FOLK MUSIC OF RUMANIA

From the Collection of Bela Bartok

BRAULS

BOCETS

WEDDING DANCE

SARBA DIN BRAU

FOLK DANCES

DOINAS

HORAS
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Descriptive Notes Are Inside Pocket
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INTRODUCTION BY BERNARD CHEHAN

The lonely shepherd playing his flute on the slopes of the Carpathian Mountains sings of his beloved and evokes myths that come from legendary Roman and Dacian times. Down on the endless plains of the Danube the peasants' dances carry on the traditions of ancient folk festivals, and their songs tell of the woes of man and woman, of the beauties of the earth and the skies, of life here and of life eternal, in words set to the strange music of a distant past.

The roots of Rumanian folk music go far back in history. The tongue of the Rumanian people belongs to the Romance family, but its culture developed under the tremendous influence of Byzantium and the Eastern Roman Empire. The Roman West and the Byzantine East met in the life of the peoples that emerged into history as the Rumanian nation. Back of it are the traditions of the peaceful Dacians, conquered by the legions of Trajanus, and of the other pre-Roman inhabitants of the Carpathian mountains and the Danubian plains.

All this shaped the lore and the music of the Rumanians. Their songs, some strange, bitter and harsh, some soft and subtle and profoundly moving, reveal widely separated influences, according to regions and districts and historical hazards.

The characteristic Rumanian folk song is the doina. The doina can be a song of love, it can be a ballad, it can be a Pantheistic poem, or a fighting song, or an outcry against injustice or the foreign ruler, it can be anything the shepherd feels that it should be — for the laborer in the fields, or the wanderer on the road, or the peasant woman washing her linen at the brook. The doina is everybody's song. Its music is as varied as its word content, but it fits with impressive mastery the dramatic content of the poem. Sometimes it is monotonous for long stretches, and then it becomes suddenly tumultuous or gay, or starts moving into unusual sound patterns. The subject matter encompasses all that troubles the hearts of men on the mountains or in the valleys. Some doinas tell us of the common happenings of life: birth, childhood, adolescence, love and marriage; in others, man speaks to nature around him or to the stars above him. The doina is mostly a melancholy song. It has become the great repository of a whole people's inner life. As some musicologists believe to have found in Rumanian folk music traces of Hindu music, it is not without interest to mention that there is a Sanskrit word,

ANOTHER POPULAR DANCE KNOWN UNDER ABOUT 350 NAMES IS THE SARBA, IN WHICH THE DANCERS PLACE THEIR HANDS ON EACH OTHER'S SHOULDERS. THE DANCE IS NOT AT ALL COMPLICATED, BUT VERY FAST. THE BRAUL OR SASH-DANCE, IS DANCED WITH HANDS ON THE SASH WHICH IS WOUND AROUND THE WAIST. SOMETIMES THE SARBA AND THE BRAUL ARE DANCED IN COMBINATION, WHEN IT IS CALLED SARBA DIN BRAU, WHICH MEANS "SARBA DANCED FROM THE SASH." EXAMPLES OF THE BRAUL AND THE SARBA DIN BRAU ARE FOUND ON RECORD BAND 5.

AN IMPORTANT PLACE IN RUMANIAN FOLK MUSIC IS HELD BY THE LAMENTS FOR THE DEAD, FOR WHOM THE RUMANIAN DESIGNATION IS BOCET. THE WOMEN WHO ARE CALLED TO THE FUNERALS TO BEWAIL THE DEAD ARE CALLED BOCITORRE. RELATIVES OF THE DEAD SOMETIMES SING THE LAMENT BUT, LIKE IN THE ROME OF OLD, THERE ARE PROFESSIONAL WAILERS WHO POSSESS A RICH REPERTORY OF LAMENTS. MOSTLY THESE ARE SUNG WITHOUT ACCOMPANIMENT BUT SOMETIMES THE VOICE IS SUPPORTED BY A FLUTE WHICH EVEN ATTEMPTS, AS IN ONE EXAMPLE IN THIS ALBUM, SOME SORT OF PRIMITIVE COUNTERPOINT.

THE RUMANIAN NAME FOR THIS PRIMITIVE FLUTE IS FLUTER, WHICH LITERALLY TRANSLATED MEANS WHISTLE. OTHER INSTRUMENTS OF THE SHEPHERDS ARE THE CIMPOIU (A BAGPIPE), AND THE BUCIUM, A WOODEN HORN SIMILAR TO THOSE FOUND IN THE WEST AMONG ALPINE SHEPHERDS. THIS IS, OF COURSE, A VERY OLD INSTRUMENT AND USED MORE THAN THAN IN THE PAST.

THE SHEPHERDS' FLUTES ARE CARVED WITH GREAT CARE AND ARTISTIC FEELING. THEY VARY IN SIZE AND SHAPE BUT ALL ARE RICHLY ORNAMENTED AND CONSTITUTE IN THEMSELVES SUPERB EXAMPLES OF FOLK ART. MANY TRADITIONS ARE INTERWOVEN IN THEIR ORNAMENTATIONS, JUST AS IN THE MUSIC THAT BREATHER THROUGH THE FLUTES SOME OF THEM SEEM TO BE MINIATURE ImitATIONS OF GREEK AND ROMAN TEMPLE COLUMNS; OTHERS EVEN REVEAL FAINT EGYPTIAN INFLUENCES.

THE PROFESSIONAL MUSICIAN WHO FOR CENTURIES HAS STORED AND CONTINUES TO STORE THE TREASURE OF RUMANIAN FOLK MUSIC, IS THE LAOUTAR, THE FOLK VIOLINIST WHO IS ALSO HIS OWN VOCALIST. A GROUP OF LAOUTARS FORM A TARAF, THESE MUSICIANS ARE NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH THE GYPSY FIDDLERS, ALTHOUGH A GREAT NUMBER OF LAOUTARS ARE GYPSIES, BUT THE MUSIC THEY ALL PLAY IS RUMANIAN FOLK MUSIC. THE WORD LAOUTAR IS DERIVED FROM LAUTA WHICH MEANS "LUTE". THE MUSICIANSHIP OF THE LAOUTAR IS HIGHLY DEVELOPED, AND THE BEST OF THESE PERFORMERS ARE TRUE ARTISTS IN THEIR FIELD. A GREAT LAOUTAR WAS GIORGAS DINICU WHOSE NAME IS WELL KNOWN OUTSIDE RUMANIA SINCE JASHA HEIFETZ MADE WORLD-FAMOUS THE UNIQUE "HORA STACCATO".

THE LAOUTAR LOVES, PLAYS AND PRESERVES WITH DEEP DEVOTION THE FOLK MUSIC OF RUMANIA. IT WAS HE WHO GAVE THE COLLECTORS OF FOLK MUSIC MOST OF THE MATERIAL WHICH ENABLED COMPOSERS AND MUSICOLOGISTS TO STUDY THIS VAST TREASURE OF SONGS AND DANCES WHICH BECAME THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORK OF PRACTICALLY ALL RUMANIAN COMPOSERS, FROM THE MIDDLE OF THE LAST CENTURY TO THIS DAY. SOME OF THE LAOUTARS HAVE A PRODIGIOUS MEMORY, ONE UNBELIEVABLY OLD ONE AND HIS TARAF Poured out nearly one thousand melodies and more than fifteen thousand verses to THE AMAZEMENT OF A COMPOSER WHO WENT INTO THE COUNTRY TO COLLECT RUMANIAN FOLK MUSIC.

GREAT FREEDOM AND VARIETY IN THE USE OF SCALES AND CHORDS IS REVEALED WHEN A LARGE NUMBER OF RUMANIAN FOLK SONGS ARE ANALYZED, THE DIATONIC SCALE OF WESTERN MUSIC, OF MORE RECENT ADOPTION, IS EMPLOYED SIDE BY SIDE WITH THE MODAL SYSTEMS AND IN SOME REGIONS WITH ORIENTAL SCALLS, NO HARD RULES ARE EVER FOLLOWED AND ALL COMBINATIONS ARE
THE SONG SOARS FREELY, BOUND ONLY BY THE FEELINGS IT EXPRESSES. THE RUMANIAN FOLK SINGER HAS SUPERIMPOSED ON ALL THESE INFLUENCES HIS OWN NATIONAL TEMPERAMENT, SO THAT AFTER ONE BECOMES FAMILIAR WITH THIS MUSIC IT IS PRACTICALLY IMPOSSIBLE NOT TO RECOGNIZE A RUMANIAN AIR AS SUCH, WHATSOEVER VARIETY ONE WOULD HAPPEN TO LISTEN TO.

IT IS EASY TO UNDERSTAND WHY A GREAT COMPOSER LIKE BELA BARTOK, WITH HIS PASSIONATE INTEREST IN THE DEEPER ROOTS AND LESS TRODDEN WAYS OF EUROPEAN COMPOSED MUSIC, BECAME SO STRONGLY ATTACHED TO THE UNCONVENTIONAL MUSIC OF THE RUMANIAN PEOPLE. HE COLLECTED UNTIRINGLY AN ENORMOUS NUMBER OF RUMANIAN SONGS AND DANCES OF ALL TYPES, SOME OF THEM NOW PRINTED IN THIS ALBUM, A FEW YEARS BEFORE HIS DEATH BARTOK WAS STILL WORKING ON HIS COLLECTION OF RUMANIAN MUSIC, SEEKING OUT AND ASKING RUMANIANS IN NEW YORK TO HELP HIM TRANSLATE THE WORDS OF MANY SONGS.

LIKE OTHER MODERN COMPOSERS, BARTOK TOO SOUGHT IN FOLK SONGS, THOSE OF RUMANIA AS WELL AS THOSE OF HIS NATIVE HUNGARY, THE UNIVERSAL VALUES OF THE MUSIC OF ACTUAL LIFE WHICH TRANSCEND ALL THEORIES AND SCHOOLS.

NOTES ON THE RECORDINGS BY HENRY COWELL *

FOLK MUSIC IN RUMANIA SHOWS STRONG INFLUENCES OF TWO GREAT MUSICAL CULTURES — THAT OF WESTERN EUROPE, THE MAJOR AND MINOR CHORDS OF WHICH ARE FREELY EMPLOYED (ALTHOUGH WITHOUT BEING HAMPERED BY THE "LAWS" OF HARMONY AS TAUGHT BY EX-PONENTS OF WESTERN MUSIC), AND THAT OF THE NEAR EAST. THE MODES AND RHYTHMS OF ISLAMIC MUSIC ARE TO BE FOUND EVERYWHERE, MIXED WITH WESTERN CHORDS. THERE ARE MANY GYPSY SONGS, AND THEIR STYLE OF FRENETIC RHYTHM AND FREE TONAL SLIDES IS A STRONG INFLUENCE EVEN ON NON-GYPSY FOLK GROUPS. NEARLY EVERY DANCE BAND (AND THERE IS A DANCE BAND IN EVERY VILLAGE) HAS A FIDDLER WHO IS EITHER A GYPSY, OR WHO IMITATES GYPSY FIDDLING, WITH THESE ELEMENTS FOUND IN ALL RUMANIAN MUSIC, THERE IS NEVERTHELESS A GREAT DEAL OF VARIATION. EVERY VILLAGE HAS TUNES AND DANCES OF ITS OWN, AND IN MANY CASES THESE MAY BE IN MODES AND RHYTHMS NOT FOUND ELSEWHERE, EVEN IN NEIGHBORING VILLAGES. THERE ARE, OF COURSE, SOME POPULAR FOLK TUNES KNOWN THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, BUT THESE ARE ADAPTED TO THE PARTICULAR STYLE OF PLAYING AND SINGING OF EACH SMALL DISTRICT.

SIDE I

Band 1: FOLK DANCE IN HORA STYLE — THIS IS A VERY FAST DANCE IN 12/8 METER, WITH GYPSY-STYLE FIDDLING ACCOMPANIED ON PLUCKED STRING INSTRUMENTS IN FRENZIED RHYTHM. THE MODE-FORM IS INTERESTING — THE AEOLIAN MODE-FORM, STARTING ON E INSTEAD OF A, ALTERNATING WITH G MAJOR. THIS PLAN IS OFTEN HEARD IN OLD GAELIC MUSIC. HOWEVER, WHEN THE G MAJOR SCALE IS USED, THE NOTE D IS THE TONAL CENTER RATHER THAN G, STILL NOT GIVING THE IMPRESSION OF A MIXOLYDIAN MODE FORM BASED ON D. THE ONLY ACCOUNT WE HAVE OF A MODE ON G WITH D AS ITS MAIN TONE IS FROM ANCIENT GREECE. EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE THERE POPS UP IN BALKAN MUSIC EVIDENCE THAT IN IT SOME ASPECTS OF ANCIENT GREEK CULTURE ARE PRESERVED.

Band 2: FOLK DANCE IN HORA STYLE — THIS PIECE IS TYPICAL OF A GREAT DEAL OF RUMANIAN DANCE MUSIC. IT IS 4/4 METER WITH CONSTANTLY RUNNING EIGHTH NOTES, BUT THE FIRST OF THE TWO NOTES ON A BEAT IS SLIGHTLY LONGER THAN THE SECOND. THE MODE IS MIXOLYDIAN IN FORM STARTING ON A FLAT.

Band 3: ): LOVE SONG — THIS SONG IS A DOINA ABOUT A WOMAN'S HEARTACHE. SHE SINGS:

"HE WHO HEARS ME SING WOULD SAY I HAVE NOTHING TO SING ABOUT. AND TRUE ENOUGH, I HAVEN'T MANY THOUGHTS, BUT I HAVE ONE, AND THIS ONE HURTS."

THERE IS ORIENTAL-STYLE SINGING HERE IN FREE RHYTHM ON A MODE BASED ON D MINOR (THE "NATURAL" FORM WITH G NATURAL) BUT WITH THE EMPHASIS SHIFTING D MINOR TO F MAJOR RATHER THAN TO A DOMINANT ON A.

Band 4: ): TRAGIC ROMANCE — ANOTHER DOINA ABOUT TWO LOVERS WHO WERE NOT ALLOWED TO MARRY, AND WHO COMMITTED SUICIDE BY DROWNING. SIMILAR IN STYLE TO CUTF, LONG NOTES ARE INTERSPERSED WITH RAPID ORNAMENTAL TRIPLETTS. THE SCALE CONSISTS OF D, E, F, G, A, ALTERNATING WITH G, D, E, F, G. D IS THE FULL-CADENCE NOTE; C IS THE NOTE FOR SEMI-CADENCES.

Band 5: ): LAMENT FOR DEAD MOTHER — THIS PIECE IS A BOGAT, A LAMENT FOR A DEAD MOTHER. THE REFRAIN TRANSLATES: "LET THE BELL TOLL LOUDLY." THE WOMAN SINGS SOLO IN
Clear, expressive style, but with oriental-style ornamentation. There are swift runs up to long sustained tones, on which there is a tremolo sometimes wide enough to produce a 1/4 tone trill. A tetrad chord (four-tone scale) is used, which varies as to the inner tones. The lower tone is E flat, the upper one A flat. In between there is sometimes F, sometimes F flat; sometimes G, sometimes G flat.

Band 6: Lament for dead husband -- This bouzet is a lament for a dead husband. The words go:

"How could you do this to me?
How can I live in this world
When you're not with me,
My husband, my brave one?"

The same style of singing as in cut 1; starting on B flat, E flat, F, and G, giving a strong E flat major impression, then bringing the phrase to a close on the note C. Toward the end, the notes D and D flat are introduced, and the final unexpected tone is D flat.

Side II
Band 1, 2, 3: Three dances -- the first is a sash-dance (braul), the second is a sarba din braul and the third is a village folk dance in a local style. A fiddle with plucked string instruments in a fast dance. The mode, starting on E flat, is like a major scale with both A flat seventh degree (D flat) and a raised fourth degree (A natural). The rhythm is in general 6/8, but changes to 4/4 in the middle section. Such changes of rhythm during the course of dances are characteristic throughout the Balkan countries.

Band 4: (1): Wedding dance -- This is a wedding dance for the bride, bridesmaid, and best man. The instrument is the gimieu, the Romanian bag-pipe, with a low sustained drone tone on A flat, and with the melody tones D flat, E flat, F, G flat, A flat and B flat usually, sometimes adding C flat and D flat on top. The style is free rhythmically, an introspective improvisation, with sudden fast grace notes leading into long sustained ones.

Band 5: (1) Braul -- The piper changes into a dance tune in 4/4 with A flat as a fundamental tone, often with G flat, leading into it. This melody ends unexpectedly on G flat, which is heard as the 7th degree of the mode.

Band 6: Lament for dead husband -- In this bouzet the singers say:

"Speak, lips,
But my lips cannot speak
To thank God
For putting me to sleep."

This song employs a scale of D flat, E flat, F, G flat, A flat; D flat is the keynote; E flat is used for the semi-cadences. There is always an oriental-style short trill on the G flat.

Band 7: Lament for dead brother -- A bouzet in which the singer prays that the brother may return in a dream. There is the same scale as in cut 1, but here the tune fools one -- it comes down to a long E flat as though to a semi-cadence, then descends to a tiny, staccato full cadence on the D flat.

Band 8: (1) Hora -- This is the song of a girl asking to be given away in marriage to her beloved. The same scale is used as in cut 1, with the addition of a low A flat, and a slight flattening of the F, so that F becomes a neutral third in relation to the keynote D flat. The neutral third is neither major nor minor, but just halfway between the outside perfect fifth.

Band 9: Lament for the dead -- A bouzet sung by a professional wailer, with pipe accompaniment. A low woman's voice sings a primitive-style melody on the tones D flat, E flat, G flat and A flat, with F sometimes as an alternate to E flat. A tiny flute embroiders the same melody an octave higher with many arabesques, and with ornamental flaps of pitch at the end of some sustained tones. There are intermittent flashes of sound from a bass voice, sometimes just in vocalise, sometimes sung while blowing into a low pipe. The bass-drone tone usually remains on a low D flat, but sometimes, when the woman's voice is on E flat, he shifts to the A flat below. The practice of singing into a pipe is very primitive, and this music as a whole gives little indication of outside influences.

*Word translations by Bernard Cehan, Harold Courlander - Editor, Moses Asch - Production Director