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## Soprano Lucia Stănescu, the first Romanian canto professor in Italy, a model of professionalism and spiritual growth

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Item Type	Article
Authors	Mirea, Ruxandra
Publisher	Dialogo / Research Center on the Dialogue between Science & Theology (Romania)
Rights	© 2014 RCDST. All rights reserved.
Download date	2026-07-09 22:48:47
Link to Item	<a href="http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/3978194">http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/3978194</a>



2016

## Soprano Lucia Stănescu, the First Romanian Canto Professor in Italy, a Model of Professionalism and Spiritual Growth

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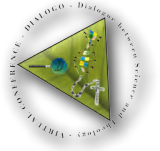
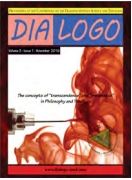
### Recommended Citation

Mirea, Ruxandra, "Soprano Lucia Stănescu, the First Romanian Canto Professor in Italy, a Model of Professionalism and Spiritual Growth," *Proceedings DIALOGO (DIALOGO-CONF 2016 SRAC)*, DOI: 10.18638/dialogo.2016.3.1.1, ISBN: 978-80-554-1285-6, ISSN: 2393-1744, vol. 3, issue 1, pp. 23-30, 2016

Available at: <http://www.dx.doi.org/10.18638/dialogo.2016.3.1.1>



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# ***Soprano Lucia Stănescu, the First Romanian Canto Professor in Italy, a Model of Professionalism and Spiritual Growth***

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## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 21 October 2016  
Received in revised form 25 October  
Accepted 27 October 2016  
Available online 30 November 2016  
doi: 10.18638/dialogo.2016.3.1.1

### Keywords:

Lucia Stănescu; Lyrical artist;  
Transylvania; God; Christian-orthodox;  
Italy; Romania; sound maintenance;  
human voice; lyric opera;

## ABSTRACT

Lucia Stănescu shined on the stage of the Lyric theater for 32 years, both in the country and abroad. The lirico spinto soprano, revealing a strong artistic personality, became a model in what concerns the performance of the roles of Puccini, and not only. Her vivacious and flexible voice combined with her magnetic and convincing theatricality in every role she had performed. Lyrical artist Lucia Stănescu is a person of intellectual refinement, passionate about and devoted to music and its servants, mature or still students. She is, also, a model in what concerns the support of the free movement of values. Professor Lucia Stănescu's laborious work has been accomplished through the art of molding voices shaped in the manner of a Romanian singing school, carrying the joy of living, of giving, of being.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Music is an art that opens the doors of universal communication. It is a distinct communication, composed of invisible, yet harmonious vibrations that, with time, have been refined through laborious research. Ethnicity, culture, wealth, gender, social position play no role in its promotion. Geographic boundaries are transient and feeble to impede the dispersion of musical sound structures. Value is the only advocate which persuades.

The human voice is the noblest instrument

through which God showed His love for people. One thinks, feels, smells, breaths, using all this qualities in communication. But the voice is the priceless gift one has received and through which one expresses artistic emotions. When it is modeled according to rigorous instructions and academic standards, the voice stimulates the most inexpressible emotions.

Lyrical artist Lucia Stănescu is a person of intellectual refinement, passionate about and devoted to music and its servants, mature or still students. She is, also, a model in what concerns the support of free

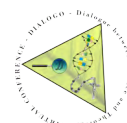
movement of values. The artist was born in the Christian Transylvania, Romania, in a family of Orthodox priests, leaving the country in 1979, and moving to Italy. She rewarded the generosity of the adoptive nation through countless shows, concerts, and heartfelt rewards.

Her entire life, career, and demeanor are a genuine gesture of Christian love. It has been 90 years since the music world of Romania, Italy and elsewhere enjoys her presence. Lucia Stănescu, a life that changed lives, has always been in the limelight of music world all around the globe.

Lucia Stănescu modeled the voice, taste and attitude both of her and of other dozens of lyrical artists in Romania and in Italy, in particular. Considering this matter, one must take into account the strong Christian-orthodox root and the solid education related to it, that the artist had received. There were no less than three generations of priests on her father's side that blessed the young girl with a high level of faith, generosity, and professionalism. Given two destined names, Felicia in official documents, and Lucia, as everyone knows her, the artist of Romanian origin was born in 1926 in the heart of Apuseni Mountains, in a village with a fairy tale landscape called Somesul Rece. She and her three brothers received a Christian education both from their father, priest Ioan Stanescu, and from their caring mother, Aurora Stanescu. Over the years, Lucia's studies were supported by Professor Paul Țurcanu, her aunt Leontina Navrea and her uncle Ștefan Navrea. In Bucharest's epoch atmosphere, "in the Interwar period, full of peace, culture and welfare (1918-1939)[1]", Lucia attended the courses of The Orthodox Institute of Young Women and after that, of Zoe Râmniceanu High School, educational institutions that used to put emphasis on the teachers' strictness in what concerns studying for classes, discipline and decency.

In 1939 "was opened the road to music, destined by God, and even more than that." [2] Lucia's voice, as the artist relates, "is a gift from my father, that thrived to continue the road destined by God..." [3]. Professor Music in Voice, mezzo-soprano Aura Davideanu, was the one to perceive the sparkle in the child's voice. Lucia continued, after that, to receive priceless guidance from baritone Jean Athanasiu and his wife, soprano Enrichetta Rodrigo. Advised by Professor Aura Davideanu, the young girl enrolled to Oancea Private Conservatory, which was an institution acknowledged for its theory and solfège classes. Preparation for the Belcanto live audition admission exam under the direction of Professor Music of Voice and tenor Mihăilescu-Toscani opened the doors to a new artistic and spiritual world. The Conservatory was then bearing the name of Royal Academy of Music, was subsidized by the Royal House, and was led by the composer Mihail Jora.

After that, the artist's career began to ascend, denoting perseverance, determination, diligence and joy of singing. The return to Cluj revealed a well-deserved soloist career emphasized by a young spirit, integrity, collegiality and respect "towards my precious predecessors and the possibility to be so often in the middle of them" [4]. At the beginning of her career, she received small roles, (the Polovtsian Girl in "Prince Igor" by A. Borodin; Lola, in "Cavalleria rusticana", by P. Mascagni; Anina, in "La Traviata", by G. Verdi; Mascha, in "The Queen of Spades", by P. I. Tchaikovsky; Franschita, in "Carmen" by G. Bizet. etc.), only to receive, afterward, the roles of soloist, following the concept "each role has its own age from all points of view" [5]. The concert tours that the artist went on abroad (China-1954, Cuba-1967, Egypt-1969, Sicily-1969, Ireland-1969) unveiled to the public a rhythmic pace of singing in a suave and professional manner able to envelop one in intense feelings.



The period during which she held the position of director of the Romanian Opera in Cluj (1970-1975) created the opportunity for an inner transfiguration both for the artist and for the entire team made of numerous professional opera singers. The managerial plan, of performing the operas in their original language, was encouraging and liberating enough due to its wish of bringing a change, a bold enough idea for those hard years: “studying opera texts in their original language, a crucial condition for crossing new borders as the Romanian National Opera in Bucharest was doing it.”[6] The objective, reached through great effort but in a diligent manner, made possible the connection to the cultural world beyond our borders through wonderful and valuable productions that placed Lucia Stănescu’s name on top of the institution.

The artist began teaching when her voice was already pure essence, and after she had already acquired the skill to explain the information required in her classes easily. “The chance to begin my didactic career at 36, in 1962, in full career, has been a rare and extremely emotional moment for me.”[7]

The retirement from the soloist career (2 of May, 1981, Livorno Opera) came naturally, in the noble manner of a grand artist who endowed the public with an important present, meaning, the role of Santuzza, from *Cavalleria Rusticana*, of P. Mascagni, “At Livorno, where the composer, Pietro Mascagni was born and buried.”[8] The joy of performing a long-wished role from her youth made the artist remark that “God has given me this gift, but at his age, professionally.”[9]

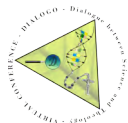
Lucia Stănescu shined on the stage of the Lyric theater for 32 years, both in the country and abroad. The lirico spinto soprano, revealing a strong artistic personality, became a model in what concerns the performance of the roles of Puccini, and not only. Her vivacious and

flexible voice combined with her magnetic and convincing theatricality in every role she had performed. The artist’s vocal artistry confirms her remarkable vocality through great accuracy of expression, through dynamic subtleties own to her timbre quality and, especially, through an exquisite voice sound maintenance. These technical qualities are accompanied by the profile of the music aesthician, who passionately lives every role of Puccini, and of the actor who effortlessly transposes in every role undertaken.

Lucia Stănescu was and still remains the professor who awards every student practical and spiritual gifts. The Romanian singing school, represented by the artist, is a prestigious school that has availability all over the world, all the more that Stephan Poen, the well-renowned speech therapist and musicologist, who owns a PhD in Medicine and Musicology, stated that “she remains in history as the first Romanian woman to be a professor of voice in an Italian conservatory.”[10] Her poise, determination and the beauty of her nature and visage are the essence of her personality. Her accomplished performance on stage, praised countless times, aided the artist in her dedication to the cause of teaching. “As in what concerns my profession as a professor of voice, I was concise enough regarding the technical principles I had experienced and which I have imparted to those who understood me.”[11]

## II. VOCAL TECHNIQUE

Professor Lucia Stănescu’s vocal technique aims to reveal and transform the student, by aiding him in assimilating “some vocal and behavioral hygiene rules.”[12] She reminds them, having in mind their age, about the importance of resting the mind, body and voice, as “money will not replace the harm done to the gift that God has given to you.”[13]



Lucia Stănescu molds the future complex artist starting with the vocal emission. Vocal hygiene that comprises proper vocal warm up, vivacity in vocalization and the avoidance of emission flaws ensures student's proper amount of knowledge upon which the professor can then start to shape the voice of the future lyrical artist.

The abdominal-diaphragmatic breathing exercises are also professor Stănescu's responsibility, as "One says that our profession is a sport, and so it is. Think only about the effort the abdominal, intercostals and diaphragmatic muscles are submitted to." [14]

The professor, by identifying the voice type, its resonance and the vocal registers, can analyze the transitional passage and give it a high mark." I admit my true obsession: the passage for each type of voice." [15] In order to avoid the lack of continuity between the three vocal ambitus registers and to keep the natural harmony of voice, the professor develops vocal sound continuity through technical exercises.

Word articulation and its Rhapsody, followed by the musical notation, are the necessary steps in creating each partiture. Professor Lucia Stănescu's knowledge of music revealed her sensibility in what concerns the choice of a musical repertoire. She would always give advice in her firm but soft manner: "After you will enter your career path for real, I beg you to consider this personal saying of mine: each role must have its own age." [16]

The established lyrical artist generates again, through the usage of explanations and examples, the morphological and syntactic aspects of the chosen works. Phrasing, articulations, syntax and lyrical architecture of opera texts now begin to intensify. It is the emotional moment when the student enters in a constructive and motivating competition with soprano Lucia Stănescu.. It is on this superior level that genuine music

reveals itself through its elevating message. The challenge arrives when the student has become aware of the vocal and aesthetic condition of a role. The impact with the orchestral harmony is crucial in establishing the sound and voice level of modulations or inflections. What the professor, then, powerfully imprints, is the theatrical construction of the role, by choosing the emotional charge of character's gestures, mimic, and attitude.

The artist revealed her didactic vocation by bringing on the international lyrical stage countless famous artists, such as: Maria Luigi Borsi, Aurora Brancaccio, Rossana Bertini, Fulvia Beroli, Niki Mazziotta, Antonio Montezzi etc.

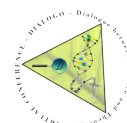
Professor Lucia Stănescu's laborious work has been accomplished through the art of molding voices shaped in the manner of a Romanian singing school, carrying the joy of living, of giving, of being.

Madame Lucia Stănescu was kind enough to give us an interview from our sunny friend country, Italy, in 2013.

### III. INTERVIEW WITH LUCIA STĂNESCU

1. Ruxandra Mirea: You have been carrying all your life, in your soul and spirit, the honest, loving and caring Christian atmosphere from your parents' house. How did this image guide your career that has always been so much in the limelight? What pieces of advice would you give to the young artist in this matter?

Lucia Stănescu: I can affirm, with my almost 87 years sensibility, that my parents' existence was and continues to be even now, after their departure, like a shining luminary in the sea full of strong and high waves I had to battle. I believe and I cherish the wise old saying regarding the "first seven years of family good upbringing." I advise today's young generation to refrain from smiling ironically when hearing it uttered by



someone.

2. Ruxandra Mirea: What can you tell us about the intellectual atmosphere that reigned in your aunt and uncle's house in Bucharest? Have they completed the personality of the Transylvanian child, who was spiritual, genuine, and humble, a people and beauty lover person? Did education help you with your stage performance?

Lucia Stănescu: I have always considered them as being my second parents. I am sure that, already having my first seven years of family good upbringing, it was easier for them to complete their mission, of giving me a capital city scholastic education. On theatre, when you are on stage, the serenity and wiseness derived from a specific type of education makes everyone's work easier.

3. Ruxandra Mirea: Today I have, once more, noticed, with delight and surprise, the qualities of your voice that freely responds to a rational command, in a light and clear manner. How long and in what manner have you completed your studies? How can the healthiness of vocal chords can be maintained over as long a period as possible?

Lucia Stănescu: Vocal technique expression itself makes one reason in a clear, organized and complete manner, like a reflex. It would be useless to start and drive a car if under its cowl wouldn't exist all the necessary accessories. Vocal chords are a singer's priceless gift. Their efficiency is to be debatable if the opera singer lacks or neglects his/her "vocal hygiene" and relies only on technique.

4. Ruxandra Mirea: Are there any essential aspects related to a long-lasting vocal technique? What can you tell students about phrasing?

Lucia Stănescu: Understanding and respect towards the above-mentioned can, undoubtedly, create vocal longevity, and what is more, it develops into the logical and emotional chant of phrasing. A proper vocal

sound maintenance sustains and endows the phrase with an interpretive silence that conveys the sense and protrudes the public mind.

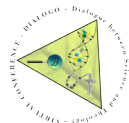
5. Ruxandra Mirea: When striving to fulfill your dream, how did you know how to select your roles? What type of attitude one must have in order for one to receive the role of one's dreams?

Lucia Stănescu: In what concerns my career repertoire, I was always compelled to repeat, when necessary, one of my sayings: "each role has its own age." How many unforgiven mistakes has the anachronistic role choice done in the music world?

6. Ruxandra Mirea: The will and determination of performing a role on stage is, also, conditioned by the co-workers, stage partners, soloists, conductors and directors. Opera is, actually, a syncretistic genre that amazes by involving all types of art: vocal and instrumental music, theatre, choreography, painting, design, architecture, history of costumes, lights. What can you tell us about some of the extraordinary moments that you have shared with your colleagues from other fields?

Lucia Stănescu: The thorough training of an opera singer from all types of view, his musical, and, why not, cultural technique is an excellent protection against some of the not so pleasant surprises. Work is not done in the same manner, everywhere. It is determined by "the name of the theatres" in what concerns their value, and even differs from one country to another. Not to mention that in tours abroad, one always has different stage partners, and not only. It would be wonderful if, from the first rehearsal, an affinity and a natural collaboration between characters would be created. Fortunately for me, I had these kinds of moments, the show almost becoming a reality.

7. Ruxandra Mirea: What about the lyric operas factotum, the orchestra conductor?



How much has the creating energy stimulated your career?

Lucia Stănescu: When a wand not only imposes itself, but also follows the soloist, it means breathing together in the colorful phrase of vocal miracle.

8. Ruxandra Mirea: Although people think in a broad manner about the life of an artist, only few are aware of the fact that this path is similar to the one of an athlete. Are refrains from natural human joys necessary for an artistic career?

Lucia Stănescu: I am not aware about the way other colleagues of mine behaved towards their career, but I was forced to discern all that life has given me, deciding to keep only what resonated with my person. The respiratory, diaphragmatic and muscular effort, in general, the technical movement and the slightly difficult lights toleration give us the right to be considered athletes. I was fortunate enough to be involved in this type of activity in my adolescence, taking part in all kinds of sports competitions, volley, equestrian, technical training swimming. I put everything aside once I have realized that this kind of effort only served me, without helping me.

9. Ruxandra Mirea: Your evolution on stage, in time and space, is the result of your sensitivity blended with your will, discipline and the focus on your dream. Still, these qualities had to be modeled and constructively oriented towards what you have realized in the lyric theatre. Who were the maestros who shared their knowledge and gift with you and who revealed your talent through their outstanding didactic qualities?

Lucia Stănescu: My innate will and discipline have given me an atavic certainty, without them being modeled or adapted by someone. I don't believe that this act would have been of too much help for me. I can honestly confess that my only professor of voice, Maestro Constantin

Stroescu, through his experience, sensibility and refinement, increased my genuine and positive confidence that I would, one day, have a say in the lyric world

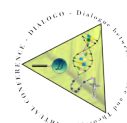
10. Ruxandra Mirea: You resonated with Puccini's works, and you are renowned as a cherished performer of this verist composer with post romantic features. How did you manage to lead your voice, the lower of instruments, on Puccini's partitures? What character has always impressed and provoked you in your performance/

Lucia Stănescu: I have honoured all the composers that have enhanced my career. But I must honestly confess that I loved Maestro Giacomo Puccini, because he is closer to us, all. For instance, the four students from La Boheme are to be found not only in Paris, but all around the world, struggling almost always with financial and locative problems, and especially with feelings of love that overwhelm and mellow their young souls. Maestro's music reveals in a melodic, genial and warm manner, the feelings of its characters. He captivated me as far back as my Conservatory years, like an eternal love. The character I felt closer to me was, definitely, delicate Cio Cio San of Madame Butterfly, who, along the opera, develops into a noble woman, able to give up on her only son out of pure love, and, then, in a brave manner, specific of her race, leave this world, so full of cruelty and uncaring towards her sensitivity.

11. Ruxandra Mirea: What secret can you reveal to the students in what concerns adding originality when performing a role which was given standing ovations dozens of times?

Lucia Stănescu: To honestly feel and identify with the character so that, you suddenly forget who you are and what your real name is.

12. Ruxandra Mirea: Over the time, the same role receives performance adjustments. Does an individual's mental



change that leads to his maturation, involves other type of role performance?

Lucia Stănescu: It does not involve other type of performance, but understanding it in its core, as if putting on a cloth more expensive than the first one.

13. Ruxandra Mirea: There is a fusion between the artist's and the character's souls. Theatricality is the gift that gives value to every lyric artist. Which one is more important: the music or the text?

Lucia Stănescu: In my opinion, what matters in this profession is knowing exactly the historic period characteristics in which the composer creates the character. I will give you a simple, but real example: the handheld fan. Its usage differed from Floria Tosca, to Carmen and Cio Cio San. It is a very small but concrete example. Regarding the position of music and text, I will tell you how I proceeded: I have first understood and memorized the text, and after that I have studied the musical part of the role. The understanding of the text allowed me to emphasize the musical phrases.

14. Ruxandra Mirea: You are and have always been a remarkable voice that has professionally captivated the young voices that let themselves molded by your knowledge. How do you recall the meetings and the work atmosphere with your students?

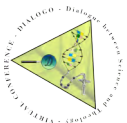
Lucia Stănescu: In what concerns voice technique, it was my idea to separate vocal chord vocalization exercises. I have never worked on them in groups of students and at the same time. It seems illogic and even dangerous. Concerning the professor-student relationship, I have chosen a modality that involves empathy, patience, help in key situations, but also the respect between the student and the teacher. I do not agree, although, with the American custom that, unfortunately, has rooted in our old Europe, too.

15. Ruxandra Mirea: You are a Romanian from Transylvania, an area blessed by divinity, with peaceful, decent and hard-working people, content about the gifts they have received. Did you manage to share to the borderless world of art and culture the essence of your personality, ingrained by the Romanian traditions?

Lucia Stănescu: In my family's patriarchal atmosphere, I have received from my parents what one calls education, that I have thoroughly completed in my adulthood, being careful not to betray them. It was this trait what guided and protected me even on my tours abroad. And during my years of teaching in Italy, I have managed to develop a mutual student-professor warm relationship. I believe it is important to want, and what is more, to know how to leave something that will live on after you.

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Arts- she taught Theory of Music-solfeggio, dictate and Piano. Now, she is a lecturer at Faculty of Arts, where she teaches History of Music, Musical Esthetics, Theory of Music-solfeggio, dictate.

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Ruxandra Mirea has graduated from George Enescu Highschool of Music, from Bucharest, piano specialisation, and afterwards Faculty of Music, and Music Composition, Musicology, specialisation Vocal and Instrumental Music, from Ciprian Porumbescu Conservatory of Music, Bucharest. She has a PHD in Music, from George Enescu Academy of Arts, Iasi, Musicology specialisation (2008). She has taught piano, in Queen Mary National College of Arts, Constanta (1988-1999). From 1999 she has become lecturer at Faculty of Arts, part of Ovidius University, where she has taught Theory of Music-solfeggio, dictate and History of Universal Music. Between 2004-2010 being a lecturer at Faculty of Orthodox Theology-specialisation Sacred