Three Indiana University Bloomington faculty members were awarded the Republic of Romania's highest honor that can be bestowed on non-Romanian citizens for outstanding service to the country. On November 17, in a formal award ceremony at the palace of President Emil Constantinescu, three professors were designated as "cultural ambassadors" of Romania: Distinguished Professor of Music Virginia Zeani; Christina Zarifopol-Ilias, associate professor of classical studies and Romanian language and culture in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literature; and Matei Calinescu, professor emeritus of comparative literature and West European studies. Each was honored with the national order "Faithful Service" for their roles in promoting the appreciation of Romanian arts, literature, and civilization. These three were the very first recipients to be decorated since President Constantinescu officially reinstated the order in August of 2000. The order originated in 1932 but had been discontinued since the end of World War II.

Virginia Zeani
The president conferred the highest rank of Commander of the national order "Faithful Service" on Zeani in recognition of her outstanding musical achievements: 34 years as a brilliant opera star, 20 years as a distinguished professor of voice at IU Bloomington, and a lifetime of devotion to promoting Romanian culture in Italy and the United States.

While in Romania, Zeani was further honored with two honorary doctorates, from the School of Music of the University of Bucharest and from the Academy of Musical Arts in the city of Cluj-Napoca, whose mayor paid further tribute by designating her as an honorary citizen of the city. Zeani was also presented with an honorary membership in the Union of Interpreters, Choreographers, and Critics of Music. As she has done for years, Zeani travels extensively to teach master classes and to judge important singing competitions.

Christina Zarifopol-Ilias
The president conferred the rank of Officer of the national order "Faithful Service" on Illias in tribute to her outstanding activities in advancing knowledge of Romanian civilization and literature in the United States through research and teaching. She is particularly known for her work in energizing the Romanian Studies Program at IU Bloomington. It is an interdisciplinary program, with the largest concentration of Romanian studies specialists in the United States. In addition to courses in Romanian language and literature, Illias teaches courses in Latin.

Illias was also honored with a special medal, issued in 2000 by presidential decree, to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the birth of Romania's national poet, Mihai Eminescu. In 2000, Illias published a significant book in Romania on the poet, a transcription and reproduction of previously unknown correspondence (108 letters) between the poet and his lover, Veronica Micle. The work has been hailed as one of the most important cultural events in recent memory in Romania. Illias has received numerous invitations in the United States and abroad, most recently in January at the Romanian Cultural Center in New York, to speak about her book and her work at IUB.

Matei Calinescu
The president conferred the rank of Officer of the national order "Faithful Service," on Calinescu, in absentia, praising his work in literary criticism of Romanian works and his promotion of Romanian literature and history. Calinescu is now completing a book about intellectuals and nationalism in Eastern Europe in relation to Romanian émigrés after World War II.

For more information: www.indiana.edu/~reeibweb/roman.html