A socio-cultural perspective of the musical arts, from the historic Banat region, in the European cultural context

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Abstract. In the context of economic development since the 1990s, but also in the current economic crisis and dilemma, an analysis of the role of musical art in the coming 20 years is an exciting topic. This study aims to provide a perspective from the point of view of future music projects institutional in a favorable economic environment but also in terms of future changes on the economic and financial background less friendly to the historic area of Banat. Defined as an economic zone with a real success, the Banat Regional pole offers a positive perspective of contemporary musical arts. At the same time it offers the possibility of managerial and institutional changes, based on current research and studies of socio-economic impact made by doctoral thesis at West University of Timisoara, Faculty of Music.

Keywords: art, music, economic environment, future changes.

JEL Codes: I21, I28

1. Banat and the musical arts in the present economic context

Defined as a historic area with exceptional artistic resources, with institutions of musical tradition positively appreciated nationally and internationally in outstanding schools (musical art high schools in Timisoara, Arad and Resita, at the Faculty of Music of the West University of Timisoara), in musical institutions such as Banatul Philharmonic of Timisoara, the Philharmonic of Arad and the National Romanian Opera House of Timisoara, the historic region of Banat is a factor of musical culture. Defined as an economic area with a real success, the regional pole of Banat offers a positive perspective to contemporary musical arts. From a simplistic analysis of the different musical genres, classical, traditional or light, new musical genres of pop music, at present we can find a number of musical institutions that offer any taste and musical need. By means of the various musical institutions, all of them state institutions and where arts have an appropriate place in terms of institutional representation. Thus, folk music is represented by the School of Arts, The Centre of Culture and Arts as well as by folk music bands among which Ansamblul Profesionist Banatul (www modest cultural associations or NGOs, each musical genre has a wide perspective in a cosmopolitan and multinational cultural environment. As a fact, the region of Banat is famous for its ethnic and religious tolerance, by the original way in which the different cultures of the Romanians, Hungarians, Germans, Swabians, Serbs, Bulgarian, Roma, Ukrainians and in the last years

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through the Italian population stand out as a whole. It is worth noticing that as compared to other Romanian cultural areas here tolerance is one of the qualities of a European society.

The musical (ccajt.ro/banatul) with its vocal soloists and outstanding instrument players. The School of Arts of Timisoara and Arad have the following purpose: educational and training in fields like that of traditional culture, folk creation and life-long education. The activities they propose by means of educational curricula consistently aim at preserving the local specificity and the needs of the present educational market; preserving, valuing and transmitting moral, artistic and technical values of the local community, as well as of the national and universal cultural heritage; enhancing artistic creativity and talent; cultivating the values and authenticity of contemporary folk creation, of amateur interpretative in all its forms – music, choreography, visual arts, drama and ballet. The Art Schools curricula contain subjects such as: classical singing, piano, guitar, organ, folk and light music, accordion, violin, folk singing, light music singing, painting, graphics, design, sculpture, ballet, wood-wind instruments, graphic design, photographic art, acting, drums and brass band etc. (http://www.ccja.ro/pages/m_2.html). This generous offer covers the need of musical education entirely as far as the amateurs and music lovers are concerned, their activity being appreciated, but it also covers a large area of the musical activities from the field of the folk music arts, light music or the musical genres that do not belong to the category of classical music.

As far as classical music is concerned, the activity of the Art High schools in Arad and Resita, of the National College of Art “Ion Vidu” from Timisoara or that of the Faculty of Music of the West University of Timisoara corresponds to the highest standards in the field of musical education for the future professionals in the field. The educational activity, the concerts, the festivals and national or international conferences organized by these institutions cover the artistic need of a contemporary society that experiences a period of conceptual reorganization regarding the place and role of contemporary musical arts. In terms of success and the number of national and international rewards, the 95% integration of the graduates of the Faculty of Music of Timisoara on the job market, as well as the educational quality that is appreciated internationally give us the certitude of a future musical educational activity with a good perspective.

The activity of the graduates is beneficially used in professional classical music institutions. Banatul Philharmonic of Timisoara, The State Philharmonic of Arad, the Romanian National Opera of Timisoara are three institutions with an activity that is highly appreciated in Europe. The Musical International Festival Timisoara, The Days of Music in Arad, the “George Enescu” International Festival, The Old Music Festival, Timorgelfest, Jazz Gârâna Festival, the Plai Festival (promoted by the Banat Village Museum of Timisoara) are all examples of festivals where the classical and professional music offer is wide-ranging and completely culturally integrated in Europe. To these festivals we can add the national and international conferences such as Academic Musical Timisoara and the Anthem Conferences and Seminars held by the West University of Timisoara, the Faculty of Music.

This is a rich range of musical activities that offer cultural value to Banat but which, in their turn have a strong economic and social impact. In this context, the implementation and development of the theoretical activity becomes a necessity that the present paper aims to underline and cover. The theoretical bases have already been presented in an academic environment and they should become a research material for the local social, economic and political environment as well as a development recommendation for other regions.

2. Management and art organizations

The organizations or the institutions whose main scope is the artistic field, are characterized by a series of particular features, firstly due to the artists whose creation is delivered to the public by means of organizational structures. As any other form of organization, the organizations that “unpack” the artistic product need a responsible and efficient management team. Although cultural or art management was not
very strictly defined in the past, the development trend of the contemporary society and the market economy leads to a natural conclusion, according to which the success of an organization depends mostly on the way it is being led in the process of carrying out the pre-established goals.

The special importance of cultural management is given by its capacity to organize, educate, guide the spiritual development of a community, that is applied within a system. On the other hand, it defines the space that offers favourable conditions for cultural and artistic creation as well as the way in which it is implemented and received by the public. The mission of cultural management is facilitating the relationship between specific requests and the creation activities in the field of culture and art in order to enrich the cultural and spiritual life of the community they live in.

„The aim of cultural management is the discovery of organizational structures that allow a most effective cultural activity. From this point of view, cultural management has two basic dimensions⁴:

a) analytical-descriptive – the description and study of the existing forms and methods of organization;
b) designing-shaping – the development and discovery of new, more adequate, forms and ways of organization.

Cultural and artistic management has the following aims:

- Conceiving the system of cultural life, having as a starting point a certain cultural policy; organizational shaping of the system taking into account the specificity of the country and of a certain community;
- Planning cultural development by establishing the aims and the methods of a certain cultural policy as well as the research of the existing cultural situation, which represents a starting point in conceiving the planning methods;
- Making cultural activity partnership systems in order to get maximum results;
- Building the cultural institution infrastructure as well as the organization of their activities – institution management;
- Organizing the work of art production process – project management within the institution or independently;
- Organizing the culture spreading process;
- Product management;
- Making models of international cultural collaboration.

Due to the vast area covered by the eight aims of cultural management, the activity of a cultural manager also includes creating the necessary conditions for cultural manifestations and the making of the specific product – the work of art, connecting the artists with the audience interested in culture, as well as the reception of the works of art by the public opinion”.

The artistic activity takes place within an organization that is mainly based on the relationship between the management and the artist or group of artists. As any other type of organization, an art institution’s scope is the performance of pre-established aims. In this respect, the manager of such an institution has to make use of the four stages of the management process, Planning, organizing, leading

⁴ Ardeleanu Roxana Sorana, Contributions to the management of musical institutions in Romania (Contribuţii la managementul instituţiilor muzicale din România), Timișoara, Brumar Publishing House, 2011, pp.10-11
(motivation and coaching) and control having in mind the good operation of the institution he/she manages.

Defined as a person responsible with the work of a group, the manager organizes the human and material resources necessary to the carrying out of aims. Although the activities that a certain art institution hosts differ according to the product or the services provided, the choreographer, the conductor, the director or the curator are all managers and need to have management qualities in order to succeed in their endeavor of employer guidance.

The process of artistic product creation and spreading takes places within an organization defined and made up as any other type of organization. At the basis of its existence and well functioning lies the artistic product whose creation and spreading is the responsibility of the management. An organization or art institution is born due to the artists who look for material resources and the environment where they can put their creative ideas into practice. We can bring a series of examples in order to support this statement, such as: a group of dancers who want to set up their own company that offers the audience their personal vision of interpretation; a script writer looking for material support in order to make a theatre performance; a group of artists who want to exhibit their works in a gallery that they also administer. A more thorough analysis of the specific activities underlines the strict dependency between the quality of the artistic idea and the quality of the management. Thus, even if at its basis there is a valuable artistic idea, putting it into practice can fail when the planning or the organization of the activities are made unprofessionally. For this reason, any organization or art institution that envisages the success of the creation process needs good managers. On the other hand, even if the management is effective, long term success is subject to the quality of the artistic manifestations – performance, concert, exhibition.

The four functions of management are to be found in any type of organization, independent of the scope. As the personality of the artist and the specificity of the creative activities cannot be easily framed in rigid forms of organization, the management of art organizations needs to offer favorable conditions for the manifestation of the act of creation and its reception by the audience. On the other hand an important characteristic of this type of organization is the lack of personnel at the level of management in most of the cases because of the lack of funds for salaries. This phenomenon leads to the overcharging of the manager’s working agenda by an increase in the number of duties normally shared by several people.

During the management process, the art institution and organization managers need to carry out seven main functions:

1. Planning and development – a good manager of an art institution will permanently look for ways of income increase for new programs and for cost payment
2. Marketing and public relations – represents the tie of the organization with the community it belongs to, the audience of the manifestations it organizes and the potential donors that it has to attract
3. Personnel management – an effective use of the human resources represent the key to success for an art organization
4. Fiscal management – a good financial resource administration can lead to the attraction of investors
5. Relationships with the board – the divergence of opinions and values of the manager and the board of directors within an art organization are totally unproductive in the process of aim fulfillment.
6. Relationships at work – the manager of an art organization has to collaborate in its work with the employed personnel and is responsible for their actions as well as those of the personnel in front of the board of directors.
7. Relationships with the government – a good art manager needs to be informed about the existing set of laws and act accordingly."

During its existence any institution or art organization interacts with the external environment, illustrated in Figure 1.

![Diagram of the interaction with the external environment](image)

Feedback that modifies the inputs, modifies in its turn the processes and the outputs

Fig. 1: The institution or art organization interacts with the external environment

Irrespective of the object of activity, all the organizations are under the influence of the external environment with its six components: economic, political, cultural and social, demographic and technological. The art institutions owe their survival and development to their capacity of adjustment to the opportunities and threats of the external environment. This capacity is the responsibility of the manager, who firstly has to decipher the information that comes from the external environment correctly and then decide the actions that the institution he/she manages needs to take in order to resist the external pressures.

As any other type of organization, the art institution functions in variable environments made up of a series of external forces that the institution comes in contact with. The description of the interaction of such an organization with the six components of the external environment has to focus on the importance of information source selection concerning the opportunities and the threats of the external environment: the audience, the management and personnel members, other organizations and art groups, the press, the professional associations and the consultants.

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5 Ardeleanu Roxana Sorana, idem, p. 13
Depending on the sources of information that they prefer, the managers of an organization or institution of art take the information about permanent changes occurring in the external environment. Irrespective of the sources, the information received must be used in planning and organizing the entire activity. The way each department is constituted as well as all the decisions is based on the continuous adjustment to the opportunities and the threats of the external environment.

The careful monitoring of the external environment and the transformation of the information received is a prerequisite for the survival of any type of organization. When the organization proves to be insensitive to the forces of the external environment or rigid in the process of continuous adjustment it will disappear from the market. The responsibility of adjustment belongs to the manager who has to focus on the actions to be taken within the system he manages, defined as the internal environment of the organization, while noticing the characteristics of the external environment and to establish the indispensable connection between the two components of the environment.

The internal environment of the organization needs to offer security and to inspire stability to its employees, whose daily activity is the source of development and survival of the entire system. A good manager has to focus on ensuring a positive climate for the daily activities. A first condition is listing the necessary tasks and the precise rules of operation. The most important routine activities, obligatory for any type of organization are establishing the salaries of the employees and defining the working conditions. Without a certainty in these two areas the employees are not productive in the process. On the other hand, slipping into a working routine leads to employee limitation and dramatic reduction in terms of quality. For

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all these reasons a good manager has to keep the personnel interested and motivated by finely tuning work schemes in order to attain the pre-established objectives and ensure institution survival.

Typical for an organization or art institution is the moment of its foundation as a result of an idea a person or a group of people want to put into practice. This type of organization is mainly based on the ambition and the managerial qualities of the founding members, vital in organization development.

As time goes by, an organization becomes less and less willing to change and prefers to plan activities similar to those that were successful in time. The risk of losing the audience appears when a new organization with a similar activity is founded. An eloquent example would be the case of an opera company which, after years of success, is confronted with the opening in the same town / city of a theatre and dance company. Although they do not address the same audience, the art consumers find themselves in the situation in which they can choose from the multiple possibilities. The management of the old opera company has to reconfigure the whole activity in order to keep the public interest, to the detriment of the other art organizations with which they share approximately the same audience. This example draws the attention to the importance of noticing the changes in the configuration of the external environment in order to ensure organization development and survival.

A good way of adjustment to the conditions of the external environment is the continuous evaluation of the organization management. Simply applying this method does not guarantee the success of the art organization. For its maximum efficiency there is a need of a tight collaboration between the management and the artistic department of the institution. When this collaboration works and if the entire personnel uses the evaluation procedure correctly, the organization is likely to register progress despite all the pressures of the external environment.

The first condition in the adjustment to the opportunities and the threats that come from outside the organization is knowing and using the correct information collection and analysis techniques that take place during the management process, being applied to all its stages. The collection and analysis technology of the information that comes from the external environment is called content analysis. This refers to noticing and consulting the sources in the media (newspapers, radio and television) about the contemporary practices but also about the possible future tendencies. The responsibility of the manager consists in identifying as many and as varied sources of information as possible, and especially in making the difference between the real contemporary trends that the external environment is subject to. For instance, a real trend that is present for a long time is community demographic growth, which leads to the possible long term increase in number of the audience of an art organization. Together with the identification of the environmental trends, a similar role in content analysis is played by the way in which the data is interpreted, which can lead to totally different conclusions.

For a better understanding of the importance of the art organization adjustment to the opportunities and the threats of the external environment, we will give details about the way it interacts with the six components of the environment:

1. Economic environment influences the material resources of the organization, especially in times of crisis when the inflation rate grows. In this case the management has to make the decision of increasing the price of the artistic product in order to cover the raise of the maintenance costs. In order to be fully prepared a good art institution manager needs to plan alternative budgets that he needs to put into practice in times of economic environment change.

2. Political and judicial environment is an integrative part of the life of art organizations, the latter being often invited to take part in political events by providing entertainment programs. As far as the judicial environment is concerned giving laws is highly important, influencing the way in which the employees work in conformity with the regulations in effect.
3. Cultural and social environment is an important challenge for the art organizations and institutions especially in the case of changes in audience tastes and needs, which leads to a reevaluation of the actions and the mission of the organization.

The provisions about the consumption of the artistic product are quite difficult to make due to the major changes that take place in the cultural and social environment that the contemporary society faces. The cultural values are passed down from one generation to another by means of social structures, mainly the family. The social transformations that lead to the appearance of single parent families, and especially the general tendency of decline in the standard of living influence dramatically the art organizations and institutions. The costs of the consumption of art products are sometimes exceeding the financial possibilities of the audience, which leads to the adoption of marketing strategies suitable for the present circumstances, maybe even the decrease of ticket prices or making programs for different audience categories.

The adjustment to the conditions of the cultural and social environment is one of the basic conditions of survival of the art institutions whose managers need to focus on maintaining and keeping the public interest for the interpretive arts, the performance and visual arts. In order for this strategy to be successful the managers have to collaborate with the artists and together they need to attract and educate the social community in which they perform.

4. The demographic environment has a special impact over the art organizations that have to make programs and activities suitable for the public from the point of view of race, age, gender, education, income level, birth and mortality rate as well as geographic distribution. Due to the contemporary tendency of birthrate fall and the appearance of ethnic variety worldwide, this type of organizations need to adopt a series of programs corresponding to the age but also to the ethnic belonging of the community where they perform.

5. The technological environment influences in a special way the presence of the audience at shows, concerts, exhibitions, by a fall in the price of video and audio equipment that enable watching the cultural-artistic event in the comfort of one’s home. Undoubtedly not even the highest fidelity recording cannot be compared with taking part in a concert of live performance. An adjustment to the changes in the technological environment could be making interactive activities and programs where the audience is no longer simply watching but also taking part actively.

6. The educational environment is the most important component of the external environment in the process of establishing the audience consumer of specific products. The research that have been conducted in the field revealed that more than 50% of the audience that consumes art is made up of tertiary education graduates and Lynne Fitzhugh stated⁸: „The socio-economic variable associated most often and most perfectly with cultural frequency is, not surprisingly, education.” Thus, getting and maintaining a large number of audience can be made by introducing the study of arts in the school curricula to a higher extent than at present. The involvement of art organizations and institutions in youth education lead on the long term to having art consumers who are educated. On the other hand, recent scientific research has lead to the conclusion that the study of arts during childhood develops personal abilities, discipline and responsibility.

The culture consumption is subject to the necessity to satisfy the artistic and aesthetic needs the appearance of which depends on cultural habits that and individual is familiar with. Social behavior is also strictly dependent on the common cultural needs of the members of a group. The most important concern of the cultural management is forming and developing cultural habits from childhood, which will generate the appearance of cultural needs and wishes. For this reason the age category that is the most important in

cultural management is that of children who need to be guided in the process of understanding the world they belong to, especially by being guided towards value.

3. Socio-economic consequences and future prospects

Even though taking into account the present economic crisis the implementation of this project would mean additional costs, we think that by means of the effort of the cultural and educational institutions from the field of musical art we can contribute to the development of a new relational and socio-economic impact concept and even of a model of regional development in this field.

Several solutions could come from the private sector by the activity of some NGOs with specific programs in the field but also by redirecting the educational and performance policies of the existing state institutions. We are not the promoters of stopping the activity or reducing the number of the existing institutions, but we are the promoters of a new cultural and educational policy in the field of musical arts. If during the communist period planning and cultural plans were obligatory, we think that even today, having a clear perspective on a coherent cultural policy is obligatory. Certainly not in the old setting and contents of the education of the „new person” but having in mind the perspective of the decisions and cultural policies promoted at the European level in which positive implication, by direct financing from the economic factors is one of our greatest wish. Consequently, we think that the role of a Cultural Evaluation Committee who could evaluate professionally the cultural projects in the field of music and then correlate them with the financial offers of the private companies is one of the first conditions. This committee should function independently and dispose of a warranted fund from the private sector. It could function regionally near the future Regional Economic Committee.

From these finances a series of musical education micro centers could be founded such as: music kindergartens, youth education centers, clubs for adults and seniors. These centers already exist but they do not have any clear objective coordinated towards the field of music. From all these, we think that music kindergartens are the most important and they could be real training grounds for the discovery of musical talents amongst pre-school children. From here the future candidates for the art schools or high schools could have a better educational perspective. Undoubtedly, this implies the educational number of adults towards the field of musical arts, a continuous and coherent explanation of the role of music in the spiritual life, of its beneficial harmonious psychic and physical development of a child. This education would need the involvement of some NGOs that have as an object this type of education. An important part in this endeavor could be played by the churches by implementing some programs of musical education for children, by involving and establishing kindergartens with musical activities that collaborate with professionals from the field. (Martin Luther started the reform in music and the introduction of the protestant choir by writing a song book for children and then he addressed the adults). As far as the educational offer of children by the professional institutions is concerned we think that a more effective involvement in the educational process of pre-school children on their part is to be wished for. Lesson concerts, musical performances for children, music festivals for children, even TV programs could lead to social added value, educational coherence and even a positive impact on social development of the future younger generation. The programs dedicated to each age category, offered by experienced professionals in the field would benefit them. We think that the contemporary Romanian society is influenced by the television syndrome, by that of superficial and sometimes doubtful musical information that the Romanian cultural mass-media is promoting today. We think that it is necessary that the younger generation leave behind the model of the inert consumer, without sensitivity and without culture that is very likely to become vote catching manœuvre. In this respect music has a determining role and the stadiums and the festivals that thousands of musical consumers attend can become factors of social cohesion and not of rebellion and behavioral excess. The costs of an adequate education at the right moment are much lower
than the educational and punitive costs necessary in a society that experiences social conflicts, even cases of economic difficulty. Building cultural places is much cheaper than building reeducation centers. This is a perspective that the private investors and the economic decision factors should take into account.

We think that a reduction of the activity of state musical institutions would lead to a small reduction as compared to the expenses generated by the lack of adaptability of the adult to the requirements of modern industry, to the discipline and the quality of the worker irrespective of the field of activity. Of course this should be followed by the coherence cultural policies of the state musical institutions. We think that a good cultural musical and artistic activity can be accomplished by the coordination of all the efforts, by educational curricula, by artistic offers of the best quality. In this respect the efforts of the Romanian National Opera House from Timisoara and those of the State Philharmonic of Arad can be diversified with well media-covered performances with a wide cultural offer, and that can change the perception of the role of this type of institutions. We think that these institutions will turn into “musical museums” having an offer to a small circle of audience, but by the involvement of all the cultural factors they will have a natural opening towards the younger generation that should change the aspect and the quality of this perception. Taking part in a concert should become a moment of spiritual and cultural elevation, a moment when the daily concerns disappear and when hope takes a new shape.

Of course in this respect the economic factor is essential. Our appeal to the decision factors in terms of local and regional budgets, but also to the decision factors in the private sector is that of the need to invest in culture, in education and in the life-long training of the qualified worker. Having a narrow perspective is completely counterproductive. Indeed musical education does not solve all the present socio-economic problems, but it offers the opportunity for spiritual dialogue towards a better and more beautiful world.

### 4. Conclusion

The present study is the result of the work of a team in the field of musical arts. We think that in this study we offer a theoretical and practical frame of the cultural perspectives in the field of music over the present socio-economic and cultural impact. By the implementation of the theoretical underpinnings referred to in this study, but also by practical actions such as music kindergartens, performances and educational concerts, the cultural evaluation committee, performances and concerts with the right opening and well covered by the media, musical education and Bernstein type classical concerts or other means of musical and cultural impact we can contribute to a better social cohesion, to the diversification of the cultural offer and the birth of a middle social class in Romania.

### 5. References


