

CONSTANTIN BRĂILOIU AND HIS COLLECTION OF ROMANIAN FOLKLORE AT GENEVA ETHNOGRAPHY MUSEUM¹

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Abstract: Constantin Brăiloiu (1893 – 1958) is a well-known Romanian scientist, collector and researcher of Romanian folklore, founder of the folklore archive in Bucharest. He introduced the teaching of musical folklore at the Bucharest Conservatory and began the systematic collection of pieces of folk music in different Romanian regions. He spent the last years of his life in Geneva. Here, in the Geneva Ethnography Museum, he collected an extensive collection of folk music from different nations. This collection consists of his own materials and that of his colleagues. At present, the Constantin Brăiloiu sound recording collections are in the public domain and published on the museum's website. In this way, unique folkloric creations, recorded in the distant 1930 – 1940s, are available for listening today from anywhere in the world. Of course, the scientific works of contemporary researchers can be based on these materials.

Keywords: Constantin Brăiloiu, Romanian folklore, Geneva Ethnography Museum, Constantin Brăiloiu sound recording collections

One of the most significant figures in Romanian ethnomusicology is Constantin Brăiloiu (13 August 1893 – 20 December 1958), a collector and researcher of Romanian folklore, the founder of the Folklore Archive attached to the Union of Romanian Composers. He was born in Bucharest, into an aristocratic family that came from the Oltenia region.

Brăiloiu originally studied to be a composer, and the first period in his creative and scholarly biography (1911 – 1918) is associated with that field.

The second period (1918 – 1943) was marked by undertakings aimed at developing the Romanian school of composition. Simultaneously, he embarked on his own independent research, expeditionary and educational activities. The systematic collection of folklore was necessary at that time to thematically enrich the works of composers.

In 1920, on the initiative of George Enescu, one of the most prominent Romanian composers, the Union of Romanian Composers was formed. Brăiloiu became its first secretary and continued in that post until 1943. It is noteworthy that it was under the auspices of the Union of

¹ I would like to thank Irina Teplova, under whose guidance I studied the materials of the Geneva Ethnographic Museum when I was a student at the St. Petersburg Conservatory.

Composers that in 1928 Constantin Brăiloiu established the Folklore Archive, which he would also oversee until 1943. The creation of the archive served as the impetus for the systematic collection and study of examples of musical folk culture in all parts of the country. The first expeditions to Romanian villages (to Fundu Moldovei in Bukovina, from 1928; then Drăguș in Transylvania, from 1929; and Runcu in Oltenia, from 1930) took place under the leadership of the sociologist Dimitrie Gusti (1880 – 1955; a Romanian sociologist, historian, philosopher and social reformer).

In 1921, Brăiloiu began teaching the history of music at the Bucharest Conservatory (now the National University of Music Bucharest – Universitatea națională de Muzică București). In 1933 he managed to introduce a new discipline to the curriculum, the study of folk musical creativity, which would later be made a compulsory subject.

That same period also saw him engaged in a variety of other tasks – editing his own first research papers, editing music textbooks (jointly with the composer Ion Croitoru) and translating Béla Bartók's musicological works.

His first important publications – *Outline of a Course in Musical Folklore* (1931) and *On the Dirges of the Village of Drăguș* (1932), both enthusiastically approved by Béla Bartók (Барток 1959: 43–45) – stand out for their innovative methods and detailed analysis of the material. They were followed by many other works on such diverse subjects as rhythm, the scales of the folksong and the characteristics of versification.

The start of the third period (1943 – 1958) was bound up with the decision to leave his homeland due to the difficult political situation. In 1943, Constantin Brăiloiu was appointed cultural advisor to the Romanian embassy in Berne. The following year, together with Eugène Pittard, then the director of Geneva's Ethnography Museum, he founded the International Archives of Folk Music in that city, becoming their head for the remainder of his days.

In this last period of his life, thanks to his own outstanding erudition, knowledge of the extensive material and the latest achievements in contemporary folklore studies, the scholar managed to reach erudite conclusions at the highest level. In the works from this time, he does not restrict himself to the description and characterization of phenomena, but seeks to penetrate their essence, to uncover the laws of creativity that he thoroughly studied and systematized (Comișel 1967: 5–13).

The Significance of Constantin Brăiloiu's Works for 20th Century Ethnomusicology

The scholar made a tremendous contribution to the preservation of folk music. He collected a significant number of tunes across different

regions of Romania: over 8.000 audio recordings, supplemented by transcriptions in musical notation. The rich body of material that he assembled through great efforts and with the help of his associates was systematized and classified using his own personal method (Comișel 1967: 10). The stocks of the “International Collection of Folk Music Recordings” in Geneva comprised forty 78 rpm phonograph records, now reissued on CDs. His most significant writings were compiled in the 1973 book *Problèmes d’ethnomusicologie*, which is considered a classic work of folk music research.

Constantin Brăiloiu also has to his credit the study of such genres of Romanian folklore as the *doina* and the lamentation. He was among the first to give a scholarly definition of the *doina*, characterizing the genre with regard to its musical patterns.

Besides that, he was the discoverer of a genre of ritual funeral songs that differ in principle from the lamentations to which the *doina* is akin. In a 1936 paper devoted to ritual funeral songs from Gorj County, Brăiloiu points out the error of categorizing all funeral vocal texts as lamentations.

Materials relating to the questionnaires that Brăiloiu devised have been published in his collected works under the heading “Issues of Methodology” (Brăiloiu 1981: 23–78).

The “Questionnaire on Folk Music” (Brăiloiu 1981: 23–32) allow us to form an idea of the demands that Brăiloiu had regarding the process of collecting folklore:

- the need to register information about the place and time of a recording, the collectors and the performers;
- ascertaining the existence of good performers of different ages and genders in a given locality; each question is followed by a column for indicating whether this comes from reliable informants (*informatori buni*);
- collection of data on which genres are most common in each locality (“actual” or “proper songs” (*cântece propriu-zis*), ballads, instrumental tunes, dances, songs for winter or some other time, the wedding and funeral repertoire, the herdsmen’s repertoire);
- registering the name used for a particular custom, song, dance, instrument etc.

The surveys covering weddings and funerals contain questions and answers which make a reconstruction of all stages of the ceremony possible. Besides that, Brăiloiu also suggests several potential alternative answers, evidently so as to strike up a conversation with the interviewee and establish contact.

The questionnaires that Brăiloiu devised are a vital tool for collectors heading off to some place unknown to them. They enable them to gather

general information about all aspects of traditional life, to obtain data about the musical forms existing in that locality and help to guide conversations with folk music performers along the most productive lines.

The Brăiloiu Collection at the Musée d’ethnographie de Genève in the context of the formation of Romanian ethnomusicology

The formation of the Brăiloiu Collection is an important part of the history of the evolution of Romanian ethnomusicology in the first half of the 20th century.

The collection (Le Fonds Brailoiu) is kept at the Musée d’ethnographie de Genève (Geneva Ethnography Museum or MEG) and is published on the museum’s website. A search for materials within the collection can be carried out by inputting keywords corresponding to various categories into a search engine: name of country, ethnic group, musical instrument and genre. The published recordings available for listening have been digitized from the phonograph records.

There are 389 files representing Romanian folklore in Brăiloiu’s recordings. A small number of the recordings are duplicated. Discounting those leave a total of 372. (Recordings of Romanian folklore have been found in the sets of materials for the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, when those are entered as the “country” in the search engine.) The audio files are grouped in 147 different folders, each of which contains between one and eight samples. A folder will be assigned a serial number such as HR19-1/1, while a file within it might be designated HR19-1/1-A1. The accompanying metadata include the following categories: country, region, village(s), genre(s), details of the performers, site of storage and collection. Romanian territories are represented in the stocks by materials from practically all regions: Bessarabie, Moldova, Bukovina, Maramureş, Transylvania, Banat, Oltenia, Muntenia and Dobrogea.

Below is an example of the description of the contents of a folder:

HR19-1/1

| (in French) | | (in English) | |
|---------------|--------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| Support | disque 78 tours | Medium | 78 rpm record |
| Pays | Roumanie | Country | Romania |
| Region | Olténie, district de Mehedinți | Region | Oltenia, Mehedinți County |
| Localite | Izverna | Locality | Isverna |
| sub-continent | Europe orientale | Subcontinent | Eastern Europe |
| Continent | Europe | Continent | Europe |

| | | | |
|----------------|--|----------------------|--|
| Titre | [Constantin Brailoiu: Europe – Roumanie] | Title | [Constantin Brailoiu: Europe – Romania] |
| Interprète | Maria Tarfaloaga; | Performer | Maria Tarfaloaga; |
| | Maria Mojnean | | Maria Mojnean |
| Genre | Rituel funéraire; doîna proprement dite complainte | Genre | Funeral ritual; Mourning doina |
| Instrument | Voix | Instrument | Voice |
| Collection | Collection Brailoiu | Collection | Brailoiu Collection |
| Édition | Société des Compositeurs Roumains (SCR) | Publisher | Union of Romanian Composers |
| lieu d'édition | Bucarest | Place of publication | Bucharest |
| Production | Columbia | Production | Columbia |
| Collectage | Constantin Brailoiu / Bucarest, 13.9.1937 | Recording made by | Constantin Brailoiu / Bucharest, 13.9.1937 |

Descriptions of audio files from this folder:

HR19-1/1-A1 Al sulitii = Song of the Pine (Tree)

HR19-1/1-A2 Mult as vrea sa mai traesc

The archive also reflects the genre diversity of musical forms within Romanian folklore. The audio recordings include *doinas*, “actual” or “proper songs” (*cântece propriu-zise* in Romanian), ballads, wedding songs, funeral ritual songs, lamentations, calendar-related folklore, and *lăutari* music that occupies an intermediate position between the rural and urban traditions.

The availability of such a resource undoubtedly allows people located anywhere in the world to acquaint themselves with the diverse and unique recordings made in the 1930s and '40s. Present-day researchers from different countries are able to draw upon these materials.

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КОНСТАНТИН БРАИЛОЈ И НЕГОВАТА ЗБИРКА НА РОМАНСКИ ФОЛКЛОР ВО ЖЕНЕВСКИОТ ЕТНОГРАФСКИ МУЗЕЈ

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Резиме

Во трудот е претставена кратка биографија на Константин Браилој (1893 – 1958) којшто е познат научник, собирач и истражувач на романскиот фолклор. Последните години од животот ги поминал во Женева и како резултат на неговото работење, во Женевскиот етнографски музеј се наоѓа обемна колекција на народна музика од различни народи, меѓу кои и народна музика од Романија. Во моментот, на веб-страницата на Музејот се објавени збирките со звучните записи собрани од овој истражувач. Пребарувањето на материјалите во колекцијата може да се изврши со внесување на клучни зборови што одговараат на различни категории во пребарувачот: име на земја, етничка група, музички инструмент, жанр, итн. Има 389 аудиодатотеки што го претставуваат романскиот фолклор, групирани во 147 папки. Секоја папка ги содржи следните податоци: земја, регион, села, жанр(и), информации за изведувач итн. Оваа колекција ја одразува жанровската разновидност на музичките форми во романскиот фолклор. Достапноста до ваков тип материјали, несомнено им овозможува на истражувачите и на заинтересираните ширум светот да се запознаат со народната музика од различните народи, преку разновидните и уникатни снимки, направени во триесеттите и четириесеттите години од 20 век.