head of government, Marshal Ion Antonescu, who was unwilling to accept an unconditional surrender to the Allies.

10 King Michael (b

1921): Son of King Carol II, King of Romania from 1927-1930 under regency and from 1940-1947. When Carol II abdicated in 1940 Michael became king again but he only had a formal role in state affairs during Antonescu's dictatorial regime, which he overthrew in 1944. Michael turned Romania against fascist Germany and concluded an armistice with the Allied Powers. King Michael opposed the "sovietization" of Romania after World War II. When a communist regime was established in Romania in 1947, he was overthrown and exiled, and he was stripped from his Romanian citizenship a year later. Since the collapse of the communist rule in Romania in 1989, he has visited the country several times and his citizenship was restored in 1997.

11 The Law for the education reform [3rd August 1948]

The law that unified and secularized the Romanian education according to the Soviet model. Religious and private schools were closed. The free elementary cycle's duration was set to 7 years; the intermediate cycle lasted for 4 years and comprised high schools, pedagogical school, technical schools, and vocational schools. Higher education comprised a series of faculties. By a decree of the Ministry of Education, all the contracts of the teachers were terminated. New hirings were made at the beginning of the 1948-1949 academic year. This way, the teaching body was cleansed of the elements that were considered 'unsafe' or hostile.

12 Securitate (in Romanian

DGSP - Directia generala a Securitatii Poporului): General Board of the People's Security. Its structure was established in 1948 with direct participation of Soviet advisors named by the NKVD. The primary purpose was to 'defend all democratic accomplishments and to ensure the security of the Romanian Popular Republic against plots of both domestic and foreign enemies'. Its leader was Pantelimon Bondarenko, later known as Gheorghe Pintilie, a former NKVD agent. It carried out the arrests, physical torture and brutal imprisonment of people who became undesirable for the leaders of the Romanian Communist Party, and also kept the life of ordinary civilians under strict observation.

13 Gheorghiu-Dej, Gheorghe (1901-1965)

Leader of the Romanian Communist Party between 1952 and 1965. Originally an electrician and railway worker, he was imprisoned in 1933 and became the underground leader of all imprisoned communists. He was prime minister between 1952-55 and first secretary of the Communist Party between 1945-1953 and from 1955 until his death. In his later years, he led a policy that drifted away from the directive in Moscow, keeping the Stalinist system untouched by the Krushchevian reforms.

14 Petru Groza (1884-1958)

Romanian statesman. Member of the Great National Council of Transylvania (1918), parliamentary deputy (1919-1927), state minister (1921; 1926-1927), vice-president of the Ministers' Council (November 1944-February 1945). He was the president of the 'Frontul Plugarilor' ['The Plowmen's Front'] (1933-1953), an organization that activated under the authority of the Romanian Communist Party. Under the Soviet military pressure, King Michael I accepted the appointment of Petru Groza as prime minister. On 6th March 1945 he formed a new government where Communists held the key positions. Recognized and sanctioned by Great Britain and the US (February 1946), the Groza cabinet is responsible for: the trial and execution of Gen. Ion Antonescu and his main collaborators, the falsification of the parliamentary elections in November 1946, the annihilation of the political opposition and the traditional parties, the arrest and extermination of their leaders, the forced abdication of King Michael I. Between 1952 and 1958 he presided the Great National Assembly (was the head of the state). National obsequies were held at his death.

15 Prague Spring

The term Prague Spring designates the liberalization period in communist-ruled Czechoslovakia between 1967-1969. In 1967 Alexander Dubcek became the head of the Czech Communist Party and promoted ideas of 'socialism with a human face', i.e. with more personal freedom and freedom of the press, and the rehabilitation of victims of Stalinism. In August 1968 Soviet troops, along with contingents from Poland, East Germany, Hungary and Bulgaria, occupied Prague and put an end to the reforms.

16 Romanian Revolution of 1989

In December 1989, a revolt in Romania deposed the communist dictator Ceausescu. Anti-government violence started in Timisoara and spread to other cities. When army units joined the uprising, Ceausescu fled, but he was captured and executed on 25th December along with his wife. A provisional government was established, with Ion Iliescu, a former Communist Party official, as president. In the elections of May 1990 Iliescu won the presidency and his party, the Democratic National Salvation Front, obtained an overwhelming majority in the legislature.

17 Cajal, Nicolae (1919-2004)

President of the Federation of the Jewish Communities in Romania between 1994 and 2004. PhD in medical sciences, microbiologist and virologist, he wrote over 400 scientific papers in virology, with

important original contributions. He was the head of the Virology Department of the Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacology in Bucharest, a member of the Romanian Academy as well as numerous prestigious international societies, and an independent senator in the Romanian Parliament between 1990 and 1992.