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PRESS RELEASE

The History We Want, We Make It Together:

George Enescu Philharmonic and the Romanian Athenaeum aim to become the cultural core of Bucharest and Romania's connecting point to the pulse of universal music, ideas, and values

Community engagement is essential for the success of this project

George Enescu Philharmonic (GEP), the most important philharmonic in the country, and the Romanian Athenaeum, built as a temple of national culture, have entered a strategic process of transformation and development aimed at restoring their international shine and transforming them into the cultural core of Bucharest, connecting Romania to universal music, artists, ideas and values.

The initiative was presented on Thursday, April 25, 2024, during a meeting with friends of the Philharmonic - music enthusiasts, business representatives, people of the arts, and journalists, with the invitation made to the business community and enthusiasts of music, ideas, and culture to support this initiative. Ambitious and complex, the project will be gradually developed on four key pillars:

1. **Increasing the artistic performance of George Enescu Philharmonic** so that it can deliver to its audience the experience of a season of international value all year round, and become internationally renowned for the quality of its artists and sound.
2. **Transforming the Romanian Athenaeum into a vibrant cultural center**, by upgrading the technical infrastructure to ensure a quality musical experience in line with the 21st century standards, and diversifying the cultural activities it has to offer (e.g. setting up and opening a museum; organising exhibitions and debates, connecting the Romanian public with socially and culturally relevant themes and ideas, as well as with internationally acclaimed personalities).
3. **Strengthening the educational component and the community around the two institutions** - including attracting a young and new audience to music, arts, culture, and universal values - to cultivate in the society an identity and self-representation of Romanians as citizens of the world, defined by the fundamental values of humanity.
4. **Building a new brand identity** for the Philharmonic and the Athenaeum, supported by a communication strategy that will reposition the two institutions both in Romania and internationally. **The Philharmonic is gradually transitioning to a new visual identity as of May 2024.**

George Enescu Philharmonic: a construction process started in 2022

"George Enescu Philharmonic has the potential of playing in the big league of international classical music. We are working to attract the best Romanian artists, to open more and more to foreign artists, and to refine and personalize our sound until we reach the warm purity of amber and be recognized

for it. The process of improving the artistic performance and quality of the season has already begun. We have attracted young, internationally acclaimed artists to the orchestra. Our season has been significantly enhanced since 2023 by bringing internationally acclaimed names to Bucharest. We have created new programs, such as the educational program "Everyone's Guide To Music", or the program which promotes young Romanian composers. We will continue in these directions, with even more energy. **The 2024-2025 Season** will be the most attractive and brilliant in decades, given the international headliners who will perform with George Enescu Philharmonic on the stage of the Athenaeum, such as conductor Vasily Petrenko, violinists Renaud Capuçon, Vadim Repin and Daniel Hope, opera bass Roberto Scandiuizzi. But the development of the Philharmonic and the Athenaeum will only be possible if the community comes alongside us and supports us in the long run, just as has done the community that, in the 19th century, made possible both the foundation of the Philharmonic and the construction of the Athenaeum", said Marin Cazacu, General Manager of George Enescu Philharmonic.

The full line-up for the 2024-2025 Season will be released in August 2024 when subscriptions go on sale. Some of the most esteemed French musicians will be among the GEP guests: **the legendary conductor Charles Dutoit**, whose career of over 50 years has brought him to all the great stages of the world, **the popular violinist Renaud Capuçon**, as soloist and conductor, and also **the conductor Yan Pascal Tortelier, who will perform a grandiose romantic score** - Giuseppe Verdi's *Requiem*, with one of the most appreciated opera bass in the world, Roberto Scandiuizzi, in the cast. British **Daniel Hope** and Russian **Vadim Repin** complete the list of illustrious violinists appearing for the first time in the GEP season, with the lesser-known *Concert* by Benjamin Britten and a classic of the 20th century repertoire - Dmitri Shostakovich's *Concerto No. 1*.

Some of the musical works featured in the upcoming season will be true events: the concert operas *L'Heure Espagnole* by Maurice Ravel (conducted by **Maxim Pascal**) and *Elektra* by Richard Strauss (premiered at the Athenaeum), conducted by **Christian Badea**; the monumental *Symphony no. 2* by Gustav Mahler with **Vasily Petrenko (Music Director of the Royal London Philharmonic)**; *Symphony No. 3, "Kaddish"* by Leonard Bernstein (conducted by **Alexandre Bloch, Music Director of the Orchestre National de Lille**) and *Matthaeus-Passion* by Johann Sebastian Bach, considered the most impressive oratorio ever composed, conducted by **Gabriel Bebeșelea**.

Among the big names featured in the 2023-2024 Season are conductors **Leonard Slatkin (6 Grammy Awards)**, **Laurence Foster**, **Justus Franz**, **Jean-Claude Casadesus**, in addition to a large number of foreign soloists.

The Romanian Athenaeum: the first steps and a vision for transformation, with the help of the community of friends

The Romanian Athenaeum is also the subject of a cultural development project in its own right, to make better use of the resources that this monument of built heritage has to offer to the society, besides being the home of George Enescu Philharmonic. The Athenaeum will host a museum and exhibitions. Some facilities and infrastructure elements need to be upgraded while complying with the status of a heritage building, such as the lighting and sound systems, installation of a video

broadcasting system, upgrade of the ventilation, etc. The objective is for the Athenaeum to deliver a diverse and quality cultural experience at international standards, for both the Romanian public and foreign tourists interested in cultural tourism, and the artists.

The first steps have been taken with the resources that the Philharmonic has from the public budget, as well as with the support of some early sponsors who have joined the initiative from the concept phase, but more involvement of the business community, within a community of friends of the Athenaeum and George Enescu Philharmonic, is needed for this transformation process to be quickly and comprehensively completed.

The Athenaeum was awarded the title of **European Heritage Label** by the European Commission in April following a project competition. It is an acknowledgment of the European value of the Athenaeum and its contribution to the European identity. Only one other building in Romania has this title - the European Danube Commission in Sulina - and only 67 sites in the EU.

The Romanian Athenaeum was built during the period of consolidation of the modern state, at the initiative of Societatea Ateneul Roman (*Romanian Athenaeum Society*), a scientific, literary, and artistic entity, led by the naturalist Constantin Esarcu, which included many men of science and culture (including Alexandru Odobescu, V. A. Urechia, and Nicolae Kretzulescu). Its mission was "to propagate training and education among the people" through public lectures and courses, publications, exhibitions, and other cultural events.

The building was erected in two stages, between 1886 and 1897, according to the plans of the Frenchman Albert Galeron, recommended by Charles Garnier, the architect of the Paris Opera, and the completion of the work was made possible with the financial contribution of generous sponsors and the whole community, through the famous "Give one Leu for the Athenaeum" campaign.

The Athenaeum became, from 1889 when the concert hall was completed, the headquarters of the professional Bucharest Symphony Orchestra, founded in 1868 as the Romanian Philharmonic Society. Since 1907, important names in classical music from all over the world have performed as conductors or soloists on the stage of the Athenaeum, including Pietro Mascagni, George Enescu, Richard Strauss, Maurice Ravel, Igor Stravinsky, Bela Batok, Herbert von Karajan, or Carl Böhm. The splendid hall currently hosts George Enescu International Festival and Competition, the most important international cultural event organised by Romania.

A new identity and a new relationship with the community

"George Enescu Philharmonic and the Romanian Athenaeum are part of our modern and contemporary history. They have gone through the same challenges as our society, and have the same need for Romania to reinvent itself in order to be relevant in the 21st century. This is what we have started to do through the strategic transformation project we are working on and inviting the community to join us. In the end, the history we want is made together, through engagement. George Enescu Philharmonic gives life to music of universal value, through a performance that unites artists

and spectators in experiencing a state of grace, because it has musicians with vocation and the best ensembles in Romania. The Romanian Athenaeum is a symbolic building that can come to life by investing and diversifying quality events, so that it becomes a true cultural core of Bucharest, connecting Romania to the universal music, ideas, artists, and values", said Oana Marinescu, Strategic Communication Consultant and Managing Director of OMA Vision, the team that ensures the strategic conception and implementation of the transformation project.

"We liked the project for the strategic transformation of George Enescu Philharmonic and the Athenaeum from the concept phase, because it is courageous, makes good use of the resources of the two institutions, has vision, and, above all, makes a significant contribution to society. I saw it as a form of entrepreneurship with vision at the level of public institutions, through which they want to achieve collaboration between the state and the private sector for projects of common interest. We are a bank - we support entrepreneurs and we like bold and well-grounded projects. We are also aware and mindful of our responsibility to the community. We believe this initiative will make a vital contribution to the community," said Virginia Otel, Communication Leader, Garanti BBVA, one of the main sponsors of the Philharmonic and transformation project.

"Investment in culture is critical for the sustainable development of society, for the preservation and promotion of authentic values, intellectual development, constructive dialogue between generations and institutions. The partnership with George Enescu Philharmonic is how we, Rompetrol, continue to contribute to the cultural life of the community, and bring classical music closer to the people, with all its beauty, diversity, and creative power", said Costinela Dragan, Sustainability & CSR Director, Rompetrol, one of the main sponsors of the transformation project.

"The founding, growth, and continuity of these two institutions culturally represent the revolution (several of the founders derive from the Forty-eighters), independence, and union. As of 1886-1889, the building of the Athenaeum - designed as *a modern secular temple* - has been the location of European modernity in our country. The cardinal values of these two institutions and this culture are those of any European culture: **the transverse initiative of society; solidarity as the appreciation of freedom; enthusiasm; and modernity. The history we want, we make it together.** The music we want, we make it together. The culture we want, we make it together. Nothing Promethean, but at the same time nothing fatalistic - if we really want to build, then we build. As in all modern institutions, the founders emerge from the archaic: Mesterul Manole (*the Master Builder Manole*), multiplies himself throughout society and survives. Modernity - no need for another monastery and no need for another sacrifice: **The Athenaeum has been in its place ever since and preserves its venerable function**", argued historian Eugen Ciurtin, Director of the Institute for the History of Religions.

To access the press release, video footage, and photos from the event, please click on the following link: [Mapa de Presa Eveniment FGE 25.04 - Google Drive](#)

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