

## Costache Antoniu - Actor, Teacher, and Theater Promoter

Carmen ANTOCHI\*

**Abstract:** Costache Antoniu remains one of the defining personalities of Romanian theater, a complete artist who exemplarily combined stage talent, pedagogical vocation, and the desire to promote theater culture. His training in Iași laid the foundation for his entire career: at the Conservatory, under the guidance of State Dragomir, he learned the importance of rigorous analysis of roles and the idea that the stage also has a moral mission, that of contributing to "righting wrongs." Mihai Codreanu refined his diction and instilled in him the belief that art is the expression of emotion filtered through reason, while Mihai Sadoveanu, as director of the National Theater, offered him his first real support by hiring him as a "probist" in 1920. Alongside the master Vernescu-Vilcea, Antoniu perfected his understanding of the Caragiale tradition, thus preparing himself for the difficult years of wandering through provincial theaters. His career, built step by step, illustrates admirable perseverance. As a teacher, he passed on to younger generations the essential principles of the Iași school—artistic sincerity and naturalness. His appointment as rector of the "I. L. Caragiale" Institute of Theater and Cinematographic Art confirmed his ability to transform his stage experience into a true model of professional training. Costache Antoniu's legacy lies in the harmony between the realistic tradition and the profound humanity of his performances, marked by naturalness, discreet irony, and warm humor, becoming a benchmark of professionalism and modesty for the entire profession.

**Keywords:** Costache Antoniu, Iași Conservatory of Music and Declamation, Iași National Theater, Iași theater school, Golden Sound Archive, The Turbulent Citizen

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\* Lecturer, PhD, George Enescu National University of Arts, Iași

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Born in 1900, on February 26 (25 according to some sources) 1900 near Rai, a poor hamlet located 30 kilometers from Iași, in the commune of Țigănași – a village he described as "forgotten by the world and the authorities" – into a modest family with a single source of income. His father, Vasile, was a writer at the town hall (a kind of secretary) and, together with his wife Tasica, they raised 17 children, all supported by a single, small and meager salary. Costache Antoniu<sup>1</sup> was the fifth child in this family. The village of Țigănași was poor, and the peasants worked as day laborers on one of the largest estates in Moldova.

During World War I, Antoniu's native village was wiped off the face of the earth, and his mother, Tasica Antoniu, died in exile.

His first contact with the world of theater was in the fall of 1907, when he was in first grade. He was impressed by the arrival in the village of the traveling troupe of actor Ananie Bălan. Little Costache could not understand how a man who had been sober turned into a "dead drunk" by picking up a bottle and putting on a wig.

His talent was noticed by the village teacher, Ion Anton, who guided him towards the art of spoken word on stage. Ion Anton encouraged him to recite poems and monologues and included him in a team of amateur artists, with whom he toured the villages around Iași, reciting poems and singing couplets alongside Petrache Mohoreanu. This group traveled around the villages near Iași, such as Probotă, Hermeziu, Bivolari, Sculeni, Larga, Iepureni, Popricani, and Cârniceni. The work was done out of artistic enthusiasm, and the small earnings were donated to charity. Passing through Rai, Costache Antoniu fondly remembered the "toloaca" between the church and the school, where the children played ball. Even after he left Țigănași to attend high school (middle school) in Iași, he continued to play with the amateur team, reciting poems by Mihai Eminescu, George Coșbuc (such as *Nunta Zamfirei* – *Zamfira's Wedding* –, for which he was later noticed by Mihail Sadoveanu) and, in particular, by the young debutants George Topîrceanu and Demostene Botez<sup>2</sup>.

After seeing his first "real" theater performance in Iași, *Hamlet*, which kept him awake for three nights, Costache Antoniu knocked on the doors of the

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<sup>1</sup> Photo from the volume Rusu Anca-Maria (ed.), *The Iași School of Theater – History and Current Events*, 2nd edition, revised, Artes Publishing House, Iași, 2010

<sup>2</sup> Popovici, Al., *Costache Antoniu*, Meridiane Publishing House, Bucharest, 1964, pp. 5-6

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Conservatory. This decision led to his first break with his family, who were prejudiced against theater.

After graduating from Alexandru Ioan Cuza High School in Iași, Costache Antoniu enrolled in 1917 at the Conservatory in Iași, in the class of professor and actor State Dragomir (1870-1920) an important figure in Iași theater, being simultaneously a professor of history and philosophy, a professor at the Conservatory, and an actor at the National Theater. Dragomir, although defined as "an actor with a university education, but with too little temperament," was an extremely useful element on the Iași stage, possessing a vast general culture. He was passionate about the classical Russian repertoire. His method of analyzing plays, as a director, was a novelty for actors. He discussed historical, political, psychological, and social issues, performing a "true scientific analysis of the roles." As a teacher, he stimulated his students' passion for the stage, culture, and study. Dragomir claimed that for nothing in the world would he give up the joy of saying "the good and uplifting word" on stage, of propagating morality and culture, thus contributing to "the most beautiful means of civilization and ennoblement of feelings." State Dragomir saw the stage as a platform for "correcting wrongs" and overcoming "social vices." Antoniu, who rehearsed the roles of Postum in *Fântâna Blanduziei* (*The Fountain of Blanduzia*) and Ion in *Pe malul gârlei* (*On the Banks of the Stream*) in class, continued the courageous message of Professor Dragomir in his career. He was a colleague of Sofia Arapu, Natalia Castriș, Maria Pizone, Nicu Șubă, and others. The Iași theater school played a fundamental role in Costache Antoniu's training as an actor, providing him with a solid foundation in the art of performance.

During Antoniu's studies at the Conservatory, Mihail Sadoveanu was the director of the National Theater in Iași, who sought to bring a new breath of fresh air to the Iași stage and promote a varied repertoire, including Romanian authors and universal classics. Sadoveanu noticed the young Antoniu at the final exam of his first year at the Conservatory and encouraged him to apply for a job at the theater. Initially hired as a "probist" in August 1920, he was quickly promoted, after only two months, to third-class trainee, then second-class trainee. The Iași stage was a "launch pad" for him. The repertoire was eclectic, including melodramas, vaudevilles, but also great works of universal drama. He made his debut in the lead role in M. Lengyel's play *Taifun* (*Typhoon*) and played in shows such as Tolstoy's *Înviearea* (*Resurrection*) and Robert de Flers' *The Întoarcerea* (*Return*), Olănescu-Ascanio's *Pe Malul Gârlei* (*On the Banks of the Stream*), D'Ennery and Cornon's *Două orfeline* (*Two Orphans*), Adrian Maniu's *Rodia de aur* (*The Golden Pomegranate*), *O noapte furtunoasă* (*A*

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*Stormy Night*) by Caragiale, Scapin from *Vicleniile lui Scapin* (*The Schemings of Scapin*), and Sganarelle from *Doctor fără voie* (*The Doctor in Spite of Himself*) by Molière. During this period, he collaborated with important directors such as Vlad Cuzinski and Ștefan Braborescu (People's Artist). An important moment in his artistic career in Iași was the tour with the renowned actor Vernescu-Vîlcea, a master of interpreting Caragiale's plays, in the play *O noapte furtunoasă* (*A Stormy Night*), with Antoniu playing the role of Nae Ipingescu. This experience marked the beginning of a long and fruitful career dedicated to Caragiale's work.

His colleagues at the Iași National Theatre included George Popovici, Marioara Davidoglu, Nicolae Meicu, Aurel Ghițescu, Sorana Țopa, Ani Braeski, George Calboreanu, Constantin Vernescu-Vîlcea, and others. During the refuge of World War I, great actors of Romanian theater gathered in Iași, from whom Antoniu was able to learn, such as Constantin Nottara, Ion Brezeanu, Romald Bulfinski, Maria Ciucurescu, Elvira Popescu, Maria Filotti, Olimpia Bîrsan, Zaharia Bîrsan, Lucia Sturdza-Bulandra, Marioara Ventura, and Tony Bulandra.

After Mihail Sadoveanu, the theater was directed by poet Mihai Codreanu, who was also a professor at the Conservatory in the department of "diction, expressive reading, criticism, and theater psychology." He placed particular emphasis on diction and the theatrical delivery of verses, which are essential aspects for an actor. He believed that in art, the role of the teacher is... "negative," having to show the student what not to do, leaving them to search for themselves. He urged students to avoid cheap success and triviality. In his theoretical classes, he often raised issues such as "harmonics and parasites in theater" (based on the idea of inner harmonic sounds in acoustics), "points of viability in theater" (the living elements of theatrical convention)<sup>3</sup> ...

As with State Dragomir, his memorable words also stuck in their minds "Art is only given by feelings passed through reason. Pure lyricism is insufficient. Reason must intervene, subdue feeling, and only then will it be art..."<sup>4</sup>

Those teachers saw the stage as a platform for "correcting wrongs" and overcoming "social vices"...

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<sup>3</sup> Mihai Codreanu, *Memories of an Old Teacher*, Teatrul magazine, no. 1, year II, January 1957, pp. 31-37

<sup>4</sup> *With Costache Antoniu about himself and others*, Teatrul magazine, no. 1, year IX, January 1964, pp. 69-73

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A relevant testimony by Antoniu describes his first tour, under the harsh conditions of World War I, in Piatra Neamț, alongside Al. Dem. Dan (a member of the Craiova theater company). Antoniu, who lived in a cold little room, was given the small, "knife-edge" role of Iotomo in the play *Taifun* (*Typhoon*). Having no money, a friend saved him by bringing him ten eggs, a jar of jam, and bread for the road, which he wrapped in newspaper<sup>5</sup>.

Another tragic testimony refers to the funeral of the great actress Aristizza Romanescu in 1918, where State Dragomir said: "The greatest artist of our country has passed away, in misery and forgotten by all"<sup>6</sup>.

This period in Iași laid the foundations for a brilliant career that left a deep mark on the history of the Romanian stage.

In fact, her testimonies help us better understand the condition of actors at the beginning of the 20th century. Even just a selection of her main roles and stages can give us a picture of a theatrical destiny, shaped in the Iași School of Theater.

Antoniou then went through a difficult period, marked by a lack of opportunities and poor conditions in provincial theaters. He performed at the Astra Theater in Sibiu, founded in 1923 and closed after one season. The initiative failed because a roulette casino was approved instead, and for months the actors did not receive their salaries. After six months, he returned to Bucharest, performing sporadically at the Popular Theater, and then moved to the National Theater in Craiova for three months in 1924. In Craiova, he left a lasting impression with his role as Pristanda. The struggle for existence forced him to participate in various tours, some better organized (with Victor Eftimiu's *Meșterul Manole* – *The Master Builder*), others improvised. From 1927 on, he played an astonishing variety of roles: drama, classical comedy, vaudeville, operetta, farce. The performances took place in harsh conditions, with dozens of premieres per season, sometimes repeated in just one week. Theaters in the provinces appeared and disappeared meteorically. Antoniu worked sporadically in private troupes, often as an understudy. He considered every role, no matter how small, to be a school, an exam, a test, constantly perfecting himself. He had difficulty joining the National Theater in Bucharest, initially as an extra, although in the provinces he had been a first-class actor. He was given small roles, 17 roles in which he "stepped into" from one day to the next, until in 1928 he was invited by Ion Livescu to join the National Theater in Chișinău. For seven years, until 1935, when the theater was

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<sup>5</sup> Popovici, Al., *Costache Antoniu*, Meridiane Publishing House, Bucharest, 1964, p. 12

<sup>6</sup> *Idem*, p. 12

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closed, he performed continuously in the capital of Bessarabia in numerous plays staged by Aurel Ion Maican and Ion Livescu. His definitive consecration came on the stage of the National Theater in Bucharest, where he was hired in 1935. On March 13, 1939, he played the role of old Iancu in Mircea Ștefănescu's play *Acolo... departe* (*There... Far Away*), directed by Ion Șahighian, which brought him great success. Subsequently, his name began to circulate in the press. From 1935 until his death, he was an actor at the National Theater in Bucharest. These years were a real school of perseverance for Antoniu, who continued to perfect his art, considering each role, no matter how small, as a test. His irresistible humor, sincerity, natural acting, and mischievous spirit made Costache Antoniu one of the best performers of roles of decent people, honest, intelligent, ironic heroes in Romanian plays.

Costache Antoniu in: *Profesorul Udrea* („Steaua fără nume”); *Inspectorul Prelî* („Institutorii”); *Cernogubov* („O chestiune personală”).



His return to Bucharest and his engagement at the National Theater marked a turning point in Costache Antoniu's career. Initially cast in minor roles, Antoniu gradually made a name for himself thanks to his undeniable talent. This was followed by a series of important roles in plays such as *Tinerețe* (*Youth*) by Max Halbe, *Ascultă Giacomino* (*Listen, Giacomino*) by Pirandello, *Orașul nostru* (*Our Town*) by T. Wilder, *Școala cerșetorilor* (*The School of Beggars*) by N. Kirîțescu, and, above all, in Caragiale's plays. The play *Acolo... departe* (*There... Far Away*) by Mircea Ștefănescu, in which he played the role of old Iancu, brought him recognition from the Bucharest public. He was a pillar of Romanian theater, one of those actors who delighted thousands and thousands of spectators with his talent, h, but especially with his authentic Iași humor; that is why there could be no better interpreter of Ion Roată in Mircea Ștefănescu's play *Cuza Vodă*, staged at the National Theater in Bucharest. He had a special talent for creating distinct "types" and physiognomies for each

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character, his stage performance being characterized by remarkable naturalness and emotional sincerity. He played<sup>7</sup> memorable roles in Romanian and international comedies and dramas, distinguishing himself through the way he brought to life such anthological characters as the Turmented Citizen in *O scrisoare pierdută* (*A Lost Letter*) by I. L. Caragiale, Iancu in *Acolo... departe* (*There... Far Away*) by Mircea Ștefănescu, and Spirache Necșulescu in *Titanic Waltz* by Tudor Mușatescu, roles that immortalized him in the collective memory of Romanian theater, leaving a significant mark.

His stage art was also appreciated abroad. The National Theater's tour in Paris (June 1956) drew unanimous praise in *Les lettres françaises* for his performance in *O scrisoare pierdută* (*A Lost Letter*) and *Ultima oră* (*The Last Hour*). The English magazine *The Stage* named him among the best actors of the Paris Festival. He also enjoyed great success on tour in the Soviet Union (1958), in Zaporozhye, Moscow, and Chișinău.

Antoniou was a follower of the Stanislavski method, which emphasizes artistic sincerity and authentic experience of the role. As an artistic vision, Costache Antoniu believed in simplicity, naturalness, and sincerity in performance. He was convinced that there are no big or small roles, only actors who are totally dedicated to their performance. In fact, he was not an actor of "big roles" and never sought to play only leading characters. He was not an actor of a particular genre. He approached each role he played with the same dedication. Mircea Ștefănescu wrote: "Costache Antoniu, the great comedian of the National Theater, a comedian in the full sense of the word, that is, not simply funny, but an artist with equal creative powers in drama and comedy, one of those humorists of life whom you only discover if you pay attention. He responds to life's questions with inner humor that he generally does not deem worthy of being transformed into words. And when his humor is expressed verbally, it is laconic, as if it were the synthesis of an inner dialogue that has eliminated all the frills and glittering trappings of verve."<sup>8</sup>

On the stage of the National Theater in Bucharest, he played memorable roles in Romanian and international comedies and dramas, distinguishing himself through the way he brought to life characters such as Spirache Necșulescu in Tudor Mușatescu's play *Titanic Waltz*, Professor Alexandru Andronic in Mihail Sebastian's play *The Last Hour* (*The Last Hour*), Alexandru Filimon in Victor Eftimiu's play *Omul*

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<sup>7</sup> Photographs from *Teatrul* magazine, no. 2, year IV, February 1959, p. 62

<sup>8</sup> Popovici, Al., *Costache Antoniu*, Meridiane Publishing House, Bucharest, 1964, p. 16

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*care a văzut moartea* (*The Man Who Saw Death*), and Moș Ion Roată in Mircea Ștefănescu's play *Cuza Vodă*. By 1939, he had played 17 minor roles. Then, in 1938, he played in Oscar Wilde's *Bumburș* (Antoniou in the role of the Pastor), in 1939 - Roger Sherck's *The Clown* (in the role of Bauer), Al. Kirițescu's *Ion al Vădanei* (in the role of Ilie), *Acolo... departe* (*There... Far Away*) by Mircea Ștefănescu (as old Iancu), *Tinerete* (*Youth*) by Max Halbe, *Ascultă Giacomino* (*Listen, Giacomino*) by Pirandello, *Orașul nostru* (*Our town*) by T. Wilder, and, especially, in Caragiale's plays; in 1943 - *Școala cerșetorilor* (*The Beggars' School*) by Al. Kirițescu (in the role of Biserică), *Lanțuri* (*Chains*) by Allan Laughton (Antoniou in a double role: young and old); 1945 - *Patima roșie* (*Red Passion*) by Mihail Sorbul (in the role of Șbîlț); 1949 - *Ziua cea mare* (*The Big Day*) by Maria Banuș (in the role of Spiridon); 1950-1951 - *Trei surori* (*Three Sisters*) by A.P. Chekhov (in the role of Prozorov); 1952 - *Fericirea furată* (*Stolen Happiness*) by Ivan Franko (as Nicola), *Platon Krecet* by Al. Korneiciuk (as Dr. Bublik); 1953-1954 - *Nunta lui Krecinski* (*Krecinski's Wedding*) by Suhovo-Kobîlin, *Ultima oră* (*The Last Hour*) by Mihail Sebastian (as Professor Andronic); 1956-1957 - *Steaua fără nume* (*The Nameless Star*) by Mihail Sebastian (as Professor Udrea); 1957-1958 - *O chestiune personală* (*A Personal Matter*) by Al. Ștein (as Cernogușev); 1959 - *Cuza Vodă* by Mircea Ștefănescu (in the role of Moș Ion Roată); 1960 - *Titanic Waltz* by T. Mușatescu (in the role of Spirache); 1962 - *Oamenii înving* (*People Win*) by Al. Voitin. In 1958, he played a minor role at the Moscow National Theater in *Revizorul* (*The Inspector General*) by N.V. Gogol.



At the same time, he also had a prestigious film career, appearing in numerous landmark Romanian films. Highlights from his filmography include: *O noapte de pomină* (*A Night to Remember*), dir. Ion Șahighian, 1939) role - Bank Clerk; *Se aprind făcliile* (*The Torches Are Lit*), dir. Ion Șahighian, 1939); *O scrisoare pierdută* (*A Lost Letter*) (dir. Sică Alexandrescu, 1953), role - The Topsy Citizen<sup>9</sup>; *Nufărul roșu* (*Red Waterlily*) (dir. Gheorghe Tobias, 1955), the first color film in Romania; *Pasărea furtunii* (*The Storm's Bird*) (dir. Dinu Negreanu, 1957), role - The Captain; *Telegrame* (*Telegrams*) (dir. Aurel Miheleş, Gheorghe Naghi, 1959), role -

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<sup>9</sup> Photo[https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Costache\\_Antoniou#/media/Fi%C8%99ier:Costache\\_Antoniou.jpg](https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Costache_Antoniou#/media/Fi%C8%99ier:Costache_Antoniou.jpg)

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Antonache Pamfil, state attorney; *Băieții noștri (Our Boys)* (dir. Anastasia Anghel, Gheorghe Vitanidis, 1960), role - Old Man with the Cart; *Darclée* (dir. Mihai Jacob, 1961), role - Charles Gounod; *Vacanță la mare (Seaside Holiday)* (dir. Andrei Călărășu, 1962), role - ONT director; *Străinul (Strainger)* (dir. Mihai Jacob, 1964), role - Professor Gridan; *Neamul Șoimăreștilor (The Șoimărești Family)* (dir. Mircea Dragan, 1965) - Innkeeper; *Pădurea spânzuraților (The Forest of the Hanged)* (dir. Liviu Ciulei, 1965) - Priest; *Cuza Voda* (1966).

In 1976, as a tribute to Costache Antoniu, the Electrecord record label released an LP (Electrecord - EXE 01133) containing memorable radio recordings of highly successful plays such as: *Căsătoria (The Marriage)*, by N. V. Gogol, *D-ale Carnavalului (Carnival Scenes)* by Ion Luca Caragiale, *Acolo... Departe (There... Far Away)* by Mircea Ștefănescu, *Revizorul (The Government Inspector)* by N. V. Gogol, *Unchiul Vania (Uncle Vania)* by A. P. Cehov, *Ultima oră (The Last Hour)* by Mihail Sebastian, *O scrisoare pierdută (A Lost Letter)* by Ion Luca Caragiale, *Ziua cea mare (The Big Day)* by Maria Banuș, *Anii negri (The Dark years)* by Aurel Baranga, N. Moraru, with the script and presentation by the master Radu Beligan, at that time director of the National Theater in Bucharest. This was followed by over 75 other recordings on vinyl and CD with performances that entered the Golden Sound Archive.

With the first broadcast of Radio Romania on November 1, 1928, at 5 p.m., theater experienced a new beginning, reaching people's homes for the first time.

Costache Antoniu's work in radio was marked by his fundamental contributions to the development of the National Radio Theater, where he established himself from the outset as one of the "masters of the Romanian stage." During this period, he reached artistic maturity, confirmed by contemporary reviews describing those years: "There were two years of national drama and, in particular, of the triumph of the original screenplay. This is because the plays from world literature could be counted on the fingers of one hand: *Vicleniile lui Scapin (Scapin's Deceits)* by Molière, starring Niky Atanasiu, *Polyphemus* after Albert Samain (adapted by Gh. D. Mugur, with Ion Manolescu in the title role), *Frica de bătaie (Fear of Beating)* after Courteline (by Aurel Th. Șerbănescu), *Trenul fantomă (The Ghost Train)* after Rendle. The works were staged by V. I. Popa, Victor Bumbești, Haig Acterian, Victor Eftimiu (his own evocation: *În umbra strămoșilor (In the Shadow of the Ancestors)*; he also played the role of Eminescu in his play *Rapsozii - The Rhapsodes*), Dem. Psatta. The technical direction was consistently handled by Al. Lohan. The most notable performers during this period were: Lucia Sturza-Bulandra, Tony Bulandra,

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Ion Morțun, G. Vraca, Maria Mohor, Ana Luca, Sorana Țopa, Ion Gheorghiu, I. Finteșteanu, Sonia Cluceru, Maria Voluntaru, C. Antoniu, Gr. Mărculescu, Al I. Ghibericon, I. Sârbul, Agepsina Macri-Eftimiu, N. N. Matei, Silvia Hodoș, N. Brancomir, G. Baldovin, Paul Stratilat, Dem. Psatta, At. Mitric, Ion Manu, Eugenia Popovici, Natașa Alexandra, Victoria Mierlescu, Marietta Sadova, Elvira Godeanu, G. Demetru, Clody Berthola, Emil Botta, Mircea Balaban, Al. Critico, Sabina Mușatescu, Coco Demetrescu, Lili Carandino, Sereda Sorbul, etc.”<sup>10</sup>

His presence is recorded on the radio in the following years: "And at the beginning of 1942, the staging of works from world literature continues in the studios [...] Romanian classical works are represented by only three plays: *Răzvan și Vidra* by B. P. Hașdeu (with N. Brancomir, Sorana Țopa, Costache Antoniu<sup>11</sup>, Marcel Gingulescu ) [...]"<sup>12</sup>.

Radio interpretation involves not only a certain type of voice, but also a rigorous vocal interpretation technique. Certainly, the experience accumulated over time, based on everything he had learned from the masters Mihai Codreanu and State Dragomir from the Iași school, had helped him adapt his speech, making the transition from the demands of the stage to those of the microphone.

Costache Antoniu in: *Profesorul Andronic* („Ultima oră”); *Nenea Iancu* („Acolo departe...”); *Cetățeanul turmentat* („O scrisoare pierdută”).



<sup>10</sup> Radio magazine, March 3, 1929, apud Petre Codrea, George Cernea-Comanescu, Victor Crăciun, Maria Repede, *Radio Theater*, vol. I, Romanian Radio and Television Publishing House, Press and Printing Office, Bucharest, 1972, pp. 122-123.

<sup>11</sup> Photo from *Teatrul* magazine, no. 2, year IV, February 1959, p. 63

<sup>12</sup> Idem, p. 126.

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With his distinctive voice, he transposed numerous roles into the sound environment, becoming an essential reference for preserving Romanian artistic memory, especially from the classical theater period. Costache Antoniu played alongside the great actors of the era in famous plays, broadcasting hundreds of shows such as *Titanic Wals* (1953) and *Roadele instrucțiunii* (*The Fruits of Instruction*) (1953), thus contributing to the golden fund of the radio archive. He remained in the public's memory especially as the unmistakable voice that uttered the phrase "Good night, children!", which became an emotional landmark for entire generations of listeners.

In addition to his artistic career, Costache Antoniu was also a prolific teacher. In 1940, he began teaching for eight years at the private conservatory "Astra." And, from 1948, he was a young assistant to maestro Storin, then a lecturer at the "I. L. Caragiale" Institute of Theater and Cinematographic Art in Bucharest, generously and passionately passing on his experience to younger generations of actors. Between 1953 and 1970, his merits were also recognised in education, and he was appointed rector of the "I. L. Caragiale" Institute of Theatre and Cinematographic Art.

He was also involved in social and political life, serving as a deputy in the Grand National Assembly for three sessions. In the 1952-1957 session, Costache Antoniu was elected deputy in the Grand National Assembly in the Bucharest region, in the Turnu Măgurele electoral district. His involvement in social and political life as a deputy in the Grand National Assembly demonstrates his civic commitment and desire to contribute to the progress of society.

He received numerous awards and distinctions: The Order of Cultural Merit, First Class Medal, for theater (February 1, 1943); The title of Artist Emeritus of the Romanian People's Republic (April 28, 1951); Order of Labor, 2nd class (April 19, 1952) "for his work on the occasion of the 'Caragiale Centenary';" Medal for the Fifth Anniversary of the People's Republic of Romania (December 24, 1952) "for the struggle and work carried out to build, consolidate, and prosper the People's Republic of Romania"; Title of People's Artist of the Romanian People's Republic (January 23, 1953) "for outstanding merits, valuable achievements in art, and meritorious activity"; The Order of August 23, 4th class (August 12, 1959) "for fruitful activity in the development of science and culture in the Romanian People's Republic"; Order of Labor, 1st class (February 26, 1960) "for long-standing activity and outstanding merits in the field of theater, on the occasion of his 60th birthday and 40 years of artistic activity"; Laureate of the State Prize; Order of Cultural Merit, First Class (November

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6, 1967) "for long-standing activity in theater and outstanding achievements in the field of dramatic art"; Order of the Star of the Socialist Republic of Romania, 1st class (February 27, 1970) "for long and fruitful artistic and teaching activity, on the occasion of his 70th birthday."

Costache Antoniu did not limit himself to artistic expression on stage or in front of the microphone; he also expanded his interests to writing, where he approached different forms of creation with naturalness and rigor. He published a book in which he summarized his reflections on theater and the acting profession<sup>13</sup>, wrote a preface<sup>14</sup>, which reveals his analytical finesse and respect for his colleagues, and over the years wrote numerous articles in *Teatrul* magazine and other cultural magazines. Through these literary endeavors, Antoniu sought not only to share his vast experience, but also to contribute to the consolidation of critical and theoretical discourse on Romanian theater.

Costache Antoniu was a complex artist, dedicated to the stage and the audience. He successfully combined the realistic tradition of Romanian theater with the Stanislavski method, creating his own style, characterized by naturalness, sincerity, and depth. He was a renowned performer of Caragiale's plays and contributed to the promotion of new Romanian drama.

Costache Antoniu was a complete artist, a model of professionalism, dedication, and modesty. Through his remarkable talent and his contribution to the development of Romanian theater, he remained a reference point in the history of the Romanian stage.

Dina Cocea pays him a final tribute in her obituary in the newspaper *Contemporanul*: "His naturalness, discreet irony, tender humor, verve delivered in the sweet Moldavian dialect, his ability to humanize, with rare sensitivity, the destinies of oppressed characters, — all these distinct notes outline the well-defined style of his artistic personality. Costache Antoniu enriched theatrical realism in the tradition of the greats inaugurated by Millo and Brezeanu, being, alongside Bălățeanu and Iancovescu, a worthy successor to a remarkable strand of the national theater school.

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<sup>13</sup> Antoniu Costache, *Evocări din trecutul teatrului românesc* (Memories from the Past of Romanian Theater), State Publishing House for Literature and Art, Bucharest, 1954

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talent of the great Antoniu was fully appreciated by the public, who rewarded him night after night with long applause and ovations.<sup>15</sup>

On June 16, 1979, in Bucharest, People's Artist Costache Antoniu passed away, leaving behind an impressive artistic career and much regret among those who knew and appreciated him on stage and on screen. He found his final resting place in the Orthodox Bellu Cemetery, plot 96.

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<sup>15</sup> Contemporanul, no. 25 (1702), June 22, 1979, p. 11

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