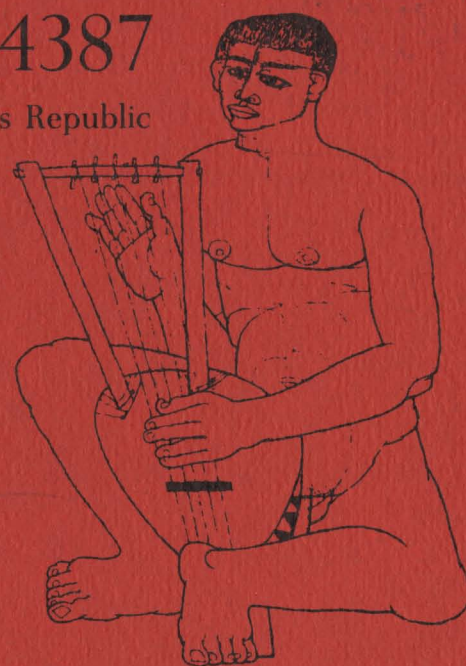


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Recorded by the Folklore Institute of the Rumanian People's Republic

Love Songs  
Wedding Songs  
Shepherd's Tunes  
Laments  
Epic Ballad  
Midwinter Ritual  
Dances and Jocs



Notes by A. L. Lloyd

## Rumanian Songs and Dances



Cover design by Ronald Clyne



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# Rumanian Songs and Dances

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# Rumanian Songs and Dances

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Rumanian People's Republic

## Introduction

This record introduces what is perhaps the most remarkably complete folk music tradition in Europe - the folk music of Rumania. It is complete inasmuch as extremely ancient and primitive melodies and usages still survive, while new-style folk music shaped by the most modern times is being created on all sides and flourishes exuberantly in town and countryside.

The archaic musical stock of ritual pieces, dating from remote pre-Christian times, lives on vivaciously, especially in the ceremonials attached to weddings, funerals, and the midwinter solstice (including Christmas, New Year, Epiphany, etc.). Thus, for instance, at Christmastime it is still common to find groups of vigorous young men marching through the village streets singing in unison great hero epics of magical hunters, of youths who wrestle barehanded with lions or ride untameable horses. Fantastic animal dancers appear in the countryside, dressed as deer or birds or goats (I. 1), recalling the paintings of humans in animal guise seen in prehistoric caves (recalling also the devils of Medieval Christian iconography).

Of all Rumanian ceremonial songs, perhaps those associated with funerals have changed least through the long centuries. These are of two kinds: lamentations and ritual songs proper. The ritual songs are sung by groups of women, usually middle-aged, at certain moments during the funeral. These songs have no character of mourning, but are, or were, of magical intent. Thus for instance there are songs to be sung at dawn on the dead person's verandah, imploring the sun not to rise until all the things are packed in the coffin that the corpse will need for the journey into the other world - the bread, the wine, the club to keep off the black dog, some money to pay the toll at the frontier between this world and the next. Many of these funeral songs have texts of

overwhelming beauty. But besides these are the laments, sung not by specialists but by near female relatives of the dead. In the east of the country, these are made up on the spot, beside the coffin, and chanted in a kind of musical prose; but in the districts of higher social organization, such as Transylvania, the laments are sung to fixed tunes, and consist of more or less ready-made texts, slightly adapted to suit the particular circumstance (I. 2).



Dance of bride and bridegroom  
in the bride's courtyard.  
(Goles, Hunedoras, W. Rumania)

Weddings are the occasions for the most intricate musical rituals, and during the four days of a full village wedding, countless moments occur, that call for prescribed music. Thus the bride is crowned to music, she is escorted to and from the church with music, her wreath is removed to music (impassioned music that draws floods of tears), the couple are played to bed with music and music awakens them at dawn. There is even music to accompany the moment - nowadays only symbolically observed - when the bride-sheets are examined, and the defloration celebrated by draughts of plum-brandy dyed red. Throughout the south and east of the country, the wedding music is entrusted to village professional musicians, usually gypsies. But in Transylvania, the peasants themselves sing the ritual songs



(I. 3), leaving the gypsy musicians to look after the dance music.

Over most of Rumania, the dances are collective affairs, in circle or column. The great round dance is the hora, found in countless variant forms under more than a thousand names. In most Rumanian villages a hora takes place every week-end and on special holidays, whether civic, religious or political. The whole village, except for the children, takes part (it is an important moment in a young girl's life when she enters the hora for the first time, for then she is entering the ambit of courtship and marriage). Without the hora, village life could hardly go on, for it affords the prime opportunity for the exchange of gossip and news, for the recruiting of labour for a special job on hand, and of course for courtship. The dances vary considerably from village to village, and one village may know as many as thirty or forty different dances. Besides the common closed circle, chain, or file dances, there are a certain number of couple-dances, mostly of central or south Transylvanian origin. The melody of one of these will be found on II 5, accompanied by the characteristic Transylvanian strigaturi, or rhythmically shouted verses.

The big wedding supper that takes place on Sunday night after the church ceremony is nowadays practically the only time when great epic ballads are performed. Sung epics, delivered in recitative style, are to be heard chiefly in the south and east of the country. Once, no doubt, they were widely spread among the peasantry, but are now almost exclusively performed by the lautari, the rural professional folk musicians, of whom probably ninety-five per cent are gypsies. Many of these old ballads of mythological heroes (I. 9) and fabulous outlaws are of great length, and audiences of sufficient patience to listen to a thousand-line epic are nowadays hard to seek, unless it be a group of peasants settling down at the banquetting table to a vast meal that is going to last for hours.

Of melodies not connected with any special occasion or function, most remarkable are those highly-ornamented, freely-improved, Oriental-sounding recitatives called doinas. The doina, rather like the blues, may carry texts full of nostalgia, longing, bitterness, protest. The main area of the doina stretches all the way along the outer edge of the Carpathians from Maramureş, through Moldavia and Muntenia and into Oltenia. At one time it probably flourished all over the territory of the Rumanians, and even today in a few isolated districts it is the only lyrical melody known to the

villagers. Our record presents various examples of the doina, from the most archaic (I. 6) to the most modern (I. 8).

The song proper, of fixed strophic rounded form, is a relative newcomer to the Rumanian village repertory, but in the course of a mere two centuries or so, it has become the dominant folk song type. Regional differences in song styles are very clearly marked. In some villages, one may find a certain number of songs sung in such a free and ornamented manner, with such exaggerated rubato that they sound very much like doinas. But in the same village, perhaps from the same singer, one may also hear an entirely modern type of song, vigorous, impulsive, four-square, of standard major or minor tonality, being a genre that has only made its appearance within the last ten years or so.

The Rumanian folk song scene is complicated by the fact that folk music is performed at widely differing cultural levels. There is the "classical" folk song of the peasantry. There is the folk music (most of it dance music or ballads) performed by the lautari, the rural professionals, whether gypsy or not. There is the semi-stylised folk music that is rehearsed and performed in the organized cultural circles such as now exist in practically every village in the country. Finally there is the grand concert-style folk music of the big city ensembles (many of which are made up entirely of specially chosen lautar or peasant musicians). Under the influence of radio, gramophone and public performance, all these groups are nowadays stylistically interacting upon each other. Meanwhile, something of the musical health of the country may be gathered from the fact that a recent (1959) national competition for village amateur folk singers, dancers and instrumentalists attracted no less than seven hundred and fifty thousand entrants (out of a population of less than 17 millions). So much for quantity. For quality, let this record be witness.

A.L. Lloyd

## SIDE ONE

### Midwinter ritual (Goat Dance)

Akin to the English Old Tup or the Swiss Schnabelgeiss, the Capra makes his ribald appearance in Rumanian village streets at Midwinter. He is a carnival guiser, crouched under a carpet and bearing a goat mask. Young men escort him, decorated



with ribbons and bells. With the aid of a cord, the Capra makes the jaws of his mask clack in time to his dance. Formerly, the ritual was a magical affirmation of fertility at the time of the year's death agony; but this meaning is lost sight of nowadays. The little band accompanying our dancer, consisting of 6-hole brass pipe, fiddle and cobza (lute) is typical of the lumberjack country of the north-east. The leader, ex-logger Ilie Cazacu, is here playing a pipe that he bought some twenty-five years ago in London, on the occasion of an international folk dance festival. The players are from the village of Fundul Moldovei, Bucovina.

(Map ref. 1)

### Funeral lament

Keening - the singing of funeral laments - survives vigorously throughout rural Rumania. The laments are sung solo, by close female relatives of the deceased. Professional mourners are unknown. In some regions the laments are improvised on the spot. Elsewhere, notably in the west, the tunes and texts are fixed, known to the mourner beforehand; all she has to do is slightly to adapt the words to suit personal circumstances. Such is the case with our example, sung by 34-year-old Elisabeta Pavel of Girişu Negru, Crisana, near the Hungarian border. She is lamenting for her brother, and she sings: "My dearest, my little brother, you have gone behind the cross, you have hidden behind the door. Someone has called you to our mother because she loved you..."

(Map ref. 2)

### Wedding ritual song and recitation

Rumanian village weddings frequently spread over four days, from Friday through Monday, and are punctuated by ceremonial moments, usually accompanied by music. Our ritual song comes from Western Transylvania, and is sung at the moment when the articles of the dowry - household goods, linen, etc. - are being displayed. In this instance, the master-of-ceremonies interrupts the song to enumerate, in a ceremonial recitation, the gifts of food etc. brought to the bride. The antiphonal responses of the guests give an air of ritual solemnity to the occasion. It is not clear whether this is a parody of church procedure or a relic of ancient pagan ceremonial. Our example comes from the village of Lapugiu de Jos, in the folkloristically-rich Padureni region.

(Map ref. 3)



The tulnic is a variety of alphorn favoured by young women in western Transylvania.

### Alphorn signal for spring

At least five different kinds of giant alphorn are used in the Rumanian mountains, some of wood, others of galvanized iron, ranging up to nine feet long. The type heard in this record is a tulnic, a gigantic trumpet made from two half-round lengths of fir-tree, bound by wicker rings. It is local to western Transylvania, and for some reason is used almost exclusively by girls and young women, who signal to each other "for company" across the valleys of an evening. The flourish presented here is a call commonly associated with early springtime. It is played by a 19-year-old girl, Iosana Bud, from the village of Vidra de Mijloc, Huedin district.

(Map ref. 4)

### Musical legend: The lost sheep

In many parts of Rumania musicians improvise instrumental solos based on the 'program' of the shepherd who loses his flock, goes in search of it, thinks he has found it again but is disappointed, searches further, finally



discovers his sheep and dances happily. These "Lost sheep" pieces, relics of an ancient powerful pastoral culture that in Rumania only began to be broken up in the nineteenth century, often include spoken passages; indeed, the original form was probably that of a tale enlivened by musical interludes. Our version is an extract from a performance that, even without the spoken part, lasted some eighteen minutes. It is played by Neculae Tafta, the village priest of Negrilești, Vrancea district, southern Moldavia. His instrument is the long five-holed wooden flute called caval, and to make his performance more expressive, he growls into his flute in a manner that was already familiar in the Greece of Homer's time.

(Map ref. 5)

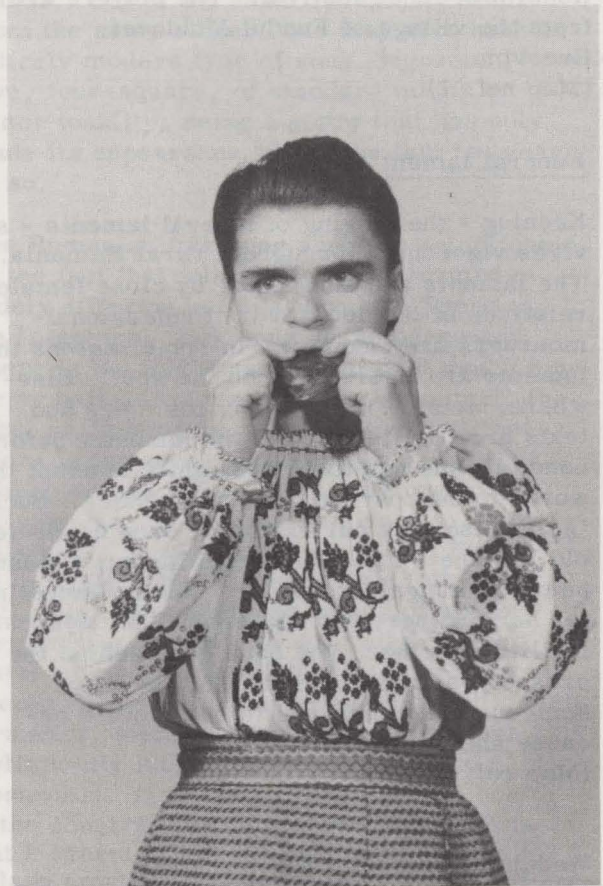


Doina singer Maria Sas.  
(Negrești, Maramures, N. Rumania)

#### Doina from Oas

It was Béla Bartók who first drew attention to the existence of a peculiar kind of lyrical melody in Rumania, open-ended, free-floating, perhaps deriving remotely from some Oriental ancestor. He called this melody-type 'hora lunga', but a more usual name is 'doina'. Bartók considered the discovery of this kind of song the high-light of all his vast folklore experience. Doinas are semi-

improvised recitatives, with a function not unlike that of the Blues. The most archaic types are found in the far north of Rumania, notably from the curious region of Oas, the homeland of our singer, 53-year-old Maria Sas of Negrești village. She sings: "Cuckoo with your ruffled feathers, may your tongue rot! Why did you sing my sweetheart to death?". She interrupts her melody with the curious sobbing or hiccuping ornaments that older singers consider proper to this kind of song. (Map ref. 6)



Florica Mizgoi, leaf-player and singer (Batrini, Ploesti regn.)

#### Leaf doina

Instrumental doinas are performed more freely and are more ornamented than the vocal ones. They may be heard on any instrument from a saxophone to a slip of birch-bark. Our example is played on a favourite Rumanian countryside instrument, the leaf. In this instance it is a pear-leaf, held with both hands against the lips. The 'virtuoso' is Florica Mizgoi, a talented 29-year-old shepherd girl from Batrini, Muntenia. (Map ref. 7)





Doyenne of professional folk singers is the gypsy Maria Lataretu, from Lelești, Oltenia, S. Rumania.

#### Doina from Oltenia

Our third example of the doina is a modern type, representative of the new-style city-fied folk music. The singer is Maria Latarețu, an Oltenian gypsy from Lelești who has become the queen of professional folk song performers. She is accompanied by the crack Barbu Lautaru folk orchestra of Bucarest. Her song says: "Green leaf of the mayflower, I looked to the rising sun and saw spring coming. I know the spring-time when it comes by the butterflies and bees, by the briar-leaf and the cuckoo, by the shouts of the ploughmen..."

(Map ref. 8)

#### Epic ballad: Iovan Iorgovan

Lengthy sung epics of heroes, dragon fighters, outlaw supermen, still abound, notably on the south Rumanian plains. They are mainly in recitative form and nowadays are almost exclusively sung by village professionals, most of whom are gypsies. Peasant weddings are the chief occasion for the presentday performance of epic ballads. Our example is a fragment from a long ballad telling how



Epic ballad singer Mihai Constantin, with accompanist Stan Gruia (Desa, Craiova, S. Rumania)

the young hero Iovan Iorgovan slays a dragon from whose head comes a swarm of flies that spread cattle-pest over the plain. The hero is a kind of St. George: indeed, 'Iorga' is a form of 'George'. The gypsy performer, 39-year-old Mihai Constantin, lives in the village of Desa, Craiova region, among the sultry sand dunes of the Danubian plain. He is one of the most impressive of living epic singers. He punctuates his performance with flourishes on the fiddle, and is accompanied on the guitar by his partner, Stan Gruia (in parts of the Craiova region, the guitar has replaced the native cobza).

(Map ref. 9)

#### Song: Hay, my handsome

Perhaps it is only within the last two hundred years that the regular strophic tune, the 'song' as we know it, has become important in Rumania. Nowadays it exists in all forms, some so free and ornamented as to be almost indistinguishable from the old recitative style such as the doina, whilst others are as foursquare and obvious as a Western popular song. The present example is a well-developed five-lined melody of a type peculiar to north-western Transylvania, a free spacious kind of melody with delicate ornamentation. The text says: "Hey, my handsome. If I knew for sure you wanted to marry me, I'd be a good girl and wait two years, while you do your army service." The singer is 18-year-old Maria Taut, of the village of Leordina, Maramures.

(Map ref. 10)



Song: Go, my longing

A song from the repertory of the lautari (rural professional minstrels). With its languorous erotic text and sentimentally expressive performance, it is characteristic not of peasant music but of the style current among gypsy musicians on the outskirts of towns. The singer is Magdalena Biriescu of Criciova, Lugoj district. She is accompanied by a famous west Rumanian folk band led by the fiddler Ion Luca Banațeanu.

(Map ref. 11)



Preparing for the ceremonial crowning of the bride. (Goles, Hunedoara, W. Rumania)

Song: I'll not give you my eyes

The young girls of the village of Batrîni, in the Teleajen district of Muntenia, are famous for their lively ability to create new songs. The centre of their artistic activity is the small village House of Culture. Three evenings a week their best singer, Florica Mîzgoi, walks twelve miles across the mountain to join in the activities of the cultural center. Many of her songs are new but she retains the old lyrical style of singing, perhaps on account of the loneliness of her life as shepherdess. Here she sings a local song: "I'll not give you my eyes or my mouth; but if you offer to marry me, then my eyes and my mouth will be for you alone."

(Map ref. 7)

**SIDE TWO**

Dance: Slanicul

The Slanic is a circle dance for young men and women, local to the Buzau and Prahova regions

of Muntenia. Its melody is played here by Marin Toma, from the Danubian village of Victoria, Galati region. His curious instrument is supplied from the great fish-pools of his neighbourhood, for it is simply a scale plucked from the belly of a carp, inserted between the lower-lip and the gum, and vibrated like the reed of a clarinet. Fish-scale players are rather rare, and among them, Marin Toma is the acknowledged master.

(Map. ref. 12)



Bagpiper Ion Petecila (back row, 2nd from right) with some of his pupils. (Batrini, Ploesti regn.)

Dance: Briul

The briul is, next to the hora, the basic dance of the Rumanian choreographic repertory. It exists over the greater part of the country in countless variants. In the briul, the dancers perform in line, holding each other by the belt or the shoulder. Specialists consider that the ancient home of the briul is the region of Muntenia, and our example is played by an old bagpiper from the very heart of that region - 72-year-old Ion Petecila of Batrîni, Teleajen district. The bagpipe, mentioned in 15th century Rumanian chronicles, was once the principal folk dance instrument, but nowadays its use has much declined. In some regions it has quite disappeared, but is not uncommon in Petecila's neighbourhood; indeed, the old man conducts a kind of rustic academy for pipers in his village.

(Map ref. 7)

Dance: Ungureasca

The name of this dance comes from the word 'ungurean', denoting a Transylvanian who has crossed the Carpathians to settle on the southern slopes - a not uncommon practice



with shepherds looking for new pastures. The dance, originally a Transylvanian couple-dance, now adapted to Oltenian style, is widespread in the trans-Carpathian regions of Craiova and Pitești. Here it is heard in a performance characteristic of south Rumanian small-village professionals. The players are the gypsies Gica Nițoi (fiddle), Ion Nițoi (cobza) and Ion Dorighean (portable cimbalom), of Bughea de Sus, Pitești.  
(Map ref. 13)

Dance: Joc cu fete

The Oaș territory in northern Rumania has a peculiar folklore of its own, unlike that of other regions. The dances of the area sometimes have a strange wedding gait, and the melodies are accompanied by short poems often improvised on the spot by the dancers. These poems, sung to a simplified version of the instrumental tune, are usually of ribald character and performed in a wild uninhibited manner. Interjections, cries, whistling, sometimes hand-clapping, are added to give special liveliness to dances from this district. The instrumental melody in our example is provided by two young fiddlers, Stefan Olar (17) and Petre Huta (14), of the village of Huta Certeze, a few miles from the Soviet frontier.  
(Map ref. 14)

Dance: Ardeleana pe trei

In central and southern Transylvania the dances are likewise accompanied by epigrammatic poems, but instead of being sung as in the North, they are shouted or rhythmically declaimed by the dancers. These calls are named strigaturi, and the improvisation of salty strigaturi in the course of the dance is a special form of Transylvanian wit, as in the present example: "I can dance the Ardeleana. Corn for the hogs and grass for cattle. I may not know how to knead bread, but I sure know how to move my shuttle." The accompaniment is provided by solo fluer (6-hole pipe) played by 39-year-old Moise Zepa, of Dobîca, Hunedoara.  
(Map ref. 15)

Dance: Arcanul

The Arcan, or Noose, is an ancient dance of the north Moldavian forests. It is an exceptionally vigorous affair, much favoured by lumberjacks. This version of the Arcan comes from Fundul Moldovel and the band is that which played the Goat Dance (Side I, Band 1) with the addition

of a double-bass and a rather shy cornet, played by a young man just home from military service.  
(Map ref. 1)



The former building worker Iosif Milu is a leading virtuoso on the torogoata.

Dance: Brîul de la Domașnea

A brîu from the Banat, danced by young men in a line, holding each other by the shoulder. This version, of fabulous virtuosity, comes from Domașnea, the native village of the soloist, 43-year-old Iosif Milu. His instrument is the torogoata, a kind of alto saxophone invented in Hungary in the late 19th century, and now a familiar instrument in west Rumanian villages. Milu, a former bricklayer, is one of the country's leading virtuosi on the torogoata. He is accompanied here by the Folk Orchestra of the Rumanian Radio.  
(Map ref. 16)

Dance: Joc din Oaș

In Rumania, the cultural sections of the trade union movement are active in promoting folk dance spectacles in the towns and cities. In Bucarest, one of the best folk dance groups is the Giulesti Ensemble, centred on a large railwaymen's club, and comprised of railway workers. Many of these are former



peasants from various parts of the country, who teach their local dances to the whole ensemble. This ensemble makes frequent tours abroad and has won many international prizes. Their accompaniment is provided by a group of lautari - professional folk musicians - specially recruited for the purpose, and includes some of the best gypsy players in Bucarest. Here they play one of the peculiar waddling dances of the Oas Territory.

Dance: Jocuri Populare Oltenesti

The orchestra of the Giulesti Ensemble, mentioned above, plays a modest concert suite of three linked dances from Oltenia.

A. L. Lloyd

