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► **To cite this version:**

Victor A. Stoichiță. To Bark or Not to Bark? On Familiarity, “Field”, and Speranța Rădulescu’s Recordings. *Musicology Today*, 2022, 13/3 (51), pp.225-242. hal-04297485

HAL Id: hal-04297485

<https://hal.parisnanterre.fr/hal-04297485v1>

Submitted on 21 Nov 2023

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Musicology Today

Journal of the National University of Music Bucharest

Issue 3 (51) July-September 2022

Title: To Bark or Not to Bark? On Familiarity, “Field”, and Speranța Rădulescu’s Recordings

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Source: Musicology Today: Journal of the National University of Music Bucharest / Volume 13 / Issue 3 (51) / July-September 2022, pp 225-242

Link to this article:

musicologytoday.ro/51/MT51studiesStoichita.pdf

How to cite this article: Victor A. Stoichiță, “To Bark or Not to Bark? On Familiarity, ‘Field’, and Speranța Rădulescu’s Recordings”, *Musicology Today: Journal of the National University of Music Bucharest*, 13/3 (51) (2022), 225-242.

Published by: Editura Universității Naționale de Muzică București

Musicology Today: Journal of the National University of Music Bucharest is indexed by EBSCO, RILM, ERIH PLUS, and CEEOL

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To Bark or Not to Bark? On Familiarity, “Field”, and Speranța Rădulescu’s Recordings*

Keywords: listening, enchantment, brass bands, ethnography, Moldavia

TO BARK OR NOT TO BARK?

A tape from the museum

For many years, one of my favorite brass band recordings was track 9 from side B of the tape *Fanfara din Zece Prăjini* [The Wind Band of Zece Prăjini].¹ The tape in the Ethnophonie series had been issued by Etno Pro and the Peasant Museum in Bucharest in 1994. I remember buying it in 1998, on my first visit to Romania after I had left it some twelve years earlier as a child.

I had visited the museum out of curiosity, with few expectations. The museum’s exhibition was nice, but didn’t leave much of an impression on me. It certainly had artistic taste, but I must admit that at that time I preferred the Village Museum, which I had visited a few days before. In the open air, with its wooden houses and churches from all over the country, its wells and its ponds, the Village Museum was more of a thrill for me, precisely because it looked less like a museum.

In line with that taste, my favorite Romanian music was at that time the “folkloric” kind recorded in Electrecord style: big string ensembles, virtuoso solos and strongly tonal harmonies. That was about all the Romanian music

* This paper was presented on May 28, 2022 at the “In Memoriam Speranța Rădulescu” section of the *International Musicological Symposium: Musical Creation and Exegesis* organized within the framework of the *Săptămâna Internațională a Muzicii Noi* [International Week of New Music].

¹ All media files referred to in this paper can be accessed at <https://svictor.net/speranta-field>.

There was the track listing with names and durations, the list of musicians, the recording credits, one general paragraph about the Ethnophonie collection and three paragraphs about the music itself. The last of these paragraphs explained the conditions in which the music had been recorded.

The wind band of Zece Prăjini was recorded at two different times: first, in 1989 at Iassy, in studio³ (with the assistance of Electrecord recording studios, to which we express our gratitude) and second, in 1993, in a small Gypsy village forgotten by the world, situated between the towns of Iassy and Roman in northern Moldova. There, in a yard full of women, neighbors, relatives, friends, dogs and geese, all as noisy as they could be, the repertoire presented on this tape was completed. The first suites are more carefully elaborated from all points of view (A/1, 2, 4, 6, 10, 11; B/1, 3, 5, 10, 11, 12) while the second offer a music which is more relaxed, more spontaneous, and more genuinely “peasant” (A/3, 5, 7, 8, 9; B/2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9).⁴

The contrast between the two sets was evident to the ears. Strong reverberation surrounded the brass band on the Iași recordings. It did not sound like the kind of reverberation that studio engineers carefully add to a “clean” recording. Rather, the band might have been recorded from some distance in a large hall, perhaps a concert hall. The village recordings, in contrast, conveyed a sense of intimacy. Occasionally one could hear some of the non-musical sounds mentioned on the cover. The full brass band being a noisy ensemble, that could only happen in the few instants before or after the performance was actually finished. If there was any chatter while the full band played, it was plainly inaudible on the tape. But some tracks featured a smaller-sized ensemble, and there the music was more transparent to its “field”, as a kind of background.

Track B9 featured only two trumpets and a drum. At one point, a dog started to bark and continued for a while. To me, this was clearly *the* field recording of the album. Not only did the music sound “relaxed” and “natural”, as the liner notes had it, but the recording also conveyed a sense of life going on around the musicians. I could imagine the dog barking at them, like in a

³ The Romanian text stated “studio-like conditions” (*condiții de studio*), which is slightly more ambiguous.

⁴ I quote from the English version of the liner notes, translated by Carmen Mateiescu.

Kusturica movie. Or maybe it wanted to participate in the music? More probably, it was barking at a stranger entering the yard. (One could also hear voices starting to talk in the background.) In all events, the recording conveyed more than music, a glimpse of its social “field”. To me it also signaled a “relaxed” and “natural” way of recording, for which I admired its author, Speranța Rădulescu (whom I hadn’t yet met at that time).

The sentence in the liner notes that depicted the yard was lively but cryptic. What the band, its audience or the yard looked like; in what circumstances the musicians had played; what effect the performance had had: all of this was left to the listener’s imagination. One sentence, a few barks and some voices in the background were enough to convey a sense of “field”, at least for a benevolent listener like me.

The field recording as magical device

In 1996, Buda Records released the same recordings on CD in France, under the title *Fanfare paysanne de Zece Prăjini*.⁵ It is interesting to compare the presentation of the CD with that of the tape, as the recordings are the same (although in a slightly different order). The CD’s cover is, however, more elaborate than the tape’s.

Speranța had added a few paragraphs about the history of Moldavia, on the village of Zece Prăjini and about the general context of the music. Interestingly for our discussion, her text dropped the reference to the recording contexts. The last page stated simply, amongst other credits:

Recordings done in 1989 (Iași, concert hall of the Philharmonic Orchestra, analogical recordings) and 1993 (Zece Prăjini, open air performance, digital recording).⁶

The acoustic contrast remained just as conspicuous, of course, but on the CD it no longer appeared as “studio” versus “field”. The text explained that the band would play in many different contexts. The listener was free to consider all of them, including the Iași concert hall, as “fields”.

⁵ I was unaware of it when I bought the tape in 1998. In fact, I only found that record after I had started working with the brass bands in Zece Prăjini and was trying to gather all the documentation available. It was possibly Speranța herself who gave it to me, as I don’t remember having seen it on sale in the music shops which I used to visit in Paris.

⁶ The leaflet of the disk was bilingual French/English. Both versions were translations. I quote from Dominique Bach’s English translation.

The text also added some indications for specific tracks. There was nothing about my favorite recording, the *bătută* dance with the dog (track 6 on the disk). But for the previous one, also a *bătută* in a small group (clarinet, trumpet and drum), Speranța had written:

Peasant brass bands do not always play in full force. In case of small popular fetes people make do with smaller bands, like this one. What counts is that the *dobă* [drum] is there.

That recording (track 5) had clearly been played in the concert hall. The large reverberation in the acoustic trace left no doubt about it. But the text invited the reader to think of something different: the local unprivileged party where people “make do” with what they have in order to dance. That same description could also have fitted the next track, the *bătută* with the dog. There, though, it would have been less efficient. The dog, the background voices and the dry open-air resonance indicated clearly enough the familiar context. What needed explanation – or rather imaginary displacement, to the point of negation – was the very audible concert hall.

On the graphic side, the CD dropped Bernea’s drawing and added two images. The insert’s back cover showed a picture of the band playing in a backyard (Fig. 2 left). One could see a few trees, a fence, a house in the background (but no audience, human or otherwise animal). The shot was credited to Speranța herself. She had taken it from some distance, to capture the whole band. The blowers stood in performance position. They were dressed casually, as for a wet day in the village. Some wore gum boots. Some freshly ironed trousers still signaled their owner’s concern with visual appearance on that day. The faces in the shot are partially masked by the instruments. One player’s head is completely invisible behind his horn’s bell. Two others are largely hidden by their colleagues standing in front of them. Some musicians watch the camera, others look sideways. Their cheeks are inflated; they are visibly performing. A close look reveals two kids’ heads in the background between the trumpeters’ shoulders. On the whole, the shot looks natural and unstaged.

The front cover was a rather different photomontage (Fig. 2 right). It was credited to Max Jacot and Julie Sauter. At its center was a vintage picture of the band playing in uniform, as it used to do for the “artistic programs” of the nearby metallurgic plant during the communist regime. In the background the designers had added a kind of manor building, four or five floors high. There wasn’t anything like that in the region’s architecture, but graphically it

signaled high class and prestige. At the other end, right in the foreground at the musicians' feet, appeared two pigs and a rooster.



Fig. 2. Front and back covers of the CD *Fanfare paysanne de Zece Prăjini*, Buda Records, 1996.

Through the front cover's visual design, the musicians appeared suspended in time, with their heads in the world of urban elites and their feet on peasant soil. The montage was quite a good summary of the band's history, which, the liner notes explained, had evolved between military marching bands and village parties. But it was a montage, a graphic dream. The text which it summarized also led the reader to dream about ancient Moldavia, its land-owners and Roma slaves, about the Austro-Hungarian empire, communism, agriculture, rural traditions and barnyard animals. That dream-like quality suggested a specific way of listening to the record. It was not just about the music. It was about an acoustic trace which purportedly enabled access to a wider "field". That "field" was at least as important as the listener's aesthetic enjoyment. But "field" did not mean the actual circumstances of the recordings. Text and image surrounded the acoustic trace, not so much as information but perhaps as injunctions or incantations. They cast a spell over the recording. Instead of testifying to the encounter between a microphone, a sound recordist and some musicians, the enchanted medium was intended as a quasi-magical device for accessing other worlds, other lives, other histories. The concert hall was an epiphenomenon, and in a way, so was the dog. The music itself was a token of something else, something that lay beyond the recording.

More than music?

Bernard Lortat-Jacob once told me that his mentor, Gilbert Rouget, had an entirely different way of recording in the open air. He would first go round the compound to ensure that dogs, chickens and perhaps noisy children were locked up or kept far away from the recording spot. The recording had to reflect good music, in high fidelity. It could include musical participation from the audience (clapping hands, sounds of dancing), but it had to be music.

The paradox is that Rouget was famous for teaching, at the same time, that “music is always much more than music” (Rouget 1995: 78; 1996: 7). By that he meant, after Alan Merriam (1964) and others, that music was a social fact which should be studied as such. But Rouget added that in many (and possibly all) ethnographic settings, “music” could not easily be set apart from other aspects of social life. He didn’t mention explicitly Mauss’ concept of the “total social fact”, but others made the connection (see Martin 2020). Bernard Lortat-Jacob pursued and theorized Rouget’s motto (Lortat-Jacob 1997). It became a hallmark of the school of ethnomusicology at the Musée de l’Homme, and of its teaching at the University of Nanterre (which Rouget had founded and which Lortat-Jacob directed for many years).

The team was clearly committed to the idea that music was just one facet of a whole network of social relations, from which it should not be severed. Rouget was still careful not to let barking dogs spoil his recordings, however. But Speranța, who visited the team regularly and had already collaborated with Lortat-Jacob, might have been happy of that dog’s intervention during her recording in Zece Prăjini. First of all, she loved dogs. But more importantly, she had developed strong ideas about what constituted a living tradition.

HOW TO RECORD A BRASS BAND

There is more than one way to record a brass band, of course. Speranța’s tape and disk already demonstrated two. In 2001, three years after I had encountered the brass band on tape, I started to visit Zece Prăjini regularly. I lived there for months in a row, hanging around with the local musicians. They took me to the weddings and other parties where they performed, and also to the local studios where they sometimes recorded. I recorded them myself as well on many occasions. I was doing “fieldwork”, and quite officially so: I was a PhD candidate in ethnomusicology, supervised by Bernard Lortat-Jacob and Speranța Rădulescu, with a contract and a grant from Paris Nanterre University. But the more time I spent in the “field”, the more difficult it became for me to distinguish “field” from “non-field” recordings.

Studio recordings

Already in 2001, the same musicians whom Speranța had recorded went to a studio in Roman, the nearby town. There, they recorded the first of a series of five CDs titled *Fanfara Speranța: Vol. [1-5]*.⁷ Studio Alidor was run by Doru Ciobanu, a Romanian man in his fifties. Its entrance was a shop with some audio equipment and recorded media for sale. In the backroom was the studio itself. Half of that space was sound-proofed, the other half, separated by a large window, was the control room. It was crowded with a huge mixing console and many other machines. As far as I could tell, the equipment was quite good, but Doru said that he was not entirely sure how to operate it. Occasionally a former TV engineer came in to help him with the recordings.

The mixing stage was the most interesting part, ethnographically speaking. Between 2001 and 2010, the band recorded five disks at Studio Alidor. Each of them sound significantly different from the others. Sometimes bass frequencies dominate and the band seems powerful, albeit perhaps muffled. Sometimes higher frequencies resonate, and the band sounds bright and sharp. Sometimes the melody is clear; sometimes the harmony is most conspicuous. There are various amounts of reverb, and of different kinds.

The musicians were occasionally present during the early stages of the mixing, but then they always left it to Doru. Sometimes the result satisfied them. Sometimes they moaned that Doru had done too many “of his experiments”. The recordings were sold on the local market, often by Doru himself. He knew from experience that his customers’ playback equipment was quite unpredictable, which made it difficult for him to strike a balance in sound. But otherwise, he was confident in his understanding of the local market and its trends.

A sure fact, for Doru and for the musicians, was that nobody would have bought Speranța’s recordings on that market. Whether they were made in “studio” or in “live” conditions, they sounded entirely unappealing to local custom-

⁷ The complete title was *Fanfara „Speranța”* [in conspicuous font] *de la 10 Prăjini condusă de Costică Panțiru* [in smaller letters]; [Fanfara Speranța from 10 Prăjini Led by Costică Panțiru]. The musicians in these *Fanfara Speranța* recordings are roughly the same as those whom Speranța had recorded under the name *Fanfara din Zece Prăjini*. It was impossible for them to use that name on the local market, however. There were four or five brass bands at that time in the village, all of which would happily have claimed that they were *the* brass band of Zece Prăjini. A minimum of etiquette required that they used different names when recording, at least for the local market. The musicians with whom Speranța worked named their band *Fanfara Speranța*, because they considered Speranța to be their manager. Half-jokingly, they also told me that they had great hopes (*speranțe*) she would open the gates to them for more contracts on stage and abroad.

ers. These were mostly “peasants” in the sense that they lived in rural settings where familial agriculture was key. But they were no longer “peasants” in the sense of the Peasant Museum, or of Speranța’s liner notes to the 1994 tape.

Conversely, the Studio Alidor recordings did not circulate amongst the urban elites who bought Ethnophonie tapes or Buda Records CDs. When I played the Alidor tracks to my friends, in Bucharest or in Paris, they instantly grinned. They used words like “artificial” or “kitsch” to describe something that they found quite excessive, in the music or in the sound (they could not decide). That impression was only reinforced when they saw the covers.

The leaflets of the Alidor CDs consisted of one sheet of paper, printed in color and folded in two. Each of its two halves was fully covered by one picture of the band (printed in color on the outside, and repeated in black and white on the inside). One of these pictures invariably showed the whole band posing with their instruments (but not playing them). They were surrounded by nature, standing on grass, with trees and sometimes hills in the background. They had shaved, their hair was combed and they wore their best clothes for the occasion. (On one of the CDs they also wore a set of folkloric costumes which Doru lent to them.) The other picture was invariably a photomontage. The band’s members were photographed individually, and their portraits were assembled over a vividly colored background. For *Fanfara Speranța: Vol. 1*, this consisted of blue skies, some hills and fluorescent yellow flowers (Fig. 3). On other disks, there was simply a non-figurative gradient of colors. What mattered in this photomontage was the individual portraits. There was no text on the cover, except for the title, the credits, the track listing, and the leader’s phone number.



Fig. 3. Front and back covers of the CD *Fanfara „Speranța” de la 10 Prăjini: Vol. 1*, S. C. Alidor S. R. L., 2001.

None of my urban friends were able to listen to an entire Alidor CD in one sitting. They grew bored and irritable after a few tracks, and asked me to change the music. The first volume, recorded in 2001, was perhaps the quickest to be ejected from the CD player. *Bătuta lui Ștefan*, track 4 on *Fanfara Speranța: Vol. 1*, illustrates how a dance tune was recorded for the rural Romanian market in 2001. There are significant differences with the ethnologist's "field" recordings:

- the Alidor recordings always include the whole band. The ethnologist's recording might feature the whole band, but, as mentioned earlier, several tracks are played by smaller ensembles;
- on the Alidor recordings, the band plays throughout the whole piece. In the ethnologist's recordings, individual instruments might rest occasionally for a second or two before resuming play. This is normal practice at live performances;
- the Alidor recordings distribute the instruments in a rather peculiar way over the left/right stereo image: clarinets and trumpets are placed at the extremes; big tubas slightly left; small tubas slightly right. The brass band could never play like this in a live performance: the harmonic section needs to stand close together, and so does the melodic section. The ethnologist's recordings always reflect the live disposition, whether they were done in "studio" conditions at the concert hall or in the backyard;
- in the Alidor studio, every instrument has its own microphone and its own track on the mixer. The ethnologist's recordings sound as if they were recorded with a single pair of microphones (or a stereo one) from some distance. The distance is particularly audible in the Iași concert hall recordings. When the ethnologist describes them as "studio"-like (on the tape's cover), she doesn't mean that they have the clean sound of the studio, but rather that they were recorded "out of context". Although one could clearly hear the hall, it didn't appear as a "context" that deserved description;
- Alidor recordings have artificial reverberation added to them. A fair amount of reverberation can also be heard on the Ethnophonie/Electrecord "studio"-like recordings, but it probably comes from the room's natural acoustics, rather than from an effect added to the mix;
- Of course, no dogs bark and no people talk on Alidor's recordings, contrary to what happens on the ethnologist's "relaxed" backyard recordings.

Both kinds of recordings were commercialized, at an interval of a few years and for different markets. I mentioned that for the local rural market, the

sound of the brass band could vary significantly from one disk to the next. The same is true for the ethnographic recordings. However, an overall difference in recording style remains, and even untrained listeners can unmistakably differentiate a disk made by an ethnologist from one made by the local studio in Roman. So which one is the “field” recording?

The ethnologist *goes out in* “the field”. She arranges various recording contexts and the musicians play for her, at her initiative. She writes a beautiful text and maybe adds a photograph of the musicians at play. The musicians, on the other hand, *are in* “the field”. To some extent they *are* what the ethnologist calls “the field”. The ethnologist’s “field” has developed its own agency when it comes to recording. The musicians use local recording facilities. They don’t care to write text on the cover, but they care about being recognizable as individuals in the picture. They always wear their best clothes for the shot and never hold instruments to cover their faces. The leader’s phone number is inscribed on the cover. Like the ethnologist’s recording, the locally produced medium is also intended as a tool of enchantment. But this time, it targets the local peasant and popular urban audiences. It is also a “field” recording in the very immediate sense that it is part of the ethnologist’s “field”.⁸

Both recordings are commercial products. Not that any of them brought significant fortune to their respective producers. Speranța explained to me more than once how difficult it was to keep Ethnophonie’s finances afloat. Similarly, Doru Ciobanu told me how uncertain he was to cover his production expenses. The intellectual “elite” who bought Ethnophonie recordings could afford them, but their numbers were small. The rural masses whom Alidor studio targeted were poor. And virtually anyone in Romania knew how to copy a commercial disk or tape without having to pay for it.

Live(ly) recordings

One could say that Speranța’s recordings sound more “natural” than the ones made by Doru Ciobanu. They do indeed, inasmuch as they don’t use close-up mics and mixing effects. On the other hand, a performance like that recorded on track B9 of the tape (track 6 of the CD) is something quite rare. I mentioned that its relaxed playing style and lively ambiance made it a model of “field” recording to my ears. But after I had spent some time with the musicians, I realized that they didn’t consider two trumpets and a drum (and a barking dog) a “proper” ensemble at all.

⁸ For a deeper analysis, see Jonathan Larcher’s discussion of the “ecology of images”, both visual and audiovisual, in the Roma neighborhood of Dițești (Larcher 2018).

Speranța hinted at that in writing, for the CD cover, that “In case of small popular fetes, people *make do* [my emphasis] with smaller bands, like this one”. But even this was an overstatement. The musicians explained to me that it was tiring and uncomfortable for them to play at length without a harmonic section, which they called the “back” (*spate*). A couple of tubas or an accordion could make for a minimal “back”. But without a harmonic “back”, no one would accept a contract for even the smallest party. Having to explain to a bunch of inebriated guests that one is exhausted and needs to take a rest was inconceivable. Of course, it was possible to play a tune or two with only a couple of trumpets and a drum (even without the drum, even with one solo trumpet). But this would only ever happen at a rehearsal (not quite a performance) or at someone’s request (the ethnologist’s perhaps). So despite the “relaxed” recording conditions and the very lively flavor of the performance, tracks like B9 were by no means the “real” thing. The track represented neither how the band sounded usually, nor how it “should” have sounded by local standards. Generally, it is safe to assume that Alidor recordings were closer representations of local aesthetic ideals, since they targeted the local market, and the musicians actually copied and listened to them (whereas I never saw copies of the Ethnophonie releases circulate in the village or its neighborhood).

The dog was another issue. I would have loved to make field recordings in the village with barking dogs and noisy children. But musicians never played spontaneously in their backyards. And when I asked them to record, *they* were the ones who locked the dogs and the chicken away before I turned on the microphone. They didn’t mind me recording their music with some live “ambiance”. It was simply that the “proper” ambiance, according to them, was that of a party.

Live (or livelier?) performances

Speranța Rădulescu recorded many professional musicians on many occasions, but she rarely issued recordings of them playing at the parties where they used to earn their living.⁹ On the one hand, she had strong views against folklorization and against folkloric recordings.¹⁰ On the other hand, one might

⁹ A careful inventory for which I am grateful to her close collaborator Costin Moisil reveals a dozen tracks recorded at live parties. They appear on tapes and disks devoted to Transylvania, Maramureș and Oaș county. In Moldavia and Walachia, there might be only one such recording (made at a wedding and issued on the tape/CD *Mahalaua de altădată/Les Faubourgs d’antan*). As I recall, Speranța was keen to record anywhere and by any means. But the recordings which she selected for publication were mostly *not* the live recordings made at the parties where the music was usually performed.

¹⁰ Her detailed analysis of Romanian folklorism and how it affected traditional musical life can be found in Rădulescu 2002.

guess that she shared with Rouget (and many others) an ideal of “technical perfection” which derived from the standards of the studio: a place designed to capture only music and what was directly relevant to it.

The barking dog, in that respect, was something of a survivor.¹¹ Speranța usually sought other ways to strike a balance between technical “quality” and liveliness. To regain some acoustic variety, for instance, over the course of a disk she would ask the band to play in smaller ensembles. Or she would ask the musicians to perform dance shouts (normally a prerogative of the dancers for whom the musicians play).

The result certainly sounds livelier than a recording at the local studio.¹² But live performances are much messier than that. The dancers make all kinds of sounds: they whistle, they shout, they yell, and not necessarily in rhyming couplets. The musicians move their bells around, which affects the sound spectrum very audibly. Moreover, in the heat of the event, they could attempt daring paraphrases on the main theme. These don’t sound necessarily “good” when playing back the recording (at least not by local standards), but they are part of an emphatic interaction which occurs on the spot between musicians and dancers.¹³

FIELDWORK AND COSMOPOLITANISM

What early ethnomusicologists like Béla Bartók or Constantin Brăiloiu called “going out in the field” referred to the act of going to the countryside in order to make recordings and gather information about peasant customs. Their “field recordings” were never made in the usual circumstances where the

¹¹ Costin Moisil, Speranța’s close collaborator, recalled that she would narrate the following episode. Adrian Enescu, the sound editor of the 1994 tape, was listening with his headphones. She didn’t know what portion of the recording he was listening to. At one point, he moaned the question: “Should I cut your dog?” Speranța loved her own dog, and refused energetically. This humorous anecdote surely does not tell the whole story of the recording, but the fact that the dog had made it to disk was exceptional enough, in Speranța’s own eyes, to deserve a story.

¹² Compare, for instance, the two recordings of the same piece at <https://svictor.net/speranta-field>: *Hora cu strigături* was made by the ethnologist (track 3 on the CD *Peasant Brass Bands from Moldavia: Zece Prăjini*, Ethnophonie CD 002, 2000). *Hora lui Branea* was recorded by the same musicians at the local studio (track 8 on the CD *Fanfara Speranța: Vol. 1*, Alidor, 2001).

¹³ Contrast the two recordings in the previous note with *Sârba lui Didic*, also available at <https://svictor.net/speranta-field>. This is roughly the same kind of tune, performed by the same musicians, but for actual dancers during a village fair in Buruienești. The track *Bătută la Buruienești* serves a similar comparison with the *bătută* performances described earlier.

music was performed. Early recording equipment was hardly portable, and even once it became so, the musicians had to stand close to the recording horn (later to the microphone). The recording duration was limited (roughly three minutes for a phonograph cylinder). And of course, the medium cost money, so the performers and their tunes were assessed for artistic and documentary quality before the ethnologist went to the expense of recording them.

Speranța's recording equipment was, of course, far more permissive. It enabled her to record outdoors, for instance, and for longer periods. Perhaps because of her numerous contacts with anthropological trends in ethnomusicology (like those of the Musée de l'Homme in Paris), Speranța paid considerably more attention to the recording context than did most other people dealing with traditional music in Romania. Still, as with her predecessor ethnomusicologists, her recordings were hardly ever made in the circumstances where the music was "traditionally" performed. This is particularly salient with her recordings of professional musicians (*lăutari*).

There is more to this, though, than an implicit continuation of earlier recording practices. Speranța's recordings also reveal a facet of what musical "tradition" had already become in Romania at that time. Playing at a scholar's demand was no longer exceptional, especially for professional musicians. They were hired, after all, in a wide variety of settings: the typical weddings, christenings and funerals, but also village fairs, political rallies, night clubs, restaurants, TV shows, all kinds of stage concerts in Romania and abroad. Concert halls and backyards were just two more places where recordings of traditional music could be produced in Romania. They were part of the "field" where popular music lived. Some genres of popular music, like the folkloric ensembles, ended up living mostly in the studio and on stage. Other genres, like the brass bands, slowly retreated towards the backyards and the ethnologists' recorders.

One might argue that "field" recording, at least in ethnomusicology, suggests fieldwork. Modern fieldwork implies in turn a certain kind of intimacy. It is about close relations with people with whom one lives, whom one admires, who get on one's nerves; relations that might be pleasurable or frustrating, but strong relations anyway. At the same time, fieldwork is about a certain kind of distance. It is a critical approach to things that might seem obvious to you or to people with whom you work. Critical thought and distance are of particular importance when one has to study things and people with whom one is already familiar by other means. That is sometimes called "doing anthropology at home". Feeling at home everywhere and, at the same time, not feeling at home anywhere is a cosmopolitan identity. It is also a privileged position from which to do anthropology.

Speranța Rădulescu had a special way of being a cosmopolitan. Intellectually, affectively and linguistically, she could be at home in Romania, but also in France, and possibly in other places as well. She was at home in a Gypsy village, in a Romanian cottage, at the New Europe College in Bucharest, at the Musée de l’Homme in Paris . . . But chronologically, aesthetically and morally, she expressed feelings of displacement and longing. She was concerned with music, people and social relations that, she felt, were passing. Things “of yore”. Her liner notes for the 1994 tape, for instance, end on a typically nostalgic note:

This cassette represents the first edited recording dedicated exclusively to the village wind band music of Moldavia, caught at the beginning of a superb but inexorable decline.

I suppose that no one who had the chance to work with Speranța could forget her often tender but always frank criticisms. In a way, she remained an outsider to all those contexts: never quite in academia, never quite in the world of classical music, never quite in long fieldwork stays either. There are many Rom and Romanian musicians whom she knew very well. She was familiar with their personal lives and family stories. But to the best of my knowledge, she never lived *with* any of them for more than a month. Even after years of collaboration, to them she remained “Mrs Speranța” (*Doamna Speranța*). And while many of them had a sincere and profound attachment to her, they would not consider her quite part of the family, to the point, for instance, where they would let the kids annoy her, tell bawdy jokes about her or let her wash the dishes, as other ethnologists have experienced in “the field”. Her way of being a cosmopolitan was perhaps less geographical than temporal and spiritual.

FINAL THOUGHTS

There is more than one way to do field recordings. Dogs can bark or be locked away. There is also more than one way to listen to field recordings. One can listen for the “field”: that set of social relations and cultural representations that surround the music and give it its meaning for those who experience it first hand. One can also listen for the sound recordist in the field.

In that respect, it is difficult to hear Gilbert Rouget in his recordings. In fact, it is difficult to hear the sound recordist in most ethnomusicological recordings. Steven Feld theorized the notion of “dialogic editing”, a process of increased collaboration between the people being recorded and the recordist (Feld 1987; Feld and Carlyle 2013). But even in Feld’s recordings, one does

not actually *hear* any dialogue. It took his knowledge, his cultural intimacy and his editing skills to make such a record possible, but the result represents *Voices of the Rainforest or Bosavi: Rainforest Music from Papua New Guinea*, not Feld's voice.

Speranța's recordings, on the other hand, are not dialogic at all. Quite the contrary: she had strong opinions about how music should have sounded. More than once, she clashed with the musicians on this. In many of Speranța's recordings, one can hear much of Speranța. By this I mean not only her aesthetic choices. In the sound quality, in the barking dogs, in the way she made musicians play *for her*, there was familiarity, intimacy, directness, casualness. And there was also distance, nostalgia, dreaming: *her* distance from the present, *her* nostalgia for a different rural world, *her* dreams of times gone by and of which she sought to retain the last musical glimpses. She clearly articulated it, as in a 2013 interview where she explained that her work as a field recordist was about "getting inside the soul of an obsolescent humanity. A world that we lose – and this is how it happens, we don't have any other choice" (Balabas 2013). The more time passed, the more Speranța's "field" became "of yore".

I think that it is difficult today (at least it is for me) to listen to those recordings without listening to Speranța as well. In a way, all of her recordings are moments of a "field", to which she herself very much contributed. I'm not saying that this field was her fabrication. It existed without her, but it led a sort of parallel life. It took Speranța to access that realm.

Some people in Romania have a "personal" tune (see Bonini Baraldi 2013). I don't know whether Speranța had something like that in any of the repertoires that she cherished. But she certainly had her own personal *field*, which she enjoyed sharing with others, but which was significantly her own. I don't have much of a conclusion to offer here. But I like to imagine that the field where she is now is at least as beautiful as the one that lives in her recordings.

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