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SPECTACULAR POLITICS AND EVERYDAY PERFORMANCE: TRACING MUSIC FROM CEAUŞESCU'S ROMANIA TO MULTICULTURAL AMERICA

by

BENJAMIN MILLS DUMBAULD

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Music in partial
Fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
The City University of New York

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Spectacular Politics and Everyday Performance: Tracing Music from Ceauşescu's Romania to Multicultural America

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Benjamin Mills Dumbauld

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Music in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

Spectacular Politics and Everyday Performance: Tracing Music from Ceauşescu's Romania to Multicultural America

By

Benjamin Mills Dumbauld

Adviser: Professor Jane Sugarman

Drawing from fieldwork conducted throughout the United States and Canada, this dissertation examines the continued performance of socialist-era music within the Romanian-American community. It addresses why a community largely made up of people who sought to leave the country during the authoritarian regime of Nicolae Ceauşescu continue to perform music tied to that period by tracing the historical performance and reception of multiple genres, ranging from traditional peasant music to folk rock. The dissertation begins by examining the nationalization of Romania's music industry under the early socialist regime (1944-1965), and locates the difficulties Communist Party members confronted in delineating a clear aesthetic policy for the newly socialist country. It then introduces ways the Ceauşescu regime in particular used mass performance as a means of cultivating a sense of nationalist and socialist subjectivity within the populace, and argues that this project ultimately failed to maintain Ceauşescu's cult of personality due to the ideological contradictions that developed during the era. These contradictions allowed citizens the opportunity to approach the music at mass performance in a polysemous fashion.

After discussing the development of these genres during the socialist era in Romania, the dissertation then turns to accounts on the performance of the music within the Romanian American community. First, it considers the extent to which the performance of the music acts

nostalgically for Romanian-Americans, especially in comparison to the ways nostalgia may be musically manifested in postsocialist Romania. Second, it interrogates the notion that these socialist-era genres act to create a sense of cultural solidarity or diasporic consciousness within the community, by examining first how the performance of this music serves to separate the community along historically-developed class lines, and second how assimilation processes act to disrupt any sense of ethnic or national solidarity. The dissertation concludes by arguing that the ideological contradictions that came out of the Ceauşescu era granted socialist-era music a polysemous character, which in turn greatly allowed their perpetuation within the immigrant community. At the same time, the social environment during the Ceauşescu era, coupled with assimilation processes within the immigrant community and continuing class divisions, also contributed to the immigrant community's difficulty in establishing strong communal bonds.

Dedicated to my wife, Angel Flesher,

who in this endeavor took the far greater leap of faith

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

James Baldwin asserted that “one writes out of one thing only—one’s own experience.” If nothing else, what follows is a testament to my own experience. Yet this experience was informed by the experiences of countless others, which I hope to have accounted for with grace and humanity. Most directly, I would like to thank all the musicians I worked with, and the Romanian American community as whole, who consistently welcomed me with warmth and enthusiasm. I would like to especially thank the members of the Roadrunners, without whom this dissertation might never have taken shape. My immense thanks to Cristina Dragomir—if there is any voice in this work outside of my own, it is hers. Thanks to the community of mentors and teachers that helped guide me: most notably Jane Sugarman and Margaret Beissinger, as well as Peter Manuel, Jonathan Shannon, Steven Blum, Katherine Verdery, Martin Daughtry, Diana Taylor, Edward Miller, Richard Alba, and Robert Courtney Smith. Thanks goes to those without whom my academic life would have quickly fallen apart: Tonisha Alexander and the staff at Mina Rees interlibrary loan office. Thanks to Ana Maria Campos and the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, for their continual support and understanding as I negotiated being both a student and a civil servant. Thanks to Jeffrey Taylor and the Baisley Powell Elebash Fund for their support. Finally, thanks to my wife Angel and my son Nicholas, for finding a way to constantly transmute my exhaustion into joy.

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INTRODUCTION

Bucharest, Queens

Battle Songs from a Church Basement

In early March 2015, I found myself with a group of Romanian musicians in the basement of a small Orthodox Church in Ridgewood, Queens. I had met two of these musicians a few months prior at a Christmas party hosted by a local benevolent organization that serves Romanian immigrants in the tri-state area. After their performance of *colinde*, or traditional Romanian winter carols, a mutual friend introduced me to them. Expressing my interest in both Romanian culture and in performing Romanian music, the musicians soon invited me to join the group as a percussionist. We soon called ourselves the Roadrunners.

Upon arriving at the Ridgewood church, we arranged our instruments—bass, electric guitar, vocal microphone, and assorted percussion—in a small corner of the basement, which on most Sundays served as the post-liturgy dining room for the congregation. We were not the headline act for this cold Sunday afternoon. Rather, we were serving as the backup band for Ovidiu Scridon, a Bucharest-based economist with a burgeoning career as a poet and singer-songwriter. Mircea, the guitarist of the Roadrunners who seemed to continually have a foot in the music scene in Romania, made the arrangements for this collaboration. By the time we entered the church, we had already performed multiple shows with Scridon throughout New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.

As parishioners meandered down the staircase, formed lines for the lunch buffet, and sat down to eat, we began. The set consisted mostly of Scridon's original songs, with well-known Romanian traditional and popular songs placed in sporadically. By the third or fourth song into the set, however, we all realized without any enunciation that something was amiss. The

audience members, who in our past experience were typically responsive and energetic towards Scridon's original music, seemed here to be rather indifferent and lethargic, clapping politely but quietly after each song, and then continuing to eat or, if finished with their meal, squirm in their chairs. Noticing this Scridon, an experienced and charismatic performer, decided to switch the formula by focusing on covers rather than his own compositions. As these traditional and popular song covers progressed—going from the joyous "Omul pădurii" ("Forest Man") to the sorrowful "Când s-o-mpărțit norocul" ("When Luck Was Handed Out") and "Rău mă dor ochii, mă dor" ("My Aching Eyes"), to the hopelessly saccharine children's song "O lume minunată" ("A Wonderful World")—the audience began to get more energetic, singing and clapping along.

The climax of the afternoon occurred with our performance of "Treceți Batalioane Române Carpații" ("Pass the Carpathians, Romanian Battalions"). Turning to me, Scridon signaled that I begin, and I started playing a lilting 12/8 march pattern on the *cajón*, a wooden box drum from Peru. Before he began singing the crowd was aware of what we were up to, and started clapping along. Full of militaristic triumph and with a conveniently built-in refrain at the end of each verse, the song almost demanded mass patriotic singing. The small basement in Ridgewood erupted with sound.

The Land of Leaves and Flowers

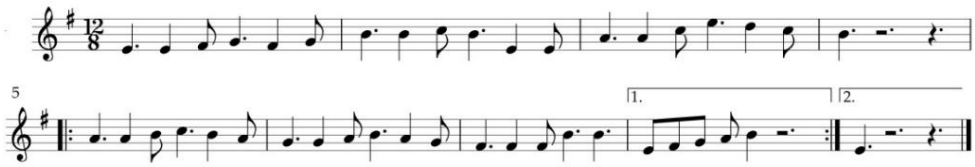
"Treceți Batalioane Române Carpații" has a fascinating history. The song is believed to have been written around the eve of Romania's entry into World War I in 1916, although the first historical record of its performance is traced to 1919, when it was sung by a men's choir (Ghisa 2009:163). The three verses thought to derive from this original version (figure 0.1, in bold) speak of soldiers saying farewell to their families and trekking to Ardeal (more commonly known in the West as Transylvania) to fight for the union of the region with the Romanian

kingdoms of Wallachia and Moldavia. This incursion into Transylvania was one of the first offensives made by the Romanian army upon entering World War I on the side of the Triple Entente, pursued in the hopes of wresting control of the contested region of Transylvania from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. While initially successful, the invasion ultimately ended disastrously, claiming 250,000 lives and the loss of three quarters of lands previously under Romanian rule to the Central Powers (Treptow 1996: 376).

However, the version of "Treceți Batalioane Române Carpații" so enthusiastically sung in the church basement in Queens was not the original, but an iteration that was created half a century later, during the socialist period in the 1970s and 1980s. The revival of the song can largely be credited to poet/political figure Adrian Păunescu, who with other poets added additional stanzas and made the song a standard part of Cenaclul Flacăra ("The Flame Literary Circle"), festivals Păunescu organized throughout the country. These mass gatherings of song and poetry, ripe with Romantic nationalist sentiment, became immensely popular during the socialist period and are remembered today as "our Woodstock" by many in the immigrant community.

We might say then that there are three versions of "Treceți Batalioane Române Carpații." The song began as a battle cry at the dawn of a military offensive that would culminate in almost complete defeat and the loss of thousands of lives. The second version re-introduced the song in a folk-rock setting that spoke to nationalist sentiment and the defense of Romania from external threats, whether from the East or West. Finally comes the third version I experienced: an iteration of the Păunescu version, sung with delight by Romanians in Queens.

Figure 0.1: Treceţi Batalioane Române Carpaţii ("Pass the Carpathians, Romanian Battalions")(Original lyrics in bold)



Un cântec istoric ne-aduce aminte Că fraţii în veci vor fi fraţi Un cântec de luptă bătrân ca Unirea Voi, compatrioţi, ascultaţi	A historical song reminds us That brothers will be brothers forever A song of a battle, as old as the Union Come, compatriots, listen
Treceţi, batalioane române, Carpaţii La arme cu frunze şi flori V-aşteaptă izbânda, v-aşteaptă şi fraţii Cu inima la trecători	**Go forth past the Carpathians, Romanian battalions Decorate your weapons with leaves and flowers Victory is awaiting you, brothers are also awaiting you With their hearts open**
Ardealul, Ardealul, Ardealul ne cheamă Nădejdea e numai la noi Sărută-ţi, copile, părinţii şi fraţii Şi-apoi să mergem la război	**Ardeal, Ardeal, Ardeal calls us Hope is only in us My child, kiss your parents and your siblings, And then let's go to war**
Nainte, 'nainte spre marea Unire Hotarul nedrept să-l zdrobim Să trecem Carpaţii, ne trebuie Ardealul De-o fi se ne-ngropăm de vii	**Go forward, forward to the great Union The unjust border will be crushed To pass the Carpathians, we need Ardeal Even if we will be buried alive**
Cu săbii făcură Unirea, ce inimi Spre Alba cu toţii mergeam Toţi oamenii ţării semnau întregirea Voinţa întregului neam	With swords they completed the Union, what courage! Towards Alba all of us moved Every compatriot signed for the Union The volition of the entire nation
Cu toţii eram regimente române Moldova, Muntenia, Ardeal Fireasca Unire cu patria-mumă Ne-a fost cel mai drept ideal	We were all Romanian regiments Moldavia, Muntenia, Ardeal The natural Union with our motherland It was to us the most just ideal
Aceasta-i povestea Ardealului nostru Şi-a neamului nostru viteaz Istoria-ntreagă cu lupte şi jerfe Trăieşte-n Unirea de azi	It is the story of our Ardeal And our brave people The entire history of struggle and sacrifices Lives on in today's Union

Dreptatea şi pacea veghează Carpaţii Şi ţara e frunze şi flori A noastră-i izbânda, ai noştri sunt fraţii Trăiască în veci trei culori	Justice and peace are protecting the Carpathians And the land is of leaves and flowers Victory is ours, the brothers are ours Long live the three colors [of the Romanian flag]
Vrem linişte-n ţară şi pace în lume Dar dac-ar veni vreun blestem Carpaţii şi fraţii sări-vor ca unul Urmând comandantul suprem	We want quiet in the country and peace in the world But if a curse should come Carpathians and brothers will jump as one Following the supreme commander
Treceţi, batalioane române, Carpaţii La arme cu frunze şi flori V-aşteaptă izbânda, v-aşteaptă şi fraţii Cu inima la trecători	Go forth/ by pass the Carpathians, Romanian battalions Decorate your weapons with leaves and flowers Victory is awaiting you, brothers are also awaiting you With their hearts open.

The Case for Postsocialist Nostalgia

"Treceți Batalioane Române Carpații" is but one example of a myriad of songs that developed in Romania during the socialist era (1944-1989) that the Romanian immigrant community continues to perform and receive enthusiastically. In fact, the vast majority of music I've experienced New York Romanians performing belong to genres which were greatly co-opted and, depending on one's outlook, corrupted by socialist ideology. The most significant of these genres are: *muzică populară*, a version of traditional peasant music that was arranged, staged, and mediated in accordance with the cultural policies of the socialist government in Romania; *muzică ușoară*, a light pop genre controlled by the state-owned recording industry; and *muzică folk*, a genre of contemporary folk and folk-rock music in the vein of Crosby, Stills, and Nash or Bob Dylan. In the 1970s and 1980s, the decades in which most of my interlocutors emigrated from Romania, these genres were often performed at large-scale spectacles intended to glorify Nicolae Ceaușescu, the final socialist leader of Romania who governed from 1965 to 1989, and legitimate the Communist Party that he led. As such, the government paid enormous amounts of money to develop the performances of the music, which included financing a vast network of amateur musical education programs and developing a highly competitive conservatory model for training virtuosi in art music.

The continuing popularity of these genres prompts interesting questions. Given the fact that the majority of Romanian musicians whom I interviewed left the country due to the near-totalitarian atmosphere of the Ceaușescu regime, the most pressing question may be: Why continue to perform and enjoy music so closely associated with a regime that one has fled? Put another way, why do members of this community, in a certain sense Cold War refugees, continue to be enamored with socialist-era music?

Perhaps the most immediate response one might offer to these questions relates to nostalgia: that the continued appreciation of this music is due simply to the fact that it signifies the homeland, and that this signification alone overshadows any negative political connotations the music may have had at one time. Yet, such an explanation is in itself unsatisfying because it only leads to deeper questions. If these genres of socialist music act primarily nostalgically, what sort of memories do they evoke? What circumstances existed that allow this music to be received as suitably "Romanian," but not "socialist," among the immigrant community—or perhaps "socialist," but apologetically so? And why would the memories this music triggers be received positively, and not associated with the potential trauma of living in a harsh totalitarian regime?

It bears mentioning that postsocialist subjects are under no objective obligation to appreciate the music of the socialist period just because it was part of their past. Indeed, Adelaida Reyes' fieldwork among Vietnamese refugees reveals that the socialist music associated with the Vietminh was anything but positively received. To the contrary, she notes that the music most performed in the refugee community was virtually any genre *not* tied to the socialist era: music that developed before the socialist period, music that was banned under the regime, or popular and traditional musics of the Americas. Indeed, even the most traditional musical forms from Vietnam might be considered compromised if they were even tangentially associated with the communist regime (1999:113, 148, 164). Reyes' findings are almost antithetical to my ethnographic experience with the postsocialist Romanian community, for whom a communist/non-communist boundary in musical practice is far less pronounced.

My goal in this discussion is not to invoke comparison between different postsocialist immigrant communities (which is far beyond the scope of this project), but simply to assert that, in examining why postsocialist immigrant communities continue to incorporate socialist-era

music in their everyday lives, explanations limited to nostalgia or homeland longing are incomplete. This is not to say that they are not worth pursuing, as I have devoted the fourth chapter entirely to issues of nostalgia surrounding this music. But the nostalgic explanation alone is problematic. For one, it threatens to imply that the reception of this music among the immigrant community is entirely based on it being a product of the past—that is, only worth listening to because it evokes a sense of nostalgia. Such an explanation downplays the possibility that the music might serve other social functions for the community outside of pleasant invocations of nostalgia. Additionally, nostalgic explanations of the continued reception of socialist-era songs may indirectly carry the assumption that the music should be read primarily as socialist to begin with, that the only reason this community would dare listen to music advocated by the socialist regimes they fled is because it evokes the pleasant feelings of nostalgia., I argue, however, that despite being developed, controlled, and propagated by the socialist regime, the genres of music discussed in the dissertation carried much more nuanced significations for musicians and audiences that produced and received them than those related to the socialist or communist project. It is precisely the polysemous qualities of these genres that allow their continued perpetuation within the immigrant community.

In sum, understanding why Romanian immigrants continue to embrace the music of a socialist regime they so desperately wanted to flee necessitates above all else an understanding of the history of such music: under what circumstances it was originally developed, what purposes it fulfilled at the time of its creation, how it was initially performed and received in the homeland, and the contemporary significations it evokes. As such, in this dissertation, I trace the historical performance of *muzică populară*, *muzică ușoară*, *muzică folk*, and socialist art music,

examining the significations the music had for Romanians both in the socialist past and the diasporic present.

Between Romania and America

My Interlocutors' Historical Positionality

To effectively investigate the continued popularity of socialist-era music among the Romanian-American community, I needed to conduct fieldwork with a very particular population: those who left socialist Romania as adults or teenagers, and can recall their experience with the music both during and after the socialist regime. By focusing on this group alone, I was taking a relatively small community (as of 2000, 121,573 people, or .001% of the population of the United States, claimed Romanian ancestry), and narrowing it even further.[1] However, while the community is small in comparison to other immigrant groups in the Western hemisphere, it is one whose members hold a unique historical position, having experienced both the extremity of socialist control in Romania and the precarity of late capitalism in the United States.

The majority of interlocutors with whom I spoke came of age in socialist Romania during the 1970s and 1980s. In this period of late socialism in the Second World and a burgeoning neoliberalism in the First, this group occupies a distinct position. As Gorbachev's *glasnost* and *perestroika* programs led to an unprecedented level of liberalization in the Eastern Europe, Romania under the leadership of Nicolae Ceauşescu remained firmly entrenched in a Stalinist version of Soviet totalitarianism, becoming (along with Albania) one of the most repressive regimes in Eastern Europe during the era. Inspired by the dynastic communism of North Korea,

[1] U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 4, Matrices PCT43, PCT46, and PCT48.

on March 28th, 1974 Ceauşescu was declared the President of Romania, and from that moment until his untimely death set himself up to be the omnipotent father of the country, the regal *conducător*, or "great leader" of the Romanian people. As the 1970s transitioned into the 1980s, Ceauşescu's cult of personality grew in parallel with the disenfranchisement of the Romanian populace. Harsh austerity programs left many freezing in the winter, while Ceauşescu constructed for himself the lavish and ironically named People's Palace, which remains the second largest building in the world. The pervasive presence of the *Securitate*, or secret police, left the citizens under constant fear and suspicion, while draconian pro-natalist policies banning abortion and birth control forced women to give birth to children in a social infrastructure that could barely support them. Meanwhile, systemization campaigns leveled villages and destroyed any aspect of culture that did not align with Ceauşescu's particular brand of Romanian nationalism.[2]

It is from this environment that many of my interlocutors left Romania, either by finding means to emigrate during the socialist period, or by leaving shortly after the revolution in 1989. Arriving in the United States and Canada in the 1980s and early 1990s, these immigrants confronted an almost antithetical social environment from the one they grew accustomed to in Romania. Rather than a pervasive government presence and nearly complete eradication of civil society, economic policies disseminated by Reagan led to a gradual erasure of government intervention in a myriad of social arenas.[3] This was the era in the West that saw the diminution of Keynesian economic policy for a neoliberal approach. Leaders advocating "trickle-down"

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[2] For a general historical overview of Romania during the Ceauşescu era in particular (from which this summary draws), see Deletant 1998, Fischer 1981, Georgescu 1985, Gilberg 1990, Nelson 1988, Shafir 1985, Tismaneanu 2003.

[3] In Canada, where I interviewed two musicians, neoliberalism occurred on a federal level later, under Stephen Harper. However, as in the United States and Britain, neoliberal policies began on a local and provincial level in the early 1980s. See Stanford 2014.

economics led the charge for market deregulation, cuts in welfare programming, and free trade agreements which have developed into the situation we encounter today: cheap goods, less powerful trade unions, stagnant wages, and continued prioritization of CEOs and bankers over workers and laborers (Harvey 2005).

It would be disingenuous, however, to conclude that the transition between these two political and economic environments was one that led Romanian immigrants from the proverbial frying pan into the fire—that for this community the system in the West was different but no better than the one they left in Romania. Rather, the vast majority of people with whom I spoke have through migration attained a level of economic security, political freedom, and domestic comfort that would have been impossible in socialist Romania, and perhaps even denied to them in Romania today. For many the American dream and all it entails in the minds of immigrants, particularly home ownership and college education for the second generation through hard work, has largely come true.

This being said, it is equally disingenuous to promote an entirely, hopelessly bleak account of Romania during the Ceauşescu era. As I discovered very quickly in my research, Romanians during socialism were not relegated to being either high-level corrupt apparatchik ideologues or part of the masses of impoverished laborers. Nor were artists in the country necessarily caught between either resistance or acquiescence, a choice to either to sell their souls to the system or sacrifice their livelihoods for their artistic integrity. While such extremes surely existed in socialist Romania, there also existed countless individuals occupying a middle ground between these two positions.

Methodological Issues: Space, Class, Time, and the Author's Positionality

One of my initial introductions to this community occurred when I attended a concert at a Romanian restaurant in Sunnyside, Queens. Headlining the event was Maria Dragomiroiu, a well-known singer who was flown into New York for the concert. Dragomiroiu achieved star status in the 1980s after building a career for herself by competing in a variety of music competitions organized by the state. That night in the restaurant, I watched her weave between the crowd, singing what I later learned were socialist-era *muzică populară* songs through a wireless microphone. She was dressed in an immaculate and detailed *le* and *fotă* (a traditional peasant tunic and skirt), her long auburn hair flowing past her hips. As I later recalled audience members gleaming as she approached them during the performance, and lining up to get a picture with the star after the concert, I came to realize that, unlike those figures featured in Reye's work, postsocialist Romanians had little qualms celebrating music that, judging from the ages in the audience, they likely became acquainted with in the 1980s, one of the harshest periods of Romanian socialism.

As I began seeking to understand why music such as Dragomiroiu's continued to elicit such a positive response from this community, I realized the particular limitations this research project would inevitably confront. The first of these limitations related to space. As I came to recognize the small size of the Romanian American community in the New York City area, I felt my principle arguments about the performance and reception of socialist-era music would be compromised if I provided no accounts of Romanians outside of what is the fairly unique environment of New York. The observations I was making about the community in the city could have very well been confined to it— Romanians elsewhere may not have had the same appreciation for the music of this era.

To address this issue, I sought to expand my network of interlocutors past New York City. This was largely done by reaching out to my Romanian friends locally, as well as through internet research. Thanks to a grant I received in 2015, I was able to attend and present at a variety of conferences throughout the eastern United States and Canada, and I took advantage of these travel opportunities to meet additional Romanian interlocutors. To prepare for these trips, I located and contacted local university programs, community groups, business associations and commercial establishments that catered to the Romanian community. Through this initial contact I was able to meet with a handful of Romanian vocational and avocational musicians outside of New York, finding particular success in Pittsburgh and Ottawa. I found that these interlocutors had similar affection for the music as those in New York, and a similar understanding of the function the music served both in Romania during socialism and in the United States. In addition to these musicians, I also contacted a variety of vocational musicians I located via promotional and personal websites. This outreach resulted in a series of telephone interviews with art musicians, conductors, and composers whose careers both in socialist Romania and North America broadened my research project to include art music.

Pursuing fieldwork in this way presented another potential limitation, as I found those most responsive to my solicitations for interviews were firmly middle class. As a large number of my respondents came from my initial contact with university student and alumni groups, as well as business associations, such a result was hardly surprising. But my participant observation in New York was not any more representative of class difference. As the members of the Roadrunners and their families became my gatekeepers to the community, the majority of Romanian Americans I spoke to were, much like the bandmembers themselves, highly educated and solidly middle class.

This seeming overrepresentation of middle class interlocutors, however, also speaks towards the demographic realities of the generation of immigrants I sought to work with—that is, those who experienced socialist Romania as young adults, and today anywhere from 40 to 70 years old. In order to emigrate from Romania to North America during the socialist period of the 1970s and 1980s, as well as during the economically stunted transition period of the early 1990s, this group required an immense accumulation of social and cultural capital. In this sense, it is not surprising that the vast majority of the avocational musicians I spoke with arrived in the United States as doctors, engineers, and technicians (those without such education found it much easier to immigrate as laborers within Europe, in places like Spain and Italy). Given their education, it is also not surprising that the majority of my interlocutors already arrived rather cosmopolitan—perhaps born in a smaller village, but spending substantial time of their professional lives in larger cities such as Cluj and Brașov in Transylvania, Bucharest in Wallachia, and Iași in Moldavia (see Appendix I). Indeed, the more rural origins of the Roadrunners' band manager was endearingly brought up often, as a sort of novelty for an otherwise cosmopolitan group.[4]

As the research progressed, I began to understand the limited class status of my interlocutors as a strength rather than a limitation of the study. This background allowed me to examine in depth the ways strategies of class distinction operate through music for this community, and the ways assimilation, a process comparatively easily accomplished for these immigrants, alter musical practices. This being said, it bears mentioning that descriptions of the ways socialist music are performed, received, and remembered in this dissertation applies only to

[4] As far as they have admitted to me, the ethnic makeup of my interlocutors largely corresponds to the region they were born. Those in Wallachia usually admit Romanian heritage; those in Moldavia largely Romanian as well, though at times Slavic. Those in Transylvania regularly confess Romanian, Hungarian, Austrian, and German ethnicity, speaking to the major groups that have settled in that historically diverse region. One, as will be described in more detail, spoke of her Jewish heritage. None spoke of Roma heritage specifically, but a few acknowledged the possibility.

a particular generational and class-based demographic. Perspectives on socialist-era music for a younger generation of New York Romanians who are sooner to go to Romanian DJ nights in Brooklyn than Maria Dragomiroiu concerts in Queens are likely to be very different than those presented here.

Perhaps the most substantial limitation of the research didn't involve a question of space or class, but time. One of the principal findings of this dissertation—that songs developed during the socialist period and heavily promoted by the state as a means of indoctrination were still not necessarily read as socialist by everyday citizens—became quickly apparent to me after a few initial interviews. But while this idea emerged consistently in my interviews with Romanian American immigrants, it was difficult to objectify. When my interlocutors discussed with me the subversive ways they read the songs of the socialist era, to what degree were they speaking with the hindsight of successful, middle-class intellectuals in a capitalist society? To what degree, furthermore, are my interlocutor's recollections of their emotional mindset during politicized music spectacles compromised by the fact that such events happened over two decades ago? And to what extent are they attempting to tell me, an American with no Romanian ancestry and a less-than-perfect grasp of the Romanian language, what they suppose I want to hear about the Ceauşescu regime?[5]

As it was impossible to go back in time to understand how the musical genres I discussed were received, I considered conducting fieldwork in Romania, as a way to compare my American interlocutor's recollections of the socialist period with those who live in the country. While such a two-sited approach would have enriched aspects of the dissertation, I feared it

[5] All of the interviews I had with Romanians outside of New York were conducted in English, while the majority of my participant observation in the New York City Romanian community, including rehearsals with the Roadrunners, occurred in Romanian (often at my insistence).

would place increasing distance from what I saw as the intimate ethnographic framework which made the research unique. But the greater influence behind my decision not to pursue fieldwork in Romania had to do with the fact that my son was born shortly into my research, and I had no real desire to sacrifice time with him or my wife in order to pursue what was at most supplementary research.

As a control against my interlocutor's recollections of socialist Romania, I therefore relied on a variety of ethnographic accounts of both music making and everyday life among Romanians during the socialist era. Thankfully, I found in this literature an abundance of material meticulously detailed and brilliantly theorized—works by Romanian scholars such as Speranţa Rădulescu, Anca Giurchescu, Marin Marian-Bălaşa, and Vintilă Mihăilescu, as well as ethnographies by western scholars such as Katherine Verdery, David Kideckel, Gail Kligman, Paul Nixon, and Steven Sampson. By comparing their observed ethnographic experience with Romanians living under socialism with my own fieldwork with Romanians remembering socialism, I was able to better understand the conflicted and contradictory ways in which the music of that period was approached.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that this research covers but one sliver of musical practices occurring within the Romanian immigrant community, if only to encourage further interest and research into these rich traditions. In this dissertation, there is no mention of the sublime Romanian liturgical tradition, in addition to other evangelical musics that are produced and received among Romanian Americans of particular faiths. There is little discussion of occurrences of music associated with weddings or other life cycle events. Given its popularity both in Romania and in the diaspora, *Manele* music is underrepresented. Finally, there is no discussion of music making practices among second and third generations of Romanian

Americans, and it would be fascinating to examine whether the musical practices of these generations have become fully assimilated, or if they retain a sense of ethnic identity.

Between Postsocialism and Diaspora

Theoretical Perspectives and Contributions

My Romanian interlocutors' unique status as postsocialist immigrant musicians positions this dissertation between two rather significant bodies of ethnomusicological literature: writings focused on (post)socialism and writings on diaspora. Certainly, this isn't the first monograph on a postsocialist community living in North America, but it is one of the few that examines issues of diasporic experience directly in the context of postsocialist subjectivity—that is, the effects socialist experience has had on Eastern European immigrant's understandings of themselves. The work that is most similar in this regard is Reyes' aforementioned *Songs of the Caged, Songs of the Free* (1999), which similarly investigates political subjectivities of Vietnamese refugees. Other works on postsocialist diasporas (in the sense that the groups came from a socialist background but currently live in a capitalist environment) focus far less on the lasting effects of political experience. Su Zheng's *Claiming Diaspora* (2010), for instance, provides an account of music making among the Chinese community in New York City. However, while the socialist circumstances of her immigrant interlocutors are discussed, the work overwhelmingly emphasizes Chinese immigrants' positionality vis-à-vis ethnic discourses in the United States—their lineage as socialist political subjects is not particularly emphasized. Carol Silverman's work with the postsocialist Roma diaspora in the United States (2011) follows a similar trajectory, noting the community's socialist past but focusing far more deeply on how a history of racial persecution inflects Roma musical performances. Louise Wrazen's work on a Polish immigrant community (2007) is, for the most part, concerned with issues of collective memory and the

perpetuation of traditional performance in North America—that Poland was a socialist country at the time of its writing is almost never mentioned. Jane Sugarman (1997) also examines the perpetuation of traditional musical practice among a postsocialist diaspora, particularly the Yugoslav Albanian community in Canada. And while this project is perhaps most indebted to Sugarman's social theory-grounded approach, her analysis emphasizes to a greater degree the gendered hegemonies that the performance of music enforces and disrupts, and less how musical performance enforces and disrupts socialist iterations of subjectivity.

In sum, this work's contribution lies in its capacity to enter diasporic and postsocialist writings into conversation—two fields that, while widely discussed in ethnomusicology, are far less often placed into contact with one another. At a theoretical level then this project asks two interrelated questions: what does the diasporic experience of this Romanian-American community say about ethnomusicological accounts of socialist and postsocialist experience; and conversely, what can postsocialist experience within this community reveal about approaches to diasporic consciousness in ethnomusicology? Regarding the former question, the conclusions I've reached through fieldwork have largely been complementary with accounts of socialism and postsocialism in ethnomusicology. That is, I have found that postsocialist experience among the Romanian American immigrant community supports many of the arguments and perspectives already put forward by ethnomusicologist working with Eastern Europe especially. Conversely, my fieldwork experience has made me fairly reticent to align music-making among this community with the development of a sense of "diasporic identity" or "diasporic consciousness," as is commonly done in ethnomusicological works on immigrant communities, for reasons detailed below.

"Actually Existing Socialism" Through Diasporic Eyes

One of the earliest surprises I encountered while conducting research for this project was the degree of nuance with which immigrant Romanians considered their socialist past. Perhaps naively, I assumed entering the field that I would be working with a community with deep and pronounced criticisms, even resentments, towards the Ceauşescu era. My interlocutors were made up, after all, of musicians who desperately sought to leave the country during this period. Certainly, no one I worked with had particularly good things to say about the Ceauşescu regime, and many still carry a leery skepticism of any politics that could be read as advocating "big government" in the United States. But their recollections of living under the Ceauşescu regime were not particularly saturated with despair and anger. Rather, it seemed the musicians' recollections were overwhelmingly expressed in terms of simply surviving a difficult period—at times finding ways to derive joy from it.

Perhaps, again, such recollections among my interlocutors were prompted by nostalgia. As one musician I interviewed even admitted, "[people] remember only the good things. . . the bad memories fade away." Or perhaps my interlocutors' views on the socialist era were influenced by the so-called Romanian national character, a sense of fatalism to which many I spoke to jokingly referred, that prepared them for making the best of a difficult period—a collective process anthropologist Steven Sampson termed "muddling through" (1984b). However, if I were to take my interlocutors at their word and their recollections as a truth not entirely tinged by the rose-colored hues of nostalgia or the mythologies of the Romanian national character, another analytical path opens: one of "actually existing socialism" outside of the dystopian or utopian public discourses that were propagated during the Cold War (and, in certain ways, linger on today).

This is far from the first work on a postsocialist community that deeply considers the intricacies of "actually existing socialism." Indeed, it is likely the opening move required by any scholar who investigates the socialist world. In her work on rock music in socialist Hungary, Anna Szemere introduces the study as an attempt to create a "more complex and accurate understanding of the politics of popular music, one pointing beyond the rather static dichotomy of (state) hegemony versus counterhegemony" (2001:25). Similarly, in his analysis of light music in socialist Albania, Nicholas Tochka argues in his introduction that simplistic cold-war narratives of "conformity and control cannot by themselves explain the positive logic of state-directed projects to develop and reshape listeners' tastes, nor can an understanding of the negative exercise of state power over artists fully explain what my artists called *kriijimtaria,* their creative work" (2016: 2). It is perhaps Laura Olson in her work on Russian folkloric groups, however, who most directly emphasizes the need for understanding an "actually existing socialism" in lieu of any strong capitalist/communist dichotomies. As she writes:

> Western scholars long subscribed to a rather monolithic view of the Soviet art world, in which the Party wielded power and artists were made to conform to prescribed ways of representation. In this model, Soviet manipulations of folk music and dance would be seen as repressive, forceful implementations of might upon a relative passive citizenry. That model must be viewed as partially accurate . . .[but] in order to understand how power may be enabled as well as limiting, it is important to see it not only in the relation of the ruling elite to its subjects, but in the multiple and everyday interactions of people and the myriad of ways in which individuals construct their identities in the context of a society. (2004:13)

When examining what Olson describes as the "multiple and everyday interactions of people," socialism in Eastern Europe is perhaps best conceived of as an experiment, rife with uncertainty, contradiction, and contingency. The efficacy of the system, like so many, was reliant on a delicate balance of connective and supportive political, economic, and cultural components. In the case of Romania, balancing these various components was made all the harder by the fact that the country's turn to socialism was not a bottom-up achievement—the Romanian Communist Party during the interwar period was comparatively miniscule and powerless—but rather one only achieved through Soviet intervention. The task before the Communist Party in Romania, the earliest members of which were largely made up of politicians trained in Moscow, was not only to organize a vast network of economic, political, and cultural institutions in order to support the socialist system, but also to practically align each system with a uniquely Romanian cultural history so that it would be appealing, at least to some degree, to the population. Suffice it to say, the project remained incomplete for the entirety of the socialist era.

When Ceaușescu came to power in 1965 and sought to reform the country, one of the primary policies he disseminated was one of "multilateral development," which argued that infrastructural development necessitated parallel developments in the arts; in other words, revolutionizing industry and the economy required revolutionizing culture (Shafir 1985:57). But enacting socialist development along multiple avenues was not easily done. As I argue in the first chapter of the dissertation, the nationalization of the economy and the political monopolization of the government were achieved quite early in the socialist regime, and were enacted much more quickly than the development of a national aesthetic ideal or a properly socialist mindset among the populace. On the most immediate level, such an unequal development is due to the simple fact that flows of capital are much more easily controlled than the flow of culture and

ideas. The Romanian Communist Party, however, faced particular difficulties in reconciling Romania's largely Christian heritage, its historically ambivalent relationship with Russia, and its Western linguistic origins with a version of socialism first delivered by the Soviets.

One of the primary methods through which Ceauşescu specifically attempted to develop a properly socialist nationalist culture in Romania was mass performance. As discussed in the second chapter, the promotion and dissemination of Ceauşescu's particular brand of socialism entailed the development of mass performative spectacles through which Romanian citizens could effectively rehearse being the "new men" (and women) of socialist Romania. Through mass songs venerating Ceauşescu and mass dances celebrating the nation, the regime hoped participants in these events would leave the performance as stronger socialist citizens.

That mass performance sought to be a means to instill socialist subjectivity in its citizens was not unique to Romania. As Timothy Rice writes of mass performance in Bulgaria:

> Socialist ideology required the support of "spiritual development" [*dushevno razvitie]*. The Communists dedicated themselves to raising the educational and cultural level of the entire population, that is, of all classes. The "new man" would be better able to "build communism" if he could be educated to the goals and needs of the party...It [culture] was a way to disguise and make more palatable a political message. (1994:182)

Perhaps what sets the Romanian case apart from Bulgaria and other socialist countries in Eastern Europe, however, is the sheer scale of these festivals. As discussed in detail in Chapter Two, Cântarea României, a mass arts festival that developed during the Ceauşescu era, required participation of 20% of the entire population of the country at its peak (Oancea 2007:41). This was in addition to other mass spectacles such as Cenaclul Flacăra, a series of concerts catering

to the youth that brought in large numbers of attendees, as well as parades, political rallies, and national holiday celebrations.

Despite their enormity and explicit ideological focus, however, such festivals did not in the end succeed in creating the "new man" of socialism, of "spiritually developing" the Romanian people to be the proper nationalist socialists that Ceauşescu desired. At the time when these festivals were at their peak, Ceauşescu also enacted authoritarian policies aimed at empowering his cult of personality, increased censorship and secret police presence, and implemented draconian austerity policies in order to pay off the national debt. Within such an environment, mass spectacles of socialist song and dance led not to a shared sense of socialist solidarity, but to what Romanians term *dedublarea,* or the practice of acting one way publicly while feeling another way in private" (Sampson 1984b). In this sense, Ceauşescu's policies didn't create a socialist civilian population so much as enforce a clear cleavage between public action and private sentiment. This led to a broad acceptance of the view that all discourse in the country, political or not, had a dual meaning, and that every articulation had a hidden message.

In the introduction to the collected volume *Retuning Culture,* Mark Slobin writes that "every attempt to make music manageable...evokes the 'chaotic and unpredictable' as a response… Music is mutable, flexible, and volatile [and] in the most regulated of performative moments, no one can account for the multitude of meanings, responses, and attachments each individual is bringing to the experience" (1996:3-4). In terms of its approach to socialist music production, this dissertation contributes to Slobin's observation by detailing one possible "chaotic and unpredictable" manifestation a tightly managed music environment might provoke. In accordance with a culture of *dedublarea,* Romanian musicians I interviewed regularly spoke of the ways they maintained the surface illusion of being committed to the socialist cause during

mass political spectacles, while also remaining critical, even subversive, of such commitments. To quote James C. Scott, mass performances allowed for the "reproduction of hegemonic appearances," but participants in mass spectacle committed to such appearances in subversive ways—for instance, a hidden commitment to Romania as a nationalist project, but not a socialist one. Mass performance therefore opened up for participants a space in which they could negotiate their own positionality vis-à-vis Ceaușescu and the socialist state that did not necessarily align with the ideological goals of the regime.

Furthermore, I argue that this culture of *dedublarea* prompted polysemous readings of socialist music. That songs during this time were widely regarded as having surface, state-approved meanings as well as a more powerful "hidden meaning" made it all the easier to perpetuate them in the immigrant community. In other words, Romanian American immigrants can easily negotiate the continued performances of songs developed to act as socialist propaganda by pointing to their history of polysemous reception during the socialist era.

A Postsocialist Diaspora?

Given the polysemous nature of these socialist songs, one might assume that they have come to act as a vehicle for developing a sense of diasporic consciousness within the immigrant community. That is, the music might serve to create some unifying feeling of socio-cultural solidarity informed by the shared experience of "muddling through" socialism as well as a present feeling of being separated from the homeland. Indeed, the anecdote provided at the beginning of this introduction seems to speak precisely to this idea that musical activities strengthen the bonds of the community through a collective recalling or imagining of the homeland. Yet, while this may have been the case among those singing "Treceți Batalioane Române Carpații," in the Queens church basement, it would be misguided to have this example

characterize the entirety or even the majority of the cultural dynamics of the community. Without a doubt, I observed moments in which a shared sense of nationalist belonging among Romanian-Americans was articulated. But divides nonetheless existed among Romanian-Americans, to such a degree that, as my research progressed, I felt increasingly disinclined to conceptualize the production of music within this community as contributing to a sense of a unifying "diasporic consciousness" at all.

My reservations toward maintaining notions of diasporic consciousness or diasporic identity as a conceptual framework might be due to my ethnographic approach in pursuing this project. If I were to have limited my research to musical events in Queens alone, I may well have concluded that the Romanian American community in New York is indeed one bounded by a shared experience of displacement. But given the relatively stringent criteria which I required of my interlocutors (i.e. that they had to be musicians who lived as adults in Romania during the Ceauşescu era), it was impossible to stay in Queens. Consequently, I expanded my research parameters geographically, first throughout the tri-state area, and then further to the eastern United States and Canada. I spoke to avocational folk musicians in Pittsburgh, composers in Ottawa, and opera company directors in Chicago. As such, my work began to be less representative of a bounded geographical community, and more a musicscape that that spans multiple geographies, and class strata. In speaking to this collection of diverse musicians, connections with a Romanian diaspora seemed rarely articulated, and it became clear that my interviewees' interests and preoccupations lay more directly in their own projects and creative pursuits, and their own respective musical milieus.

These interviews with musicians across the United States and Canada were coupled with ethnographic research in New York City, where I acted more as a participant-observer than one

conducting informal interviews. But even with this more geographically intimate fieldwork, I still did not encounter much of a strong sense of diasporic consciousness. As a bandmember in the Roadrunners, for example, I quickly found the group was quicker to self-identify with a history of rock music than with a feeling of Romanian heritage. Videos of Romanian rock bands such as Phoenix and Holograf circulated among the band's text messages, emails, and Facebook posts less often than videos of Metallica, Rammstein, or Avenged Sevenfold, and discussions on the band's influences referenced Negura Bunget (a Romanian metal band) as much as (Icelandic alt-rock band) Sigur Rós.

In fact, the only time the notion of a Romanian diaspora was specifically articulated by my interlocutors in the band or those in the New York community in general was when discussions turned to politics, particularly elections. As will be discussed in chapter four, after socialism the Romanian diaspora often played a decisive role in the election of political figures. In turn, politicians in the country paid particular attention to Romanians abroad, either catering to them or seeking to have their votes suppressed in various ways. The concept of diaspora seemed to be largely relegated by my interlocutors to a term relating to a political voting bloc, connected to the homeland mostly in its ability to participate in the Romanian political landscape. Moreover, often I felt those in America framed their right to vote in Romanian elections as a means not of connecting to those in the homeland, but of intervening to prevent those in the homeland from electing a politician that would lead Romania, in their estimation, down the wrong path.

What is to explain this seeming lack of diaspora consciousness within the New York community that I experienced? Partially this lack of social solidarity within the diaspora might have been an effect of the socialist period, during which one was never clear if one's friends and

neighbors were agents for the secret police. As one musician I spoke to told me, "We grew up in a society where you don't even trust your friends, [and] for this reason, I think, if you compare [Romanians] with other communities, who are more united and help each other, there is still [a sense of mistrust] even after society changed and we moved abroad." What seems pertinent to answering this question for me, however, is the fact that diasporic identity is imposed externally as much as it is developed from within the community. That is, the boundaries surrounding particular diaspora are created and enforced both by the diasporic community itself and the surrounding "mainstream" or "homeland" society. To draw on Fredrik Barth (1998), diasporic consciousness is largely a process of boundary maintenance that is pursued by both those within and those outside the diasporic community in question.

My hypothesis then is that the relative lack of diasporic consciousness I experienced within the Romanian-American community stems partially from the fact that they largely remain an unmarked community in America. As European Christians, Romanians fall directly into the "white" category within a country whose history of social relations has been deeply informed by a black/white racial dichotomy (as seen, for instance, in the "one drop" rule).[6] As opposed to Western Europe, there is little to no explicit prejudice in the United States against Romanian immigrants, preventing them, for instance, from attaining home loans or securing job interviews. In fact, the difficulties my interlocutors discussed relating to their status as immigrants to the United States were fairly benign: beyond the headaches related to maintaining visas and applying

[6] Clearly this isn't to say that European groups never experienced historic prejudice in the United States. But it seems to me the racial prejudices in the United States have much more powerfully exerted themselves, and have lasted much longer than those tied to European nationality. The fact bears mentioning here that one of the first strategies new European immigrants employed to assimilate to American culture was to discursively separate themselves from blacks (See Ignatiev 1995). Such an assertion does not apply to European immigrants of Jewish descent, as that community continues to be vilified by segments of the American population as well as groups worldwide.

for residency status, most of the issues related to the fact that Americans simply didn't know where Romania was, often confusing Romanian immigrants with Italian or Russian immigrants—in addition, of course, to the always ambivalently received association with vampires.

As I argue in the fifth and sixth chapters, this unmarked status undoubtedly aided the community in the assimilation process, especially for those who left after socialism and arrived in America polylingual and highly educated. This in turn led to a separation from a strong sense of diasporic solidarity. Musically, such a separation might best be seen in my experiences with the Roadrunners. While the band's primary repertoire was made up of Romanian rock, pop, and folk songs, there were continuous attempts by the band to leave the ethnic enclaves where we commonly performed—places like Romanian churches and restaurants—and perform in more "mainstream" clubs in Manhattan and Brooklyn. As such, we often conceptualized our repertoire as a means to enter into a New York environment that privileged, supposedly, multiculturalism and new cultural experiences. After multiple conversations about our "creative" approach as a band, and how such an approach might be noticed throughout New York, it became clear that our ultimate goal was not simply to foster a sense of "diasporic consciousness" in Romanian-American audiences. Rather, the "diasporic" audience was a stepping stone to attaining a greater, more multicultural or even "mainstream" audience. Consequently, our desire to expand our audience past the Romanian-American community had repercussions on the cultivation or development of a diasporic community in that it sought to dissolve the artistic barriers that separated Romanians from mainstream audiences.

Chapter Outline

The trajectory of this dissertation is both chronological and geographic. It begins with the establishment of the socialist regime in Romania in 1944, moves to the period of the dictatorship of Nicolae Ceaușescu from 1965 to 1989, and ends in the postsocialist Romanian-American community in contemporary North America. As the continued performance of socialist music is paramount to my research questions, this history from Romanian late socialism to North American capitalist multiculturalism will be traced through the genealogies of specific socialist-era musical genres: *muzică populară,*), *muzică ușoară*, *muzică folk*, and art music. The dissertation will examine the polysemous nature of these genres, and the ways musicians and audiences have adapted the music to operate in their past and present circumstances.

The first chapter provides a historical overview of socialist Romania, outlining the changing policies and regulations that the state placed upon cultural production, and how such policies affected the creation of music. The chapter focuses on the government's nationalization and control of the recording and radio industries in the country, as well as the state's oversight of the Composer's Union, which was responsible for the commission, publication, and mediatization of art music. In other words, it examines how the socialist state became, to quote Donna Buchanan, both the "benefactor" and "oppressor" of musical culture (2006:177). In this discussion, it becomes apparent that, while the nationalization of the music industry (whether popular or art music) was completed early in the socialist era, developing a national socialist aesthetic which the music industry would adhere to was much more difficult. Romania's Christian heritage, coupled with the complex history of Romanian nationalism, made the development and deployment of any properly "socialist" or "nationalist" aesthetic policy rife with contradictions easily exploitable by composers and musicians.

The second chapter details the emergence of Ceauşescu as the leader of Romania and the subsequent ideological changes the country undertook due to the change in power. To detail the country's gradual shift from emphasizing a socialist aesthetic policy to one emphasizing a chauvinistic socialist nationalism, the bulk of the chapter focuses on Cântarea României, or "Song to Romania," a large state-sponsored arts festival which sought to legitimate Ceauşescu's role as the proclaimed patriarch of the country. The chapter reveals how Cântarea României functioned primarily as a means by which the government could coerce the populace to perform as appropriate socialist citizens, the "New Men" who would supposedly usher Romania into a communist utopia. Such festivals were therefore considered essential by the state (as were the expenses needed to organize them), insofar as the socialist government's control of the Romanian populace relied upon the performance of particular roles, among both the citizens and the party leaders.

After illustrating the general musical and ideological landscape of Ceauşescu's Romania in Chapter Two, Chapter Three considers how such practices of control, especially as they were realized in musical performance, might have been resisted by the populace. In the repressive environment of socialist Romania, direct or explicit acts of resistance were virtually absent among musicians during the latter decades (1970s-1980s) of the Ceauşescu regime. Inspired by James C. Scott's scholarship (1985, 1990) on everyday forms of resistance among the disenfranchised, I therefore detail how smaller, more hidden acts of resistance occurred in musical performance during large socialist spectacles, and stress how such small acts may have contributed to the revolutionary moment in December 1989 when the country overthrew the socialist government. Drawing upon ethnographies of the era, as well as my interlocutors' recollections of their participation in such events, the chapter delineates both the affective and

discursive methods that citizens utilized to subtly resist the ideological significations of mass musical performance. As I argue, these musicians performed the roles required of them by the government, but committed to those roles in ways that were resistant or subversive to socialist ideology. More often than not, they were committed nationalists and reluctant socialists.

The second half of the dissertation pivots from socialist Romania to the North American immigrant community. It begins by asserting that the polysemous qualities that developed in music during the socialist period allowed their perpetuation in the immigrant community—that is, the flexibility these genres offered allowed them to easily take on new meanings pertinent to the needs of the Romanian-American community. In examining such new meanings that were instilled into the music, Chapter 4 interrogates how the Romanian notion of *dor*, an untranslatable term denoting a particular nationalistic iteration of nostalgia, became uniquely invoked in the performance of socialist-era music. After providing a rough sketch of the tumultuous transition Romania experienced after the Revolution in 1989, I argue that the differences in experience and background between those who stayed in Romania and those who left greatly contribute to the different ways *dor* is felt and articulated in the homeland and abroad. In comparing my own fieldwork among Romanian American immigrant musicians with other scholars' ethnographic accounts of manifestations of postsocialist nostalgia in Romania and the countries surrounding, I conclude that, for those that remained in Romania, *dor* has a strong association with a sense of frustration towards the Romanian government's perceived inability to manage a just transition to capitalism. That is, for postsocialist Romanians still in the homeland, *dor* was tied to a longing for a past period that seemed in retrospect less precarious than the present—a communist nostalgia. For those in the diaspora, *dor* is invoked much less as a desire to return to communism and more simply as a remembrance of acquaintances and the

sensual connotations of the homeland (e.g. the Romanian landscape, the food, the "sights and sounds" of the country). While revealing the ways *dor* is articulated in the performance of music in the diaspora, the chapter ultimately concludes by casting doubt over whether such diasporic performances of socialist music are motivated entirely, or even primarily by *dor* or nostalgic sentiment, and whether there are more material functions that the performance of the music serves.

Whereas Chapter Four outlines the possible affective or emotional reasons why socialist music might continue to be performed in the diaspora, Chapter Five investigates the more social motivations for the music's performance. In the chapter, I argue that the continued performance of socialist era *muzică folk* and art music acts as a means of expressing a sense of class distinction. Drawing from my interviews with Romanian art musicians, the chapter begins by considering how class distinctions continued to operate in the musical milieu in socialist Romania, despite the government's attempts to create a "classless" society. The chapter then examines how issues of class division exist in the diasporic community by providing an ethnographic overview of the musical culture of the Romanian community in New York City. This overview reveals how musical production and consumption reify particular cultural schisms within the community related to issues of economic class and generation.

Chapter Six addresses the issue of assimilation within the Romanian community. The chapter first conceptualizes assimilation as a means in which immigrant culture producers seek to align their work with the mainstream multiculturalism of cosmopolitan North America. Noting that the relative obscurity or "unmarked" status of Romanians in North America informs musicians' strategies for assimilating into mainstream culture, the chapter then traces the biographies of four professional Romanian musicians who have relocated to the United States

and Canada. In so doing, it locates common strategies these artists have taken to insert their work into mainstream culture in a way that it allows them greater presence and a greater audience. Such strategies include an ambivalent association with “gypsyness,” a celebratory identification with multicultural ideology, and a desire to identify in a general sense with one’s cultural heritage or “roots.” The chapter ends with my own experiences with the Roadrunners in our attempts to leave the ethnic Romanian community and perform for the more cosmopolitan New York City populace, and the difficulties and negotiations such a project entailed.

CHAPTER 1: MUSICAL PRODUCTION IN SOCIALIST ROMANIA

The complex motivations under which the Romanian-American immigrant community continues to produce and consume music of the socialist era cannot be completely understood by explanations of the affective power of nostalgia or the socio-political value of the promotion of ethnic or national identity in a foreign environment. While these two motivations are indeed deeply relevant to the ongoing performance of this music, to understand fully why socialist-era genres continue to be appreciated within the Romanian immigrant community it is vital to examine how such genres were developed and performed at their genesis. As I will argue in the next three chapters, while the socialist environment framed the significations and purposes of this music within a strict version of nationalist socialist ideology, it also cultivated the music's potential for polysemous readings, ones that allow the music to continue to be performed today without issue by even the most stalwart anti-communists in the Romanian-American community.

This chapter provides an overview of the socio-political atmosphere of socialist Romania by examining the policies and practices deployed by the state in its attempts to transform preexisting popular genres, musicological research, and art music composition into vehicles for socialist ideology. Through these discussions two arguments will be asserted. First, I argue that a comprehensive and cohesive policy towards "proper" music production never materialized in the half century of socialist rule. Rather, the various guidelines regarding the production of music were articulated in different ways and enforced with different levels of rigidity as determined by the ruling regime's ideological priorities, which were themselves formulated by larger global initiatives, especially within the second world. Second, I argue that while command over musical institutions, their finances, and their personnel was accomplished fairly quickly and without much difficulty, on an ideological level—that is, in terms of the efficacy with which the regime

was able to define a precise ideological "essence" from which musical composition was to derive—control over the reception and significations of the music was far less successful.

Romania 1944-1965

Communism Comes to Romania

In order to understand effectively the socialist-era genres discussed throughout this dissertation, it is first necessary to provide a brief overview of the modes of "actually existing socialism" that created everyday life in Romania—that is, the way people actually lived through socialism, outside of the myths propagated by Marxist-Leninist idealism or the heightened political discourses of the Cold War. In so doing we find that socialist Romania was neither a utopian society built by the working class, nor an authoritarian wasteland riddled with silenced, impoverished citizens toiling in factories and agricultural collectives. Rather, Romania might be best described as a complex and inherently contradictory social experiment shaped by global political and economic contingencies, coupled with the continuous politicking of communist ideologues and ambitious legislators.

From the beginning, Romania's turn to socialism in 1944 was far from "organic," in no way reflecting the classic Marxist assertion that the socialist system would inevitably arise from the social contradictions between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. With only incipient industrialization, the largely agricultural, rural Romania of the early 20th century simply did not possess the urban proletariat necessary (at least according to Marx) to propel society towards communism. For most of the early 20th century, those few socialists that existed in the country acted, as Tismaneanu describes, "more [as] an intellectual club than an organic upsurge from below," with little meaningful political clout (2003:38).

This relatively anemic state of the Communist Party in Romania began to change by the mid-1940s, thanks largely to the Soviets. With immense support from Moscow, by 1948 the Romanian Communist Party (RCP) effectively eliminated all other parties in the country and forced Michael I (who served as King of Romania from 1940 to 1947) to abdicate (*ibid.*, 92-94). However, such an elevation to power was not due to a concentrated effort by a unified movement within the RCP. Even in this early period the Party was embroiled in a faction war between various camps: particularly the Romanian communist central committee, whose members led the party clandestinely during World War II, headed by Ștefan Foriș; a group of communist political prisoners led by Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej; and a group of Romanian emigres in Moscow, headed by Ana Pauker (*ibid.*, 97-104).

Through various kinds of Byzantine politicking, eventually it was the prison-camp group that achieved control of the country, with Gheorghiu-Dej becoming the First Secretary of the Party and effective leader of the country in 1944. Mirroring Stalinist Russia, Gheorghiu-Dej's early governance was marked by frequent purges, including the ousting of Ana Pauker and her faction, as well as the execution of Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, a major figure in the RCP (*ibid.*, 132). A steadfast ally of Russia, Gheorghiu-Dej continued to be a strong proponent of "proletarian internationalism," the ideology of solidarity in the second world that arguably served primarily to further strengthen Moscow's hegemony.

With the death of Stalin and the rise of the less totalitarian style of Nikita Khrushchev in 1953, Gheorghiu-Dej's strong alliance with Moscow began to unravel—largely because, as Tismaneanu argues, the Romanian leader had a continuing desire to draw upon the Stalinist model of rulership. While Romania's separation from Moscow was not necessarily pronounced in terms of foreign policy (the Romanians supported the Soviets, for example, in ending the

Hungarian Revolt in 1956, and continued to support the USSR in the developing Sino-Soviet split), ideologically the party began to take the first steps towards disassociating itself from proletarian internationalism and moving towards the promotion of nationalist socialist sovereignty (*ibid.*, 167-172). In adherence to this developing policy of national sovereignty, Gheorghiu-Dej's economic plan began shifting to the mass industrialization of the country. This economic and cultural drift away from the Soviets would go on to define the Ceaușescu regime which would follow after Gheorghiu-Dej's death in 1965, as described in the next chapter.

The Stalinist Legacy in Socialist Romania

In sum, the developments in Romania from 1944 to 1965 could be roughly divided into three periods: first, a period in which three large factions of the incipient RCP fought for control over the country; second, the elevation of the Gheorghiu-Dej group, and its Stalinist style of rule; and third, the death of Stalin and Gheorghiu-Dej's slow and gradual dissociation from Khrushchev's USSR. As might be expected, each of these moments carried with it unique ideological and political imperatives which, as we will see, affected cultural policy and the subsequent production of music in the country.

Despite these changes, the Romanian RCP leadership during the Stalinist era did produce certain policies that consistently informed the entire history of socialist Romania: consistencies that we might consider the bedrock on which the socialist experiment was based. Tismaneanu lists three:

1. The nationalization of all private enterprise, and the "transformation of the market-based, privately owned economy into a centrally planned, state-owned one."
2. The development of heavy industry, the abolishment of private ownership of agricultural land, and the development of collective farms.

3. The subsumption of civil society, including "intellectual life and culture," under state ideological precepts. (*ibid.*, 107-110)

For the rest of this chapter I will focus on the first and third points on the above list, examining the ways in which nationalization occurred in the music industry in particular, as well as how cultural producers during this time were limited by the "carrot and stick" censorship policies deployed by the state. In providing such an overview, I argue that while the nationalization of state media was largely effective, the cooption of civil society and culture among the Romanian populace proved much less successful.

Nationalizing Music Production: Traditional and Popular Music

Monopolizing Production

Arguably the most comprehensive ethnographic overview of governmental control over musical production during the socialist period can be found in ethnomusicologist Speranţa Rădulescu's *Peisaje Muzicăle în România Secolului XX* [*Musical Landscapes in 20th Century Romania*] (2002). In the second half of the monograph (which specifically chronicles the socialist era), Rădulescu alludes to three primary strategies through which the government sought to mold musical production into a vehicle for ideological indoctrination: by controlling the means of production and dissemination; by developing ensembles and cultivating composers and musicians that would act as models for "proper" musical production; and by incentivizing the greater Romanian population to adopt these models as their own forms of artistic expression on a local level. While these strategies often operated concurrently, they were more or less deployed consecutively, beginning with the monopolization of broadcast media in the late 1940s and culminating in an attempt to control all aspects of music making by the late 1970s.

The first step to transform musical production into a vehicle for ideology was the development and control of the infrastructure that allowed such music to be produced and disseminated. Naturally then, one of the initial moves enacted by the socialist cultural engineers in Romania was the consolidation of all existing record labels and radio stations in the country into a single nationalized institution. This occurred in 1948, when the state nationalized what was at the time the largest record company in the country, Electrecord (Rădulescu 2002:83).

After gaining ownership over the means of musical production, the regime then developed a nationwide radio network that would broadcast the state-approved music. Electrecord and the state radio network remained separate, though complementary, entities and shared many of the same processes for music production. The radio stations generally adhered to the following format: first, a selection committee made up of "specialists" (folklorists) and radio producers determined what music would be broadcast; then, the selected pieces would be arranged for the state radio ensemble, an orchestra which was housed and compensated by the radio station. These traditional pieces would be arranged in accordance with a particular broadcast format (in terms of piece length, dynamics, etc.) and also to complement whatever socialist aesthetic policy was being propagated at the time. Similarly, Electrecord housed a selection committee which would award recording contracts to various ensembles and individual musicians throughout the country. While the label gave the musicians under contract a degree of flexibility in terms of musical arrangement, the ultimate recording was largely molded by the recording engineer and sound editor at Electrecord, who during the editing process aligned the music with whatever aesthetic demands were made by the Party. Generally, the techniques employed by the recording engineers diminished much of the spontaneity and improvisation associated with Romanian folk music. While the two institutions remained separate, there was

much collaboration between the two, with members of the radio orchestra recording albums, engineers working for both the label and the radio station, and so on (Rădulescu, personal communication).

In the mid-20th century, state radio and Electrecord disseminated music mostly by a communal loudspeaker, which became an omnipresent part of the soundscape in village and city centers during the early socialist era. Often located at the center of towns and villages, broadcasts emanated from these speakers at all hours of the day, and included a variety of material which, as Rădulescu sardonically notes, all carried an ideological message:

> The loudspeaker – an unavoidable presence on the streets and town parks – took care of the pitiful people held in darkness, enlightening them from the village center with: *muzică uşoară* [light/pop music] with moral verses (for example, Marinica berated as a lazy worker; beautiful Ileana praised as a weaver, etc.), mobilizing and/or educative *muzică populară* (especially melodies with optimistic and tempestuous flavors, but also *doine de haiduci* [songs regarding *haiduci,* historical outlaws who fought against foreign powers and wealthy landowners throughout Southeastern Europe] which recall class warfare among oppressed peasants), news and educational shows ("News Bulletin," "Danube Water Levels," "Russian Language Course," "Moscow Talks," "About Socialist Countries," etc.), patriotic marches and poetry, folkloric choral arrangements, Soviet light and patriotic music, folkloric music from other countries (through radio shows like "World Music" – expressions of the proletarian internationalism

> prized during that period) and the discourses of leading activists accompanied by endless applause and appraisals for the Party. (2002:87)[7]

Rădulescu further argues that the arrangement of these diverse programs was consciously planned to intersperse certain musical and non-musical materials, so as to associate particular music with particular political figures and policies. For instance, well-known traditional music or grandiose marches might precede or follow speeches by Party leadership, so as to associate "positive connotations" or a strong sense of Romanian heritage with the Party (2002:87). This strategy of aligning music with particular aspects of the Party, as we shall see, was again deployed in festivals and competitions that featured the live performance of music.

After portable household radios became available, the government began scrambling foreign broadcasts in order to maintain their monopoly over the city soundscape. Indeed, many of the interlocutors I spoke with who lived during this period mentioned with pride their skill at turning their radio dials at precise increments, so as to just hear broadcasts from Western Europe before they were scrambled. One person I spoke with admitted that most of her life in Romania she thought that such fine tuning of the dial was simply how the radio worked, having no idea that certain signals were scrambled by the government. After all, what reason would she have had to believe otherwise, given that radio was a commonplace well into the socialist regime?

Local Ritual to National Spectacle: "Peasant" versus "Folkloric" Music

Once the record labels and radio stations were nationalized, giving the state nearly complete control over musical mediatization and dissemination, the second task of controlling musical production in the country entailed the formulation of musical genres that would act as

[7] All translations of foreign language sources are my own unless otherwise noted.

vehicles for spreading socialist ideology. While new art music was created to fulfill this need (as is described in the following section), cultural engineers also made an effort to co-opt already known and well-liked genres into an ideological framework. It was through this project that Romanian *muzică ţărănească,* or traditional village music, was transformed into *muzică folclorică,* or "folkloric" music. As Rădulescu states, this transition was purposely subtle:

> The underlying control that power exercised over *muzică ţărănească* began deceitfully, through ostentatiously offering an alternative music that was proclaimed superior, worthy of being imitated and meant to eventually serve as the correct substitute. This alternative was, at least at the beginning, quite close to the genuine music that it claimed to represent. In time, it distanced itself in small steps—such that its development would not shock anyone, indeed so that it could easily be swallowed. (2002:81)

To fully understand the transition from *muzică ţărănească* to *muzică folclorică* during the socialist period, it is first necessary to briefly define the former style. Perhaps best translated as "peasant" or "village" music, *muzică ţărănească* refers generally to musical practices that have traditionally been performed at the village level within what is today the country of Romania. Often such practices served to accompany rituals demarcating particular seasons or changes in an individual's life. Some of the most well-known practices associated with seasonal events include: *colinde,* carols that are sung around the time of the winter solstice; *cântecele de stea,* biblically themed "star songs" sung specifically by children during Christmas; *căluş*, a fertility ritual performed by men incorporating music, chants, and dance; and *plugarul* ("the plowman") and the feast *cununa* ("the wreath"), performed during harvest season. Life-cycle rituals include a wide variety of songs and dances associated with weddings, often uniquely directed towards

either the groom or the bride, as well as a variety of traditional ceremonial songs, laments, and litanies performed during funerals. As is the case in much of the traditional music of Europe, many of these rituals have become syncretic, mixing Christian themes with prior pagan traditions. This might be best illustrated in Romania by the *capră* ("goat"), *urs* ("bear"), and *căiuţ* ("hobby horse") traditions, animalist masked dances that became incorporated into winter and Christmas practices; as well as the aforementioned *căluş* festival, a pre-Christian ritual that was later set to occur during Pentecost.

In addition to music related to seasonal and life-cycle rituals, *muzică ţărănească* also incorporates more general music types. Perhaps most famous of these is the *doină* or *horă lungă*, a vocal or instrumental "long song" performed in a parlando rubato style. Non-seasonal styles include *cântece*, strophic songs often performed with a strong metric feel. Instrumental genres include shepherding tunes, often performed on aerophones, and dance music, usually in duple or triple meter (but at times in asymmetrical meters) performed on the *ţambal* (cimbalom), *vioară* (violin), *cobză* (a short-necked lute), *taragot* (a keyed reed aerophone), accordion, double bass, and at tunes clarinet and saxophone. Finally, while all but disappeared at this point, certain *lăutari* (professional, mostly Roma musicians) also performed *balade* (ballads) or *cântece bătrâneşti* ("old songs"), epic songs sometimes set to *doină* melodies and detailing heroic, historical or mythological tales.[8]

[8] For a greater overview on traditional musical practices in Romania, see Valeriu Apan's (2000) entry in the 8th Volume of the *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*, from which much of the preceding information derived. Tiberiu Alexandru's (1980b) *Romanian Folk Music* also provides a detailed overview of folk music traditions in the country. For detailed ethnographic descriptions and insightful analysis of the *Căluş* ritual as well as traditional wedding and funeral songs, one can do no better than read the work of Gail Kligman (1977, 1984, 1988). The particularly political history of *colinde* has been meticulously discussed by Sabina Pauţa Pieslak (2004, 2007a, 2007b). For detailed analysis of *balade*, see the work of Margaret Beissinger (1988, 2002, 2012a, 2012b).

Many of the performance practices outlined above are frequent in some regions and virtually unknown in others. Furthermore, due to the fact that for centuries Romania as it is today was separated into three different principalities (Moldavia to the north, Wallachia to the south, and Transylvania to the west), these styles are often performed in ways and in contexts specific to their region. Related to these idiosyncrasies in performance are the historic musical contributions of the various non-Romanian ethnic groups that have also settled in the region, especially Hungarians and Germans in Transylvania, but also Turks in Wallachia and Russians and Ukrainians in Moldavia. Finally, the fact that many of these styles are performed professionally by the Roma community, whose repertoire has historically incorporated a wide variety of popular urban music in addition to *muzică ţărănească*, further complicates any stable definition of where one category ends and others begin.

The diversity within *muzică ţărănească* warrants mentioning because it was precisely this that was limited during the socialist period with the development of *muzică folclorică.* Indeed, *muzică folclorică* might best be described as a distillation of *muzică ţărănească*, delimited by what Party officials felt was the "correct" manifestation of Romanian musical culture, and then disseminated as an authentic form of folkloric or traditional music. Anca Giurchescu notes that such a distillation process was part of a greater project throughout the Eastern Europe of transforming "folklore" to what she terms "folklorism":

> The passage from folklore to folklorism in South-Eastern European countries is in essence a symbolic transformation from social to artistic significance, and from variation to fixed forms [. . .]. The major difference between folklore and folklorism lies in the fact that folklore is a non-controllable process, while folklorism results from strictly guided selection and transformation of folklore. . .]

> According to this theory, real and authentic folklore should exist only in the artistic and crystallized forms as presented by professional and amateur ensembles. (2001:117)

This new, state-sponsored genre of folklorism, a manifestation of traditional music stripped of its ritualistic and/or religious characteristics, was largely developed thanks to the state's influence over the musicians and orchestras that were granted the right to make recordings and be disseminated on the radio. One of the first ensembles to be so influenced, according to Rădulescu, was the *Barbu Lăutaru* orchestra (2002:83-87). The orchestra was the result of a growing movement in the 1940s to expand the traditional *lăutar tarafs*—small ensembles of professional, usually Roma musicians who historically performed in courts—into large orchestras.[9] With the establishment of the Folklore Institute in 1949, a project began to locate the best *lăutari* in the country and consolidate them into a singular "popular concert orchestra." The result was the *Barbu Lăutaru* orchestra, named after a famed Moldavian singer and *cobză* player, which was made up of over 40 musicians from around the country (Alexandru 1980a). From this prototype, other similar groups developed, such as The *Rapsodie* Orchestra, the Radio-Television Orchestra, and The Ministry of the Interior's *Ciocârlia* orchestra, named after the well-known piece "Skylark," composed by Roma musician Angheluş Dinicu. In the 1960s, the Party seized upon the popularity of these groups (particularly in Bucharest) and installed conductors within the ensembles who would guide the musicians in creating state-approved, ideologically acceptable versions of their repertoire (Rădulescu 2002:83).

[9] See Beissinger 2007, Ciobanu 1969, Garfias 1981, 1984, and Rădulescu 1988, for a more detailed history of *lăutari tarafs* in Romania.

As Rădulescu argues, the result of these conglomerated folkloric orchestras, due to both the nature of their development and the Party's influence over them, was the creation of a spectacular but largely anemic version of *muzică ţărănească.* Generally, the traditional arrangements of music played by *tarafs* (particularly an emphasis on a single soloist over three to four musicians providing accompaniment) were perpetuated in these large groups, but many other characteristic musical techniques were added or removed. As Rădulescu writes:

> *Tarafs* from villages or towns often masterfully played music unique to their cultural region; but put together under the baton of the conductor and obliged to execute pieces from all parts of the country in a style with obscured features, they standardized their playing, learning to mute their individual initiative – expressed through their melodic voice and free ornamentations, ad hoc harmonizations and swung rhythm around a virtual pulse – and learned to obey the almighty conductor. Orchestra music is thus full of "savant" effects (for example, the tremolos and vibratos of the violins, frequent and sometimes deliberately shocking chord changes, crescendos, diminuendos and/or marked dynamic oppositions); none of these has an equivalent in the true *lăutar tarafs.* (2002:84)

These new "folkloristic" arrangements of traditional music soon replaced traditional peasant music on radio. While *muzică ţărănească* was still broadcast, it was relegated to a single bi-monthly program developed by a folklorist at the Institute for Ethnography and Folklore, while *muzică folclorică* became the staple music played every day over the radio (Rădulescu, personal communication). Through the constant dissemination of this music over the communal loudspeaker and later domestic radio stations, within a few decades *muzică folclorică* arrangements became the generally accepted versions of traditional music—so much so that

lăutari, especially in urban areas, began incorporating *muzică folclorică*-style arrangements into their repertoire. This transition was expedited by the gradual disappearance of more traditional *muzică ţărănească* via the elimination by the government of the *kulak* class (wealthy rural landowners), who had often patronized *lăutar tarafs* at the village level, as well as a gradual rural-urban migration that had begun at the beginning of the century (Rădulescu 2002:69). Moreover, thanks to the size of the orchestras, the presence of the conductor, and the variously deployed "savant" musical effects to which Rădulescu refers above, many took *muzică folclorică* as a heightened form of Romanian traditional music, a music that expressed the Romanian national character in a modern, sophisticated way.

It should be noted, finally, that such a project of reforming traditional music into secular staged performance was not unique to Romania, in fact being pervasive throughout socialist Eastern Europe. Unsurprisingly perhaps, the original models for this artistic movement came from Russia, particularly through the pre-Soviet Pyatnitsky ensemble, a group that similarly developed spectacular performances of folk music and dance from around the country (see Buchanan 2006, Olson 2004). The intended purpose of co-opting traditional music particularly for socialist uses specifically has perhaps best been delineated by Timothy Rice, speaking of the Bulgarian case. Rice argues that turning traditional music into stage spectacle achieved three goals for the socialist governments in Eastern Europe. First, the infusion of Western-style harmonies and (as Rădulescu is prone to say) "virtuosic" effects were seen as establishing an artistic middle ground between bourgeois and proletariat tastes—that is, this music was intended to cross class divisions, appealing to the lower classes through renditions of traditional music,

and to the bourgeoisie through its complex arrangements and virtuosic musicians.[10] Second, once co-opted it acted as an effective vehicle for education, in that it exposed people to the glories of their national cultural heritage (as it was defined by the Party). Finally, its spectacular nature, replete with lavish costuming and set design, acted as an embodied manifestation of the future communist utopia (Rice 1994:181-182). Each of these goals will be discussed in the Romanian context throughout this chapter.

Mobilizing Amateur Music Making

The final step to securing control over musical production was the alignment of amateur and domestic music making with nationalist socialist ideology. As discussed above, this was partially accomplished by controlling media—i.e. by disseminating state-approved music to the populace and attempting to erase from public mediatization any musical performances deemed inappropriate. By limiting what music was mediated, the state hoped to control practices of musical mimesis occurring on the local or domestic level. However, the government went further in this push towards the performance of "correct" music by installing a wide network of what Althusser would term Ideological State Apparatuses throughout the country: institutions that taught the practical aspects of music (theory and literacy, technical proficiency and performance practice), but "in forms which ensure subjugation to the ruling ideology of the mastery of its 'practice'" (1994:104). Rădulescu lists three of the major types of such institutions:

1. **General Education Institutions,** including both specialty music schools and general schooling which "operated to completely guide social and cultural life in order to reveal the

[10] As will be discussed in the next chapter, such an attempt to establish a national genre that appeals to audiences across class divides was not unique to the communists; in fact, it was a defining trait in the development of folklore studies in the 18th century.

beauty and richness of the land, a readiness and love for the country by the Romanian people, the class struggle and the suffering of the poor, Party ideology and the Romanian triumphant path towards communism" (Rădulescu 2002:88). At the level of general education, this was accomplished through the careful selection and editing of folkloric songs, poems, and stories to be taught and sung at school. For example, traditional *colinde* with Christian imagery were edited or erased, while the aforementioned *doine de haiduci*, which often depicted legendary outlaws fighting against aristocratic tyranny, were promoted. These songs were rehearsed during school to be performed for the public at end-of-the-year parties, mimicking the techniques employed by the conductors and arrangers of the professional *muzică folclorică* orchestras.

2. **Houses of Culture**, which were a common cultural presence in many countries in Eastern Europe (see Cash 2012, Hofman 2010, Olson 2004, Taylor 2008), serving as centers of cultural performance and education outside of the school system. These houses of culture were divided into two unique types: *cămine culturale* ("Home of Culture") for rural areas and *case culturale* ("House of Culture") for urban areas. The main difference between the two lay in their requirements to ensure state funding: for *cămine culturale,* which were often erected in small villages, all that was needed was a physical building established solely for the purposes of cultural performance and education. The requirements for the *case culturale* were much more stringent, as these acted as locations of culture for more populated areas such as cities, towns, and larger villages. These institutions were under the auspices of the local People's Council, and were required to "organize permanent cultural-educative activity" entailing at least three unique courses in culture, a permanent choir, a theater troupe, a dance ensemble, a retinue of artists, and at least three artistic and technical-practical circles

(informal groups of artisans and craftspeople) (Oancea 2007:42 *fn* 121).[11] This was in addition to other purposes, such as housing cultural authorities and visiting officials, and serving as community spaces for concerts and dances. In terms of musical indoctrination, the houses of culture might be best thought of as being the live iteration of the public loudspeaker, acting as sites for permanent and visiting folkloric bands, a stage for amateur competitions, and a site for political speeches. The added benefit of such sites as compared to the radio, Rădulescu is quick to note, is that officials could easily observe the reactions and attitudes of the audience (2002:89).

3. **Competitions and Festivals**. While various amateur visual and performing arts contests and festivals occurred throughout the 20th century in Romania, they became increasingly ubiquitous from the mid-1960s on. Indeed, Rădulescu notes that after 1964 a myriad of local, regional, and national folkloric festivals flourished, many of which were broadcast by state radio and television (2002:90). As such, the organizing bodies of these festivals worked closely with officials in media, education, and culture to ensure that a more or less unified vision of Romanian culture was presented. The importance of these festivals will be detailed more specifically in the next chapter, in the discussion of the largest of these state arts festivals, Cântarea României.

As can be imagined, the development and application of these three Ideological State Apparatuses, as well as the pre-existing state media corporations and cultural institutions, relied upon an extensive and complex hierarchy of various Party officials, committees, and councils.

[11] Nixon noted that at the village where he conducted research the courses taught at the Houses of Cultural included topics on "hygiene, politics, patriotic history, industrial productivity, law, anti-mysticism and flute-making." He further mentioned such classes took place during winter (perhaps when agricultural labor was less intensive) and were generally well attended (1998: 408).

Anthropologist Paul Nixon's meticulous schematic provides an illustration of such a hierarchy as it existed in 1979 (*fig 1.1)*. The illustration reveals no less than 14 different administrative entities responsible for the development of cultural policy, each with its own specified and hierarchized lines of communication with one another. If nothing else, Nixon's illustration reveals the extent to which cultural policy in the villages was micromanaged through multiple official avenues. Such methods of micromanagement involved continual practices of propagating state-approved music by promoting composers, musicians, and groups that were aligned with nationalist socialist ideals: determining who won various regional contests and installing appropriate cultural officials in various schools and houses of culture. As Nixon discovered during his fieldwork, often teachers and other *intelectuali* (educated village leaders) at the village level would receive edicts from above of new policies and procedures for promoting or censoring certain material.

In addition to providing opportunities for amateur musicians to publicly perform "correct" folkloric music through these various ISAs, the government also deployed methods which served to halt the performance of music deemed inappropriate to nationalist socialist ideology. The official policy of privileging the "artistic" aspects of Romania's traditional cultural products at the expense of their ritualistic purposes led to the disappearance of many forms of cultural production which lacked virtuosic or otherwise "artistic" characteristics of use to the Party. For instance, Giurchescu noted that in regions known for simpler manifestations of the *căluş*, ritual performances gradually disappeared, while in regions where the ritual was more of a *Gesamkunstwerk* (complete with virtuosic dancing, ornate costumes, and complex music) the ritual was perpetuated, as it was supported by the state (2003:168-169).

Figure 1.1: Organizational Hierarchy of Culture, Romania, 1970s (Nixon 1998: xiv)

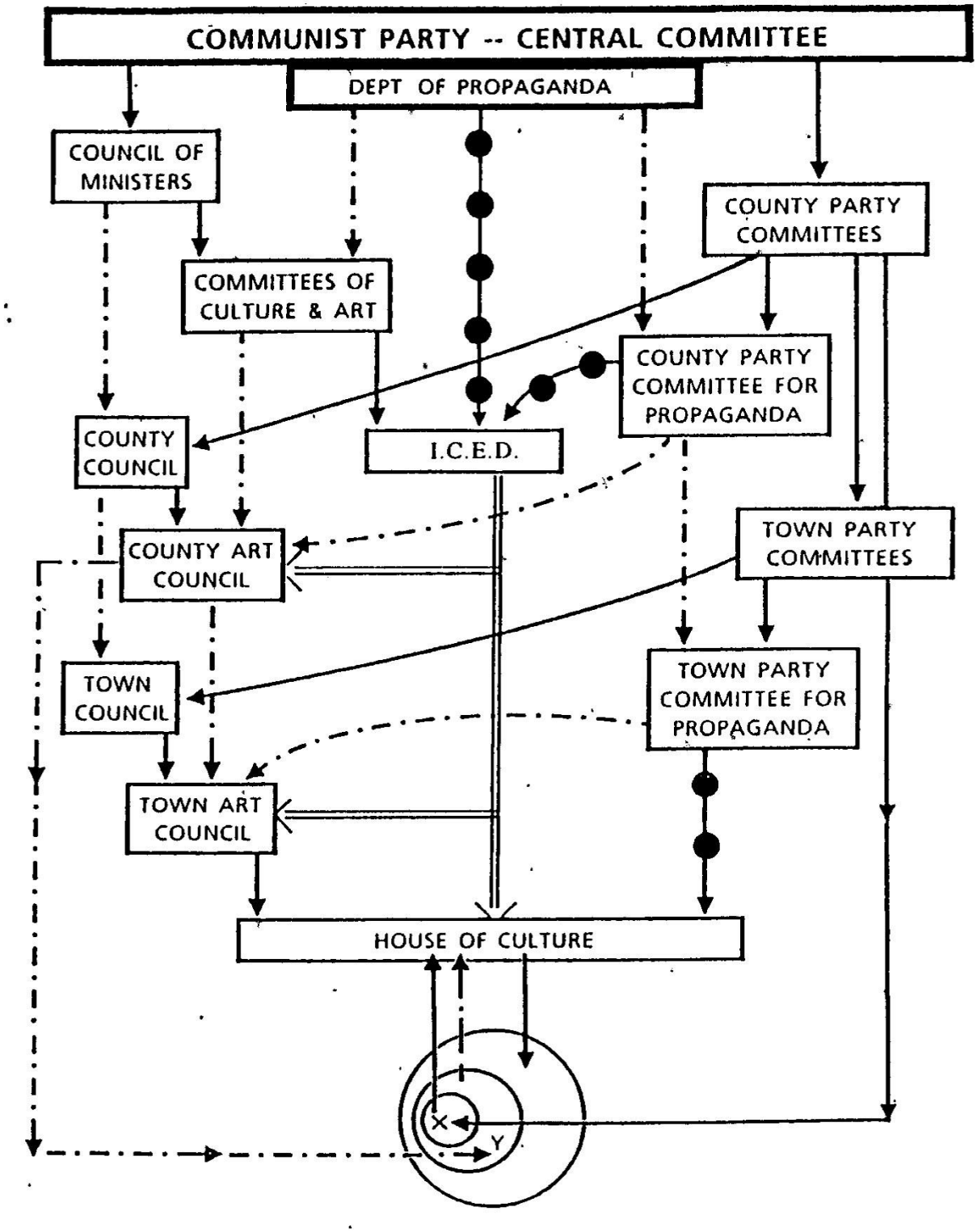


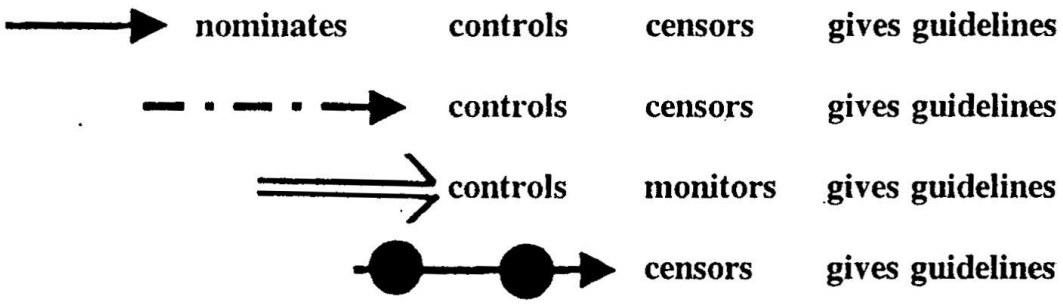
Figure 1.1 cont.

I.C.E.D.

Institutul de Cercetări Etnologice şi Dialectologice

(Institute for Ethnological and Dialectological Research)

Department of Guidance



V	comună/village community
X	Local elites: (1) village Party officers (e.g., Mayor/Party Secretary, Chief of Culture/Deputy Party Secretary, Chief of Security/cell agitators
Y	Local elites: (2) village intellectuals (e.g., schoolteachers, instructors, professionals)

There were numerous subtle methods with which to eradicate such performances deemed not artistic enough. Nixon notes that traditional village dances, rituals and music performances associated with religious holidays or periods after religious services were replaced by enforced hours of *muncă patriotică,* forced patriotic work that often-entailed agricultural labor, or road and canal building (1998). Nixon's account is corroborated by anthropologist David Kideckel, who notes that many "rituals of social solidarity" were waning, if not disappearing altogether during the Ceauşescu era (1993:194). In other instances, certain pagan rituals were remade to be secular and nationalistic—Nixon points to the transformation of the *fiertul fierului* or "Smelting the Iron" ritual, which incorporated "magico-mythical smithying associations," to the "steel maker's dance," which supported national industry (1998:414). Such a technique was leveled especially upon Christian practices as part of a project of mass secularization that went so far as to strip village grave posts of religious imagery and replace them with symbols of Romanian culture and socialism (Nixon 1998:418). Such a co-option of traditional ritual and performances parallels on a local level the similar transition from *muzică ţărănească* to *muzică folclorică*, as discussed above.

Controlling the Elite: Censorship in Art Music and Musicology

Carrot and Stick: Censorship in Socialist Romania

Commanding a more complete hegemony over cultural production in Romania required more than just controlling the production and broadcast of popular and traditional music. It also meant exerting control over the intelligentsia who might serve as the socio-cultural vanguard in cultivating appropriate musical discourses and compositional trajectories within the country.

Granted, a common method of controlling the cultural products of the intelligentsia was outright censorship, which in Romania during particular periods of history was particularly

draconian.[12] However, it was perhaps the subtler, "softer" forms of censorship that were the most effective. Such tactics might best be described as following the "carrot" rather than "stick" approach to censorship, focusing on rewarding artists whose work was in line with socialist ideology rather than punishing those whose work was not—a policy made all the easier with state control of methods of distribution. Such policies were ubiquitous throughout Eastern Europe, and perhaps best theorized by Hungarian writer Miklós Haraszti. Haraszti insists that, at its most effective, late communist censorship sought to eliminate the antagonistic relationship between the artist and the state and develop an environment in which "the artist and the censor—the two faces of official culture—diligently and cheerfully cultivate the gardens of art together" (1987:7). This was done by providing artists who cooperated career opportunities, luxurious retreats, and, perhaps most importantly, their "honorable incorporation" into socialist society by officially acknowledging their indispensable role in cultivating a better, more just national community (*ibid.*, 25). Following Maxim Gorky's assertion that the artist is "the engineer of the soul," artists operating in line with socialist ideology were assured not only that their work was desperately needed, but also it was socially transformative. As Haraszti writes, "in exchange [for cooperation], the artist receives a prize from the revolutionary movement that he painfully lacked when he was free: the satisfaction of being truly needed" (*ibid.*, 31).

This isn't to say that such acts of censorship were only reserved for art music composers or musicologists—similar strategies were deployed for artists in traditional and popular music.

[12] See, for example, the 1974 Press Law, which essentially gave the regime complete purview over publishing, including: the registration and management of all publishing rights; the authorization of any unregistered printing; controlling the access not only to printing plants and presses, but also to personal machines such as typewriters; complete overview of the importation and exportation of media; and oversight in all financial matters within the Romanian media industry (Fischer 1989: 185).

While this section focuses specifically on art music and musicology, it also serves to expose another aspect of the regime's complete strategy of controlling the country's music production.

Art Music Production in Socialist Romania

As detailed in Valentina Sandu-Dediu's *Muzică Românească între 1944-2000* (Romanian Music between 1944-2000), the strategy for redirecting art music composition along official ideological avenues was pursued in ways similar to the control of *muzică folclorică*: namely, by nationalizing the means of production. However, the distribution networks for *muzică populară* were quite different than those of art music. Put simply, the government could not control art music production by controlling recording studios, radio, and television stations alone. Rather, the bottleneck through which the government could exert its power over the dissemination of art music was the Society of Romanian Composers, a group of preeminent composers, musicologists, and ethnomusicologists that sponsored new works, managed artistic copyrights, and published journals and magazines (Sandu-Dediu 2002:12).

As such, the early socialist government exerted pressure on the pre-existing Society of Romanian Composers through a country-wide "cleansing" effort, which sought to remove all "fascists," "imperialists," and generalized "enemies of the people" from public positions. This initiative resulted in the departure of almost the entirety of the Society's ruling body, many of whom had received international acclaim for their work: George Enescu was removed in 1946, Mihail Jora in 1949, and Constantin Brăiloiu in 1944. They were supplanted by a group led by Matei Socor, a communist activist who was jailed throughout the Second World War (*ibid.*, 13). In addition to the change of leadership, a series of policy changes and laws placed the Society in closer relationship to other cultural councils and bodies within the Politburo, as a means to place it under the aegis of political ideologues and propagandists (*ibid.*, 16-17).

During the Stalinist era, the Society of Romanian Composers—which was re-titled the Composer's Union—began a program emphasizing the creation of "simplified" music, inspired by and written for the working class, and avoiding overt chromaticism, formalism, and most of all, dodecaphonism. Such "technical abuses" were seen as exemplars of Western bourgeois decadence and, in the era of the Zhdanov Doctrine, which distilled all conflicts into a division between the "imperialist" West and "democratic" East, were expressly forbidden (Sandu-Dediu 2002:16-17).[13] In the stead of such techniques the regime promoted works that presented working-class realities and the importance of the Communist Party. Musically, this often took the form in Romania of countless compositions for mass song, arrangements of folkloric material, and patriotic fanfares and marches.

With the death of Stalin in 1953, a gradual "thaw" occurred that would relax some of the stringent aesthetic mandates outlined above. Ion Dumitrescu replaced Socor in 1954 as the president of the Union of Composers of the Popular Republic of Romania (renamed as such in 1949), and Mihail Jora was rehabilitated, as were various Romanian composers living abroad who were additionally asked to rejoin the Union (*ibid.*, 20-21). Dumitrescu also set to work reorganizing the Union by developing various sub-groups categorized by the musical works they would oversee (symphonic and chamber music, light music, musicology) and strengthening various regional chapters of the union throughout the country. By expanding the organizational structure of the Union, one might argue that Dumitrescu placed its everyday functioning further away from the direct oversight of central cultural committees. Whether it was because of Dumitrescu's maneuvering, or simply due to the nationwide liberalization that occurred by the late 1950s, many composers who experimented with compositional techniques formerly

[13] This policy was developed by Soviet politician and Stalin's successor-in-waiting Andrei Zhdanov.

considered “decadent” (what Zhdanov termed “formalist”) were allowed to pursue their work in the late 1960s and early 1970s, though admittedly the resulting pieces were still not nearly as often disseminated as those that stuck closely to the ideals of socialist ideology. Lastly, Dumitrescu managed to develop two publications entirely self-managed by the Composer’s Union, an impressive accomplishment given the political circumstances (*ibid.*, 22-23, 35).

By the early 1970s this period of relative liberalization under Dumitrescu gradually came to a close. This was largely due to two factors: the policy of prioritizing amateur music making over professional music, and Romania’s economic stagnation. In 1976, Dumitrescu was dismissed and Petre Brâncuşi, a musicologist and communist ideologue, was appointed president of the Union. The following year, an earthquake in Bucharest damaged the Cantacuzino Palace, the Composer’s Union headquarters, serving as a convenient excuse to relocate the organization to less prestigious environs. This was coupled with a dramatic decrease in scholarships for music conservatories, and funding for art music in general. The number of art music creation circles (regionally based composer organizations) diminished greatly, and passports to travel to international festivals were increasingly difficult to obtain (*ibid.*, 38-40).

From the point of view of controlling the dissemination of art music, the state’s infiltration of the Composer’s Union was widely successful. As Sandu-Dediu writes, the Union was an essential roadblock between composers and their potential audience:

> . . . in Romania there did not exist in practice compositions outside this organism [the Union]: even non-member composers and students of composition, in the moment when they would be included in any concert program, needed to present their respective work to the office of composition at the Union, in order to obtain at least the qualification of being “good for distribution”—otherwise the work

> was banned. Thus, masked under the appearance of professional control, ideological censorship was a permanent presence. . . (*ibid.*, 17)

By controlling which works were considered "good for distribution," cultural engineers were in effect deciding which types of works would be privileged. A mindset thus developed among composers that one's artistic persona and oeuvre could be better valued by adapting to state aesthetic policy: those that cooperated were given high cultural positions, opportunities for retreats, and orchestral musicians at their disposal (*ibid.*, 16). Such a form of censorship aligns almost perfectly with Haratszti's description of the artistic environment in socialist Hungary, where the "carrot" approach to rewarding artists who acquiesced to socialist propaganda proved to be an effective means of controlling artistic production.

Controlling Musicology and the Musical Discourse

Just as the government co-opted the music industry through its control of Electrecord and state radio, and art music production through its influence over the Composer's Union, cultural engineers also sought to control those who created the discourses surrounding musical production: specifically, academic musicologists, folklorists, and ethnomusicologists. This process primarily entailed controlling the dissemination and promotion of certain types of research. Throughout academia, intellectual work during the socialist period needed to adhere in one way or another to the proclaimed ideological ideals proscribed at a given era of Romanian socialism. The particularities of such ideals changed throughout the decades, but generally vacillated between the promotion of proletarian internationalism and of Romanian nationalism, especially during the final years of Gheorghiu-Dej's regime. In terms of the prioritization of proletarian internationalism, one may cite the explosion of interest during the socialist era among Romanian folklorists on the aforementioned *doine de haiduci*, or outlaw ballads. Drawing from a

Hobsbawmian (2000) argument that such figures in folklore were a Marxist archetype representing resistance to the domination of the upper classes, musicologists and folklorists sympathetic to the state painted such traditional songs as evidence of the past class oppression the communist project sought to overcome.[14] At the same time, the figure of the haiduc in Romania (as elsewhere in the Balkans) is highly nationalistic, and in such a way adhered closely to the nationalism the socialist regime was consistently trying to assert.

Perhaps the most direct example of the state's early attempts to align music research with socialist ideology (and the problems therein) can be found in the research of religious music. While not officially banning the practice of religion altogether, the regime, adhering to a socialist worldview that dismissed metaphysical, mystic, or spiritual understandings, limited the social power of organized religion in the country as much as possible (Pieslak 2007b:110-111). However, the elimination of musical traditions deriving from religious institutions presented problems for cultural engineers, given that such practices were a centuries-old facet of Romanian culture. To make matters more complicated, religious music was often adapted from much older pagan traditions, themselves alluding to a mysticism and metaphysics that also ran counter to the socialist ideology's emphasis on objective realism.[15]

In her analysis of Romanian *colinde* and *cântece de stea* ("Star Songs"), traditional winter carols often with Christian associations, Sabina Pieslak details such contradictions as they existed for the early Romanian communists:

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[14] See Amzulescu (1963, 1964), Ionescu-Nişcove (1958,) Marin-Buga (1963), Vrabie (1966). For a fuller account of the objectively problematic ways the haiduc was presented during socialism, see Vătavu 2016, which critiques the above works.

[15] See Kligman's (1977) monograph on the *Căluş* ritual particularly for further discussion on the ambiguous position of mysticism and paganism during the socialist era.

> . . .the historical identification of this music with important national, ethnic, and religious currents in Romanian society posed a challenging dilemma for Romania's Communist leaders [. . .] As they pursued a "top down" offensive to create a socialist state, leaders had to reconcile their aims for a scientifically atheist, industrial, and urban society with a culture that for centuries pursued a predominately Christian, rural, and agrarian way of life – and *colinde* and star songs were an outward expression and celebration of these aspects of Romanian life and emblems of Romanian nationalism (2004:13)

Pieslak continues by arguing that the relatively small size and general unpopularity of the Communist Party during the interwar period all but necessitated that they not only allow *colinde* and other Christian songs to continue to be performed, but also that they utilize the music to legitimate their own adherence to Romanian heritage. As a result, intellectuals sympathetic to the Party adapted the music in the same way early Christians co-opted older pagan rites and practices. For example, the Star of Bethlehem that stands as a center symbol in *cântece de stea* became the communist star, and the light of Christ became the "light of the world" or the "light of socialism" (as an example of such a process, see Figure 1.2) (*ibid.*, 16).

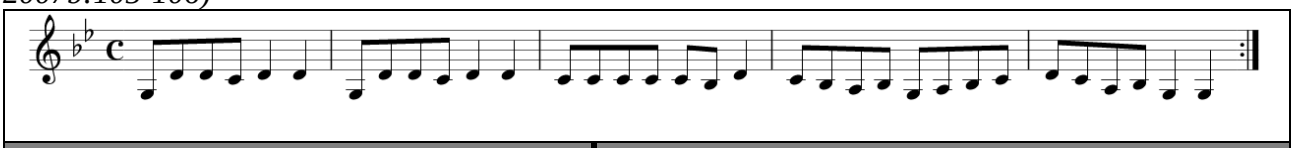
Through this process, lexical substitutions were enforced in musicological and ethnomusicological collections and anthologies of religious song. Descriptors such as "religious" and "ecclesiastical," were banned in official publications, replaced by more official and appropriately secular terms such as "Byzantine" and "Gregorian." Musicologists changed song titles to be as secular as possible, and in the cases where they deemed the text entirely too religious to edit, they simply removed it, leaving only the notated transcription in the published collection (Sandu-Dediu 2002:40). Such interventions, it should be noted, were not limited to

colinde: Marian-Bălaşa notes that similar processes of lyrical manipulation are found in *pluguşor* ("little plow") songs, a popular style of recitation traditionally related to agricultural work. As he notes, in academic collections of *pluguşor* texts, lyrics alluding to mysticism or religion (prayer for a plentiful crop and a fertile season, for example) were de-emphasized in order to exalt the labor itself (1998).

The prioritization of nationalism that occurred later in the Gheorghiu-Dej era resulted in large volumes of monographs devoted to efforts proving that the author's musical interests were inherently nationalist. This process of nationalist legitimation particularly in Romanian academic circles reached its pinnacle with the development of protochronism, a theoretical approach that sought to establish the hidden Romanian origin of a variety of artistic, musical, and literary movements. Such an approach allowed scholars to continue to pursue their respective interests so long as they were able to "prove" such interest had Romanian roots (see Verdery 1991). As a result, Rădulescu argues that "all the legitimate [musicological] discourses were protochronist" during the Ceauşescu era (2002:153).

In their research programs, scholars followed a paradigm which Marin Marian-Bălaşa terms "innocent romantic amateurism." According to Marian-Bălaşa, this approach prioritized the production of monographs dedicated to the investigation and preservation of various folk musical traditions which were more often than not taken as wholly Romanian and testament to the glorious diversity of ethnic Romanian musical practice (2007:200). Such accounts erased any acknowledgement of traditional music's non-Romanian elements, whether Hungarian, Roma,

Figure 1.2: Socialist Adaptation of a Traditional Star Song (Changes in Bold) (Pieslak 2007b:105-106)



Traditional star song: **"*Steaua sus răsare*"** **("The Star is Rising on High")**		**Communist Syncretization:** **"*Steaua muncitoarească*"** **("The Star of the Working class")** **(Textual changes in bold)**	
Steaua sus răsare Că o taină mare Steaua strălucește Și lumii vestește Și lumii vestește	The star is rising on high Like a great mystery The star shines And proclaims to the Magi.	Steaua sus răsare Ca o taină mare **Este steaua noastră** **A clasei muncitoare.**	The star is rising on high Like a great mystery **It is our star,** **Of the working class.**
Ca astăzi Curata Preanevinovata Fecioara Maria Naște pe Mesia Naște pe Mesia	That today, the Pure, Most innocent Virgin Mary Gives birth to the Messiah	Steaua strălucește Și lumii vestește **Cum se mai trudește** **Cel care muncește**	The star shines And announces to the world **How he keeps on striving** **The one who labors.**
Magii cum zăriră Steaua și porniră Mergând după rază Pe Hristos sa-l vază Pe Hristos sa-l vază	The Magi, when they sighted The Star, and started Following the ray of light To see Christ.	Steaua luminează Și adeverează **Case oropsite** **Bordeie prăpădite.**	The star illuminates And confirms **Poor houses,** **Wretched shacks.**
Și dacă porniră Îndată-L găsiră La Dansul intrară Și se închinară Și se închinară	And when they arrived They immediately found Him Entered to see Him And knelt down before Him	**Voi, de-aici din casă,** **Nu aveţi la masă** **Pîine albă şi cîrnaţi** **Cum au cei bogaţi.**	**You, here in this house,** **Don't have at your table** **White bread and sausages** **Like the rich people do.**
Cu daruri gătite Lui Hristos menite Ducând fiecare Bucurie mare Bucurie mare	With gifts prepared Especially for Christ Partaking, each one In great joy,	**Tineri, feţe supte,** **Care vor să lupte,** **Fete muncitoare** **Zac în închisoare.**	**Young people with drawn faces** **Who want to fight,** **Girls who work** **Lie in jails.**

Care bucurie Și aici sa fie De la tinerețe Pan-la bătrânețe Pan-la bătrânețe	Which happiness May it also be here for you From youth To old Age	**Afară, şomerii** ***Dor*m in frigul** **serii;** **Ieri, nici azi, nici** **mîine** **Ei nu au de pîine.** **Patronul te fură** **Șeful te înjură** **Și fără dreptate** **Te rupe, te bate** **Daca vreţi să-** **nvingeţi** **Rîndurile strîngeţi,** **Muncitori uniţi-vă!** **Muncitori uniţi-vă!**	**Outside, the unemployed** **Sleep in the cold of the** **evening;** **Yesterday, not today, not** **tomorrow,** **They don't have money** **for bread** **The owner steals from you** **The boss swears at you** **And unjustly** **He breaks you, he beats** **you.** **If you want to prevail,** **Gather your ranks,** **Workers, unite!** **Workers, unit!**

Turkish, or otherwise. As Rădulescu writes, it was a "point of honor" for such works to highlight "the differences between Romanian music and that of other coexisting ethnic groups (for example the Hungarians) by stipulating past histories and the quantitative and qualitative superiority of Romanian music, [and] through the 'intriguing' denunciation of Hungarian folklore as 'stealing' the beautiful melodies of Romanians in Transylvania" (2002:164).

The Ambiguities, Contradictions, and Possibilities of State Aesthetic Ideology

A New Socialist Aesthetic?

In the above overview of the development of popular, traditional, and art music and music scholarship during the socialist period, it becomes apparent that, at an organizational level, the state was fairly successful in maintaining its hegemony over musical production. So much is to be expected: when cultural and educational institutions are completely nationalized, mass broadcast of music and the promotion of personnel within any given institution can easily be controlled. The major roadblock preventing the regime from gaining complete control over music production was therefore less organizational and more ideological. While the regime could control musicians' pensions, record pressing, and the radio waves, they could not control how their ideological aesthetic dicta would be received by musicians and audiences—especially when the details of such aesthetic ideology fluctuated depending upon the power struggles within the government at any given period, not to mention the inherent contradictions that lurked beneath any promotion of the ideal aesthetic purity or social efficacy of a cultural work. Therefore, the promotion of a certain aesthetic ideal that would support socialist ideology was always coupled with seemingly endless rounds of debate over how such vaguely articulated ideals could and could not be interpreted musically. Through this debate emerged a proliferation of new and

innovative works of art—some of which, as will be discussed in the third chapter, even managed to be subversive to the ruling regime.

Early in the socialist period, many of the aesthetic guidelines the Communist Party promoted came from Russian intellectuals—foremost among them writer Maxim Gorky. In a speech during the first Soviet Writers Congress in 1934, Gorky laid the foundation of what came be the underlying aesthetic vision for most of the Warsaw Pact countries. In the speech, Gorky proclaimed "bourgeois society. . . has completely lost the capacity for invention in art," and called both for the development of talent within the proletariat population (through educational programs) and for the creation of new forms of literary art that reflected the material realities of the working-class majority. The expressed purposes of such a reorientation were abundantly clear: to reform the position of the artist as not a decadent formalist, but one that "participates in the work of creating realities, in the struggle for the renovation of life" (1935). Haraszti defines this iteration of artistic responsibility well:

> The artist [becomes] a social planner. He not only inspires but also organizes his public [. . .] The aesthetic merit of a work of art is measured by the extent to which, in its structure, fantasy world, and passions, it conforms to the needs of concrete social action; otherwise, the artist's commitment would not be credible. Truly artistic works are those in which the socialist message is indivisible from the aesthetic means chosen to express it. The artist must package the message in such a way that the audience experiences it as a kind of revelation. The best package for this purpose is the world itself. That is why the socially engaged artist must "mirror reality." Realism is the most accessible and least distorting way of encapsulating this message. (1987:39)

In lieu of decadent accounts of bourgeois “playboys,” “cranks,” and “social degenerates” illustrated in much contemporary Russian literature, Gorky maintained, socialist authors should look to exemplary characters taken from the folklore authored (or so the argument goes) by peasants and workers. This emphasis upon folklore as an appropriate source for artistic inspiration allowed Gorky’s ideas to move beyond literature and into multiple artistic domains, including music. Musical institutions throughout Eastern Europe thus invested in pre-existing folk music collection programs, which would provide the raw material, so to speak, to be polished into “high art” by conservatory trained composers and performed by conservatory trained virtuosos. In truth, this was not a radical change in priority for many musical institutions, as the collection and “polished” performance of folk material was a nationalist project for almost a century before it was socialist one.

But while heads of institutions were likely accustomed to the promotion of their nation’s folkloric material, aligning such materials with socialist ideology presented new challenges. The first complication arose from the simple fact that, despite Gorky’s romantic notions, very often traditional folklore did not align in the least with Marxist-Leninist ideology. As folklorists could quickly attest, Eastern European folk literature often features an abundance of pagan or Christian themes, explicit sexual references and descriptions, superstitions, and mysticism— all of which were anathema to official Soviet socialist ideology (Olson 2004:40). Moreover, peasant music often lacked the clear diatonicism that was officially privileged in compositional circles— especially if such music borrowed from the Ottoman musical systems.

These are but two of a myriad of contradictions within the official aesthetic policy that allowed more flexibility for composers than one might initially assume. The promotion of one’s art in such circumstances meant not necessarily aligning works with vague aesthetic mandates,

but rather successfully arguing that such work incorporated ideological ideals. As such, the new socialist aesthetic ultimately did not demand "evidence of ideological fealty, but rather proof of sincere participation" (Haraszti 1987:79). As Tochka has argued in his work on composers in socialist Albania, often the measure of one's success as a composer in such an environment was less how well one's oeuvre adopted socialist aesthetics, but rather how easily one could present one's work using Marxist discourse (2012). Furthermore, as discussed in detail in the third chapter, this practice of orienting one's inherently non-ideological work with ideological discourse opened up the potential for subtle political subversions.

Romanian Nationalism Develops

After the end of the Stalinist period in Eastern Europe, such artistic strategies continued, though now delineated increasingly along nationalistic lines rather than the Soviet-inspired proletariat internationalism. It is no coincidence that in 1954, a year after Stalin's death, there emerged the first conceptualizations of a Romanian "National School" of composition, which questioned Soviet-inspired works and debated what a uniquely Romanian school of composition might entail (Sandu-Dediu 2002:20-24). In this new environment artists simply needed to prove their compositions were appropriately nationalistic. Thus, composers could employ Western avant-garde techniques in the music so long as they continued to prove its Romanian origins.[16] Such composers, while watched closely and perhaps promoted less than those writing mass songs and patriotic fanfares, were nonetheless tolerated (*ibid.*, 74). One possible reason for their survival was their ability to maintain a thread of nationalism or patriotism in their work. As

[16] In terms of the cadre of experimental composers developing in the 1970s, Sandu-Dediu lists Ştefan Niculescu, Myriam Marbe, Dan Constantinescu, Aurel Stoe, Doru Popovici, Adrian Raţiu, Mircea Istrate, and Cornel Ţăranu (2002: 24). Ensembles she lists include *Musica Nova* (conducted by Hilda Jerea), *Ars Nova* (coordinated by Cornel Ţăranu), and the *Madrigal* choir (Marin Constantin) (ibid., 33).

Sandu-Dediu notes, “many of the younger Romanian generation adopted serial techniques that were grafted onto the polyphonic, folkloric, and Byzantine tradition” (1998:53-54). In sum, the artistic struggle for cultural producers who wanted their work recognized in Romania was not simply one of avoiding the censors, but of intimately understanding the dynamic intricacies of Romanian socialist policy at any given moment.

It should lastly be noted that such practices of aligning one’s work with the ideological ideals propagated during a particular era of Romanian socialist history were not relegated to art music. As Rădulescu notes, the retinue of popular artists supported by the state rotated constantly, in accordance with how well they adhered to the aesthetic and ideological precepts of a particular era. Speaking of popular musicians Maria Tănase (a singer and actor famous in the 1950s and 1960s), Sofia Vicoveanca, (a *muzică populară singer in the 1970s),* and Gheorghe Zamfir (a panpipe player and “world music” performer internationally prolific in the 1980s), she writes:

> Each of the three stars presented above achieved success because their music maintained a politically acceptable quality during the particular period in which they performed. In order to succeed in the 1980s, Maria Tănase would need to rigidify her music and outfits, which would be held as a little too nonchalant; in the 1950s, during the popularity of proletarian internationalism and exuberant pop symphonic pieces, Sofia Vicoveanca would appear shabby and insufficiently festive and would fail to achieve popularity; and by the second half of the 1980s Zamfir would have passed in the West as counterfeit and lacking substance (which is what happened). (2002:141-142)

It was therefore vital that artists understood the ideological zeitgeist lest they become blacklisted. Such was the case, for example, with Tudor Gheorghe, an actor and *muzică folk* singer who was one of the most popular and mediated figures in Romanian music from the 1960s to the 1980s, until he was blacklisted from performing in the late 1980s due to accusations of anti-communist tendencies (Anghel-Dobre 2009).[17]

To conclude: like Haraszti's Hungary, the music environment in Socialist Romania might best be conceptualized as a "velvet prison," or as a classical pianist I spoke with who lived during the era termed it, a "beautiful prison." Through the nationalization of media and the infiltration of research and musical institutions, musicians and composers in Romania operated within a political and economic environment tightly controlled by the state. However, the continuous debates over aesthetics, coupled with the inherent contradictions within promoted cultural ideologies allowed artists a degree of creative flexibility and innovation. Such approaches, however, changed with the appointment of Nicolae Ceaușescu, as music and musical performance were promoted not only as vehicles for socialist propaganda, but also the very means through which socialist citizens were to be developed into perfect subjects for the increasingly totalitarian leader. This change in musical function, coupled with the new implications it evoked, will be the focus of the following two chapters.

[17] This blacklisting, as we shall see in the following chapter, ended up serving Gheorghe quite well in the postsocialist era.

CHAPTER 2: MASS SPECTACLE AND THE CULTIVATION OF A NEW SOCIALIST SUBJECTIVITY

In Gheorghiu-Dej's Romania, the Khrushchev era marked the beginning of a gradual dissociation from the Soviet sphere and an ideological adherence to proletariat internationalism toward an increasing focus on national sovereignty. This process was largely finalized under Gheorghiu-Dej's successor, Nicolae Ceaușescu, who, by refusing to aid the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, established Romania's maverick status among Warsaw Pact countries.

Ceaușescu's ideological emphasis on national sovereignty, however, quickly became subsumed by his own cult of personality and desire to reform Romanian politics to resemble the "Dynastic Socialism" models of communist North Korea. In order to legitimate his rule, Ceaușescu initiated a "mini-cultural revolution" which sought in part to use the arts (including music) as a vehicle to align the Romanian citizenry with a "New Life" under the burgeoning dictatorship. This chapter examines the role the mass spectacle Cântarea României played in this larger project of creating a new nationalist socialist community. As I argue, the development and implementation of this enormous spectacle sought not only to legitimate Ceaușescu's rule by symbolically aligning him with a lineage of past Romanian rulers, but also as a sort of *mis-en-scene* in which the populace was coerced into performing as perfect, Ceaușescu-adoring citizens. Such a project was accomplished thanks to the inherently ritualistic nature of this event.

Romania 1965-1979

A Change of Leadership

On March 19, 1965, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej died of lung cancer, leaving Romania's highest political position without an official successor. Out of the subsequent power struggle emerged Nicolae Ceaușescu, a relatively unknown young official of "small stature" and a

"gawky appearance," who served as Minister of the Armed Forces (Fischer 1989:1). Ostensibly Ceaușescu was considered a surprising choice for First Secretary; however, it was precisely his youth and relative obscurity that made him the perfect candidate, as it granted him a certain immunity from the decades-long infighting between senior members of the Politburo. To this end, Ceaușescu found a powerful supporter in Prime Minister Ion Gheorghe Maurer, who felt the young candidate would be the one most likely to continue along a path of dissociation from the Soviet Union and cultivate a closer relationship with the West—policies Gheorghiu-Dej initiated during the Khrushchev era. In sum, Ceaușescu was the least likely of the contenders for the position to be compromised by relationships either with the Soviet-aligned old guard of the Politburo or the Soviets themselves (Tismaneanu 2003:186).

Maurer's perception of Ceaușescu's future political trajectory proved quite apt: upon attaining the position of First Secretary, he remained steadfastly upon the path of dissociation from the Soviet sphere. Rather than continuing to have Romania act as a bread basket fueling the USSR's ongoing industrialization, Ceaușescu further developed a program of rapid industrialization, which initially led to a better economy and higher quality of life for many Romanians in the late 1960s.[18] With this separation from Soviet economic control, Ceaușescu also began distancing the country from Russia culturally: Russified street and building names were reverted back to their Romanian originals, and figures of national heritage historically critical of the Russian Empire (most famously the nationally celebrated 19th century poet and writer Mihai Eminescu) were rehabilitated, their works allowed to be re-published.[19] Perhaps the most antagonistic manifestation of this policy was the mass publication of Marx's pamphlet

[18] Deletant notes, for example, higher rates of car ownership and consumer electronics (refrigerators, television sets, vacuum cleaners, etc.) during this era (1998: 113).
[19] See Verdery 1991: 158-159 on the process of rehabilitating Eminescu particularly.

"Notes on the Romanians," in which the father of communism criticized Russian claims to Bessarabia, or modern day Moldova (Shafir 1985:50). Such a project was if nothing else a thinly veiled attempt to equate Czarist Russian claims over Bessarabia with the USSR's claims to Moldova. Finally, Ceauşescu distanced himself from the prior regime as well, which many felt was too close to the USSR: Gheorghiu-Dej's violently repressive policies of the past were denounced; Lucreţiu Pătrășcanu was rehabilitated; and many of the old guard from the previous regime was ousted from the Party (Tismaneanu 2003:199).

These policies of economic and cultural sovereignty won Ceauşescu wide support in the mid-to-late 1960s, the peak of which occurred in 1968 when he publicly denounced and refused to give military aid to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. Such condemnation reflected a growing assertion among Eastern European governments that individual nations should have political and economic authority outside of Soviet control, a stance that ultimately served Ceauşescu well. By promoting national sovereignty and self-determination he simultaneously pleased the Romanian populace who were skeptical of the Soviets, and secured his growing control over the country. Moreover, Romania's increasing "rogue" status within the Warsaw Pact countries caught the attention of Western governments, which saw the country as a potential Cold War ally. By the early 1970s, Ceauşescu was at the pinnacle of popularity among both Romanian citizens and Western governments.

Ceauşescu Goes East

On May 31, 1971, six years after his promotion to First Secretary, Ceauşescu and his wife Elena went on a diplomatic trip to socialist East Asia, with visits to China, Mongolia, North Korea, and North Vietnam. At this point the Sino-Soviet split was well defined, and Ceauşescu, ever the diplomat, sought to establish good relations with East Asia in spite of Romania's greater

proximity to Moscow. While arguably a simple diplomatic mission, his experiences on this trip would go on to inform his politics for the rest of his leadership.

In Andrei Ujică's 2011 film *The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceauşescu*, a documentary crafted entirely of archival footage, the viewer gets the sense very quickly that Ceauşescu's visits to China and North Korea entailed much more than simply maintaining diplomatic relations. Footage from the film of Ceauşescu's welcome in North Korea, for example, reveals the thoroughly sensational nature of these visits, replete with lavish parades and concerts featuring legions of synchronized dancing women, huge adoring crowds holding placards with political slogans, fireworks, and immense outdoor theatrical stages.

Performances of such grandeur were not limited to Kim's North Korea. Examining both Chinese and Romanian newspaper accounts of these diplomatic visits, Adam Tolnay notes that:

> This spectacle of mass greeting was repeated over and over again with the very same elements present: masses of well-dressed people holding flags, banners, or flowers while enthusiastically cheering by the side of the road as the motorcade carrying the delegation passes by [. . .] In Beijing performers dressed in traditional costumes performed choreographed music and dance scenes under a 20-meter-high portrait of Ceauşescu. In Nanjing hundreds of thousands of citizens waited around the city's many bridges decorated with placards stating, "We welcome the Romanian party and government delegation." As the delegation crossed the bridge, people on and under the bridge began singing patriotic songs. Likewise, when the Romanian guests passed near the people's square, an organized chorus of citizens intoned, "We firmly support that Romanian people keep doing the independent rightful struggle!" "Long live friendship between the people of China

> and Romania." In Shanghai the city committee organized military practice games for the dignitaries to view as they entered the city. (1994:14)

Given the immense expenditure of both time and money required for such ceremonies, one cannot help but wonder if the regimes in China and North Korea had motivations outside of simply welcoming a fellow communist leader from but one of six countries in the Warsaw Pact in glorious fashion. In her examination of mass spectacle in Uzbekistan, Laura Adams argues that state-financed spectacles in the post-Soviet country were targeted to a (perhaps imagined) outside group, an international audience that grants the state a global legitimacy (2010). While the circumstances behind conducting such performances are clearly different in the case of the Communist North Korean and Chinese regimes, their motivations were similar to those of the Uzbeks Adams discusses. That is, these performances were as much about glorifying Romanian and East Asian Communism as they were about mediating their new alliance to the entire Second World. Thus, Ceaușescu's trip might be termed an act of performative diplomacy *par excellence*. Still graced by positive public opinion due to his dissociation from the Soviet sphere, Ceaușescu's nearly month-long visit to East Asia articulated to Romania and the entire Second World where he literally stood in the deepening Sino-Soviet ideological and political split. And such a stance was surely not lost on the East Asian governments, who were themselves creating similar performances: through immense spectacle presenting to the world their new Eastern European ally, a country that was the next-door neighbor of the USSR.

In historical terms, Ceaușescu's trip east would not become an ephemeral moment, a bit of performative diplomacy that would soon be washed away by waves of subsequent Cold War affairs. Rather, his experience in East Asia had concrete repercussions for the rest of the regime's existence. Inspired particularly by the North Korean model, shortly after arriving back in

Romania Ceauşescu set about to transition the very nature of rule from one of the dictatorship of the Party to the dictatorship of the individual—or more appropriately, a single family. This transition to what many historians of the era term "dynastic socialism" was achieved within 15 years of his return from East Asia. In a compilation published in 1985, Georgescu remarks:

> Dynastic socialism, at least in the case of Romania, is hardly a metaphor. Through the president's wife, three brothers, a son, and a brother-in-law, to mention only the inner circle, the family directly controls the presidency, the government, such key departments as defense, interior, planning, science and technology, and youth problems – as well as the Party cadres. (1985:7)

For those officials that remained unrelated, Ceauşescu devised another method to secure his absolute power: constant rotation, as high-ranking officials were continually shifted to different posts in departments for which they may or may not have had competence. While such a policy sacrificed bureaucratic stability, it succeeded in creating a government in which "no individual was allowed to remain in one position long enough to establish a fiefdom independent of direction from the Party leader" (Fischer 1989:191). By the 1970s, and partially thanks to his East Asia visit, the short period of liberalization in Romania was over, and a new era of repression under the dynastic leadership of Ceauşescu had begun.

Symbols, Scripts, and Roles: Developing a New Romanian Identity

A New Life, a New Man

As a result of Ceauşescu's gradual dissociation from the USSR, the early 1970s acted as an ideological turning point for the Romanian socialist government. Katherine Verdery describes the emerging ideological paradigm that characterized this transition as "symbolic-ideological," in which the previous official discourses of Romanian-Soviet camaraderie were largely replaced

with those of nationalist socialist self-determination. The extent to which this paradigm shift occurred, Verdery argues, made the country unique compared to others in the Warsaw Pact countries during this time, in that "the most prevalent symbolic appeal in Romania, more than in other states of the bloc, was to values of the Nation" (1991:100-101).[20]

This switch in ruling ideology necessitated as much cultural change among the populace as it did organizational and policy change within the Party. After decades of living under the ideology of proletarian internationalism emphasized by the Gheorghiu-Dej regime, citizens had to be retrained, so to speak, in "correct" modes of Romanian subjectivity. Inspired by the East Asian model, Ceauşescu sought to instigate such a cultural change via a "mini cultural revolution," which he announced in his "July Thesis" speech on July 6th, 1971. This cultural revolution was vital, Ceauşescu maintained, to the "multilateral development" of the country. As Shafir describes:

> The term "multilateral development" was chosen to indicate that the future of socialism in Romania was not only a function of the structural development, but also one of supercultural achievement. Infrastructural (industrial) progress alone would not create socialist consciousness. And since this consciousness bore heavily on the entire mechanism of social development, material investments must be accompanied by the necessary "spiritual investments." The member of the "multilaterally developed society," the "multilaterally developed New Man," must master all its values. The realm of consciousness was thus declared

[20] A similar argument has been made by other scholars: Georgescu cites the 11th Congress of the Romanian Communist Party in 1974 as the beginning of Ceauşescu's nationalist cult-of-personality, while Tismaneanu traces the earliest expression of this cult-of-personality to a series of writings in honor of the president's 55th birthday in 1973 (2003: 213).

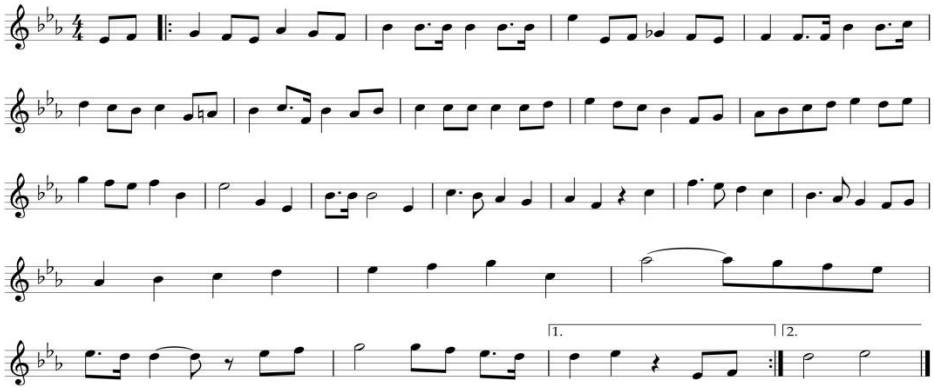
> to be no less decisive than that of material achievement. Consequently, the Party could not conceivably abandon its leading role in either of them. (1985:57)

Musically, the cultural manifestation of this transformation in Romanian society was perhaps most clearly illustrated in 1977, when the pre-existing national anthem composed during the early socialist period, "*Te Slăvim, România*" ("We Glorify Thee, Romania"), was replaced by newly composed "*Trei Culori*" ("Three Colors"). In so doing, the problematic lyrics of Soviet adoration in "*Te Slăvim, România*" (figure 1.2) were replaced with the much more nationalistic "*Trei Culori*" (figure 1.3), which speaks less to Romanian-USSR solidarity and more Romanian sovereignty. Through such changes, the notion of a strong connection between Romania and the USSR became effectively erased from public consciousness.

However, it wasn't enough to simply transform political discourse through new anthems and slogans: one of foundational goals for the mini-cultural revolution was the transformation of Romanian subjectivity itself away from older models and towards those that adhered to Ceaușescu's nationalist visions of Socialist Romania. In pursuit of this goal the regime developed and widely promoted a propagandistic model that would serve as an archetype for the modern Romanian socialist citizen: The New Man (*omul nou*), or the more gender-neutral variant, the New Life (*viaţa nouă*).

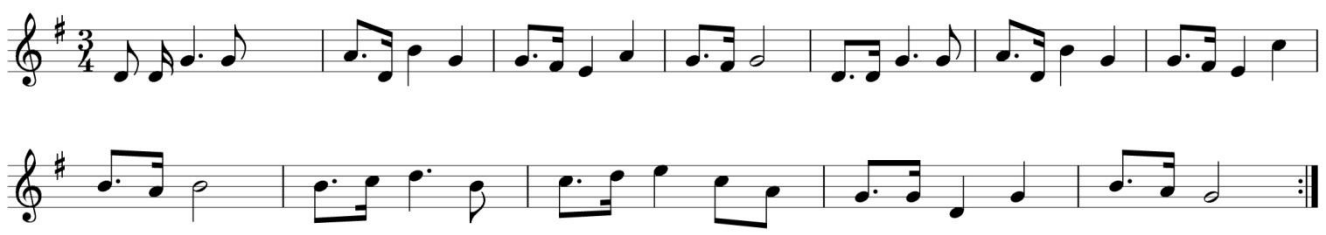
The ideal of a New Man who is to usher in a new era is neither a recent nor solely Romanian concept. While the origins of the particularly communist variation of the concept might have come from Marx's image of the "Whole Man" (1963) unburdened by capitalist relations of production and free to live in complete and equal reciprocity with all of society, the Romanian iteration of the concept owes its origins to a much greater extent to the Soviet Union. In 1961, a document titled "The Moral Code of the Builder of Communism" was adopted

Figure 1.3: The Romanian National Anthem 1953-1977, "Te slăvim, România" (emphasis mine)



Te slăvim, România, pământ părintesc Mândre plaiuri sub cerul tău paşnic rodesc E zdrobit al trecutului jug blestemat Nu zadarnic, străbunii eroi au luptat Astăzi noi împlinim visul lor minunat.	We glorify thee, Romania, our fatherland The proud lands under your peaceful skies bear fruit The cursed yoke of our past has been smashed Our heroic ancestors did not fight in vain Today we fulfill their great dream.
Puternică, liberă, Pe soartă stăpână Trăiască Republica Populară Română	Powerful, free A master of our fate Long live the Romanian People's Republic
Înfrăţit fi-va veşnic al nostru popor **Cu poporul Sovietic eliberator.** **Leninismul ni-e far şi tărie si avânt** **Noi urmăm cu credinţă Partidul ne-nfrânt,** **Făurim socialismul pe-al ţării pământ.**	**May our people be joined forever,** **With the liberating Soviet people** **May Leninism be the lighthouse that pulls us forward** **We follow with faith our invincible Party** **Creating Socialism on our country's land.**
Puternică, liberă, Pe soartă stăpână Trăiască Republica Populară Română	Powerful, free A master of our fate Long live Romania, The People's Republic.
Noi uzine clădim, rodul holdei sporim Vrem în pace cu orice popor să trăim Dar duşmanii de-ar fi să ne calce în prag Îi vom frânge în numele a tot ce ni-e drag Înălţa-vom spre glorie al patriei steag	We're building new factories, and yield more fruit We want to live in peace with all people But if our enemies come to trample us We will defeat them in the name of everything we hold dear We raise in glory the flag of our Fatherland
Puternică, liberă, Pe soartă stăpână Trăiască Republica Populară Română	Powerful, free A master of our fate Long live the Romania, The People's Republic.

Figure 1.4: The Romanian National Anthem 1977-1990, "Trei Culori"



Trei culori cunosc pe lume, Amintind de-un brav popor, Ce-i viteaz, cu vechi renume, În luptă triumfător.	Three colors I know in the world Reminiscent of a brave people Bravery of ancient renown Victorious in battle
Multe secole luptară Străbunii noştri eroi, Să trăim stăpîni în ţară, Ziditori ai lumii noi.	Many centuries fought Our heroic ancestors To let us possess this land As builders of a new world
Roșu, galben și albastru Este-al nostru tricolor. Se înalță ca un astru Gloriosul meu popor.	Red, yellow, and blue This is our tricolor It rises like a star, The glory of my people
Suntem un popor în lume Strâns unit și muncitor, Liber, cu un nou renume Și un țel cutezător.	We are the people of the world Closely united and industrious Free, with new renown And a bold aim
Azi partidul ne unește Și pe plaiul românesc Socialismul se clădește, Prin elan muncitoresc.	Today the Party unites us And upon Romanian land Socialism we will build Through the worker's spirit
Pentru-a patriei onoare, Vrăjmașii-n luptă-i zdrobim. Cu alte neamuri sub soare, Demn, în pace, să trăim.	For the honor of the homeland We crush enemies in battle With other nations under the sun Let us live in trust and peace
Iar tu, Românie mîndră, Tot mereu să dăinuiesti Și în comunista eră Ca o stea să strălucești.	But you, splendid Romania Shall stand forever And in the Communist Era Shall shine like a star

into the USSR Program for the Communist Party as official writ, and was subsequently published throughout the country in school books, job training manuals, and other propaganda pieces. The document itself acted as a sort of code of conduct for the socialist citizen. Among other things, this code stressed:

> Dedication to the Communist cause; love for the good of society; a high consciousness of social duty; collectivism and comradely mutual assistance and respect; moral integrity in public and private life; intolerance of injustice, dishonesty and careerism; friendship and brotherhood with the other peoples of the USSR, and solidarity with the workers and peoples of other countries; and firm opposition to the enemies of communism, peace and freedom. (White 1977; quoted in Almond 1983)

Beyond simply being a call for civility and rectitude, the concept of the New Man provided the ideal the average socialist citizen was to strive to achieve in all aspects of life. It represented above all else a new contract between the state and its citizens: with communism, one's daily existence was to be no longer motivated by income and economic survival (both would be provided by the state), but rather by a desire to propel the socialist state into the Marxist end of history, an era marked by the complete eradication of economic injustice and inequality.

Unlike the Soviet model, the New Man as iterated by the Ceaușescu regime entailed more than simply becoming the perfect socialist—it entailed becoming the perfect *Romanian* socialist. Drawing upon nationalist sentiment was, after all, the perfect way for Ceaușescu to enact control over the Romanian populace: national pride remained strong throughout Gheorgiu-Dej's regime, and by aligning himself with such pride Ceaușescu was able, at least early on, to command support from the masses. The New Man in its Romanian iteration was therefore reimagined less

as a vanguard figure leading toward a global communist project, and more as one whose project involved the realization of Romania's glorious national potential.

Tapping into both nationalist sentiment and socialist ideology, the image of the New Man during the Ceauşescu regime was widely disseminated, becoming an endemic part of the official language of the Party, regularly encountered in radio and television broadcasts, propaganda posters, newspapers, and other forms of media (Nixon 1993:408 fn 57). The New Life and New Man effectively became, as Kligman writes, the icons of the state religion of "life, vitality and progress" (1977:149). This religious consecration of state ideology and the Ceauşescu family approached the absurd when poet and regime sympathizer Ion Gheorghe publicly associated Nicolae Ceauşescu, Elena Ceauşescu, and the Romanian fatherland with the Holy Trinity itself (Tismaneanu 2003:219).

Scripting Citizenship, Performing Leadership

By the 1970s, the New Man became omnipresent within national discourse thanks to a variety of initiatives created to disseminate this image. However, just as much as the New Man was a symbol to be venerated, it was also a role to be played. The government compelled citizens to perform according to the script of the New Man through a variety of political and artistic manifestations. Among the clearest cases of such an attempt were the various political rallies and mass performances which glorified Ceauşescu, the Party, and the utopian communist future of Romania. As might be imagined, the regime intricately micromanaged such spectacles. Tismaneanu notes that Ceauşescu and his wife Elena often "personally supervised the content of the slogans and chants expressing the allegedly spontaneous enthusiasm for them of the masses" (2003:214). Gilberg further describes the result of such scripting:

> Personal appearances by Ceauşescu are carefully orchestrated events in which the masses "spontaneously" surge forward, rhythmically chanting "Ceauşescu and the people," "Ceauşescu-peace," or simply 'Ceauşescu, Ceauşescu." Children demonstrate with flags, pretty young girls in national costumes provide him with flowers, and the eyes of the workers, it is said, glow with admiration and love for this "truly remarkable man," the true son of Romania, the greatest leader the country (and at times, even the world) has ever seen. (1990:54)

Not only was the "spontaneous" choreography of Ceauşescu's adoring crowds manufactured, the crowds themselves were manufactured through an immense bureaucracy. As Nelson describes:

> Producing a crowd or throngs to line a road is a finely cultivated art in communist systems. Once a decision is made to make an address, in Bucharest for example, the Central Committee informs the municipality's Party Secretary (specifically, the secretary charged with mobilization), who then communicates with each of Bucharest's eight sectoral Party organizations, with the specific message going to the secretary responsible for mobilization. Knowing the total size crowd needed, sectoral Party secretaries have quotas to fill, which they accomplish by going to Party first secretaries in all economic enterprises, research institutions, schools, and so on, who then complete the task by filling the quota assigned to each unit. To obtain a crowd of 100,000 in Bucharest, for instance, it is quite possible that one in ten employed adults in the capital would be called upon. Since many occasions of this nature arise in Bucharest each year, enterprises and institutes in the capital rotate 'crowd duty' among employees. (1988:34)

While political manifestations as described above coerced citizens into performing the role of the New Man, in other situations the enforced rehearsal of the New Man was evoked much more subtly. Such was the case of *muncă patriotică*. Translated as "patriotic work," this uncompensated labor for national development was a common aspect of living under socialist regimes not just in Romania, but throughout the Eastern Europe. Voluntary by name only, *muncă patriotică* generally entailed agricultural or infrastructural labor (picking fruit, paving roads, building bridges, and repairing buildings) which was assigned to adults and school-aged children by Party officials in a bureaucratic quota system very similar to that which created the audience for political rallies (Nixon 1998:312). Other tasks often included the creation of goods for export, often "cultural" items such as flutes to be sold in markets abroad (*ibid.*, 440).

Outside of its obvious function to compel more labor from the populace, the *muncă patriotică* program held additional purposes. Firstly, it was a convenient means to further control how Romanian citizens spent their time. Often the patriotic work was assigned during periods in the year or week that were traditionally devoted to other, non-state-approved activities. In his fieldwork, Nixon noted, for example, that *muncă patriotică* often fell on Sunday afternoons, precisely the time when villagers at his field site would historically attend village dances. Additionally, *muncă patriotică* was a vehicle in which to instill the socialist virtue of *autoconducere,* or a worker's "self-management," in the populace (Nelson 1988:21-26). An essential part of the qualities of the New Man, *autoconducere* spoke to the self-managed worker laboring not for financial compensation but to deliver himself and his community into the industrious communist paradise.

The role *muncă patriotică* played in instilling within the Romanian populace the ideal of the New Man, however, was made clear to me during a conversation I had with Grigore, an

avocational musician who was a high school student during the Ceauşescu regime. As our conversation turned from music to work in general, he began discussing his "volunteer" work in high school constructing the infamous Danube-Black Sea Canal.[21] He related to me that "the work we did with our hands was not that significant, it was really the big machinery, the big tools they used to build the channel. But it was political propaganda [to show] our kids helping to build the channel. . .it was an image Ceauşescu wanted to build to show the whole country participating." Surprisingly, when I asked him if there were then cameras to mediate their work as propaganda, he replied "not necessarily." Given that this musician's ineffectual labor on the canal was not mediated, it does not seem likely that the project was entirely devoted to propaganda as he asserted, but rather a form of forced socialist training. "We didn't want to go there. We were forced to go there," Grigore said, "[but] it was viewed as if we wanted to go there." This musician's account recalls a common turn of phrase that I was told by my interlocutors was often expressed to describe labor during the Ceauşescu era: "we pretended to work, and they [the government] pretended to pay us." But pretending was precisely the point: *muncă patriotică* was likely less about providing actual material labor and more a means to physically embody the industrious socialist New Man promoted by the regime.

While Ceauşescu was cultivating an ethos of the New Man in the Romanian populace, he was also developing his own unabashedly paternalistic image to present before the country. As Tismaneanu writes, as soon as Ceauşescu became the general secretary of the Party, he "engaged in a feverish creation and consolidation of his own myth [. . .] Ceauşescu founded a cult of

[21] Initiated in 1949, this public works project was tasked with creating a water route from the Danube to the Black Sea in southwestern Romania miles from where it naturally empties into the Black Sea, which would increase trade with Russia and Central Europe. Towards this goal, the project was a spectacular failure: its completion almost forty years later in 1987 yielded a canal too shallow to hold most ships, and it was calculated that the multi-billion-dollar project would only pay itself off in the year 2638 (Nelson 1988: xv, Cosor 2005).

personality aimed at linking his doings with medieval Romanian princes and the Thracian-Dacian rulers who defied the Roman Empire" (2003:191). In this sense, it could be said that in enacting his defiance against the Soviet Empire, Ceauşescu himself took up a new role, no longer as the Party functionary serving the global communist project, but as a royal figure leading his nation by example.

Indeed, it is difficult to deny that the role Ceauşescu developed for himself was a regal one. In 1974, he promoted himself from head of the Party to the newly-created position of President. This new title granted him additional control over the country: he was no longer "the first among equals" within the Party, but in a position that essentially allowed for rule by decree. President in name only, the swearing-in ceremony, in March that year revealed the true regal nature of this position. Fischer writes that at the ceremony Ceauşescu was "presented with 'the symbols of worth and prestige, of state power' as a sash in the national colors was placed across his chest and he was handed a mace symbolic of the new office," later writing, "Ceauşescu was thus invested into his new office with all the pomp and circumstance of any monarch" (1981:131). Henceforth, the "President" acted in the role he felt was accorded to him, traveling in a fleet of Mercedes on blocked streets and taking residence in historic castles throughout the country (*ibid.*) The most notorious example of Ceauşescu's royal proclivities was the construction of the extravagant and gargantuan Palace of the Parliament (also known as the "People's Palace"), which continues to be the largest administrative building on earth.

In public, Ceauşescu and his wife Elena quickly adopted their roles as the sovereigns of Romania. For her part Elena Ceauşescu, who by the 1970s was elevated by her husband into the second most powerful position in the country, traveled with the president in extravagant "furs and designer fashions," and was lavishly celebrated as an "homage to the entire country [who]

beside the Great Man watches over Romania's path to glory" by the co-opted press (Fischer 1989:171-172). As many interlocutors related to me with more than a hint of sarcasm, her glory was so great that she held the honorary position of being one of the top chemical scientists in the country, despite leaving school entirely at the age of 14.

Not only did the Ceauşescu's perform as royalty, but they expected to be treated as such by the populace. Sandu-Dediu writes, for example, that by the mid-1970s members of the Composer's Union were tasked to contribute to Ceauşescu's growing cult of personality. Union members received mandates not only to provide nationalistic music for various birthday and anniversary celebrations honoring both Nicolae and Elena Ceauşescu, but also to send personalized congratulatory correspondences to the great leader, and place his image in all copies of the Union's publications (2002:38).

Note here that the settings in which Ceauşescu and his wife performed such roles were largely prescribed. Indeed, the "spontaneous" political gatherings for the leader were scripted to such an extent that when actual spontaneous moments occurred—when Ceauşescu was confronted with large crowds outside of formal ceremonies—he became "awkward and retreats into formality, reading speeches in a monotone, and underlining crucial phrasing by un-rhythmic fist-pounding with the stress all too often falling on the wrong syllable" (Fischer 1981:127). Ceauşescu's skill as an orator, however, was never the method of achieving control over the country: rather it was the perpetuation of the performed role of the President/king as the father of the Romanian country and the Romanian people. Gilberg summarizes this argument as such:

> The emphasis on the masses in Ceauşescuism does not lead to any real attempt by the leader to communicate with the masses in a meaningful manner. Ceauşescu isolates himself from the masses and only ventures out to meet them under

> carefully controlled and orchestrated conditions [. . .] The General Secretary apparently feels that the basic values of "the people" must be discovered by the leader himself, as he provides guidance and inspiration to all Romanians [. . .] The "great unwashed" cannot produce the results that are inherent in them without the inspiration (at times pictured as divine) of the leader. (1990:50)

Here one of the principle arguments for Ceauşescu's performance of a royal persona become clear: the performed role as the father and ostensible king of Romania was also that of the New Romanian Man *par excellence*: he represented the ideal that people should strive to achieve, the perfect socialist Romanian.

Cântarea României

Developing a Nationalist Spectacle

Given the regime's desire to instill a new, more nationalistic version of socialist subjectivity within its citizens, it comes as little surprise that mass artistic manifestations were increasingly prioritized starting in the mid-1960s (Rădulescu 2002:90-91). By the 1970s, these spectacular amateur performances operated in part as a vehicle to disseminate Ceauşescu's new ideology of dynastic socialism to a mass audience. Moreover, like *muncă patriotică* and political rallies, they acted as a means through which to coerce citizens into performing as perfect socialist citizens, singing nationalist songs in honor of the Party, dancing nationalist dances, and reciting venerations to Ceauşescu. As Giurchescu argues, the ideological symbolism associated with mass performances operated primarily as a process of "changing people's mentality and ideological horizon" (2001:118).

Easily the most grandiose of these spectacles was Cântarea României, variously translated as "Song to Romania," "Song for Romania," "Singing Romania," "The Singing of

Romania," and "Singing for Romania." Named after a poem of the same title by 19th century Moldavian writer Alecu Russo, Cântarea României was the "crown jewel" of cultural arts festivals in Romania from 1976 to 1989 (Rădulescu 2002:91). It developed shortly after 1974's 11th Congress of the Romanian Communist Party, the event often considered by historians as the point of final demarcation between the older Moscow-based model of governance and the new model of national (and dynastic) socialism (Oancea 2007:36). After this congress followed a more specific Congress of Political Education and Socialist Culture, which was tasked to create a cultural network that would serve to make the populace aware of the changing socialist and nationalist policies that were delineated in the 11th Congress. From this congress developed Cântarea României, a competition and festival that demanded participation from a myriad of schools, institutions, and houses of culture throughout the country (*ibid.*, 36). The competition was to take place every two years, starting first at a local level in October, moving to a county level in March and April, the regional level in May, and finally the national level at the end of May and beginning of June. All contests, of course, were tasked to promote "social and ethical exemplary behavior" and "promote a revolutionary and efficiently educative art" (Oancea 2007:44-45).

Musically, the primary influence on Cântarea României came from what Rădulescu terms "music of state representation" (*muzica de reprezentare statală*). First developed in the 19th century, it was essentially a "cosmetized" version of contemporary urban *muzică lăutărească*, a music largely associated with Roma, 19th Century European popular music, and Ottoman Turkish art music (Beissinger 2007, Garfias 1981). In an era of increasing nationalism, this music became one of the primary cultural exports of Romania, being performed as a representation of Romanian national culture at both the World's Expositions in London in 1937

and in New York City in 1939 (Rădulescu 2002:41). The music was also disseminated domestically, arranged in such a way that it would appeal to a wide audience. As such, the traditional, at times Ottoman-inspired melodies of *muzică lăutărească* were arranged with Western harmonies, and opportunities were written into each piece for virtuosic solos. Such practices were developed in an attempt to attract both rural citizens, who would recognize the melodies, and the intelligentsia, who would appreciate the sophisticated arrangements and virtuosic displays.

While Rădulescu is quick to note that the genre was not originally developed as an explicit means of disseminating ideology, it began taking on propagandistic associations during the interwar reign of Carol II, when it was performed in large-scale royal spectacles in honor of the monarch (2002:42). As such, it became a prototypical model for the development of *muzică folclorică* later in the century by the socialists, which was a similar attempt to arrange traditional peasant music in a Western framework. As was discussed in the previous chapter, it was precisely *muzică folclorică* (later termed *muzică populară*) that acted as one of the preeminent vehicles through which socialist ideology was propagated during the Cold War era.

While borrowing from royal nationalist spectacles developed during the regime of Carol II, Cântarea României, however, encompassed far more than musical performance. The inaugural event incorporated a huge variety of creative fields, divided roughly into categories of "creation" and "interpretation." As Vintilă Mihăilescu describes:

> [The creation category] comprise[d] poetry, prose, dramaturgy, literary montages, folklore collections, journalism, music (revolutionist and patriotic, pop music and brass band), choreography (ballet, new dance, thematic dance), plastic arts (drawing, sculpture, decorative arts, cinema and photography), popular art

> (costumes, tissues, sewing, wood carving, basketry, leather cutting, glass painting) contests. The field of interpretation is divided into theatre, revolutionist and patriotic music, brass band, classical music, folk music, pop music, ballet and thematic dance, popular dance, music hall, satire and comedy, artistic crews, doll and marionette theater, literary montages, and poetry reciting contests. (2008:62)

As Cântarea României progressed, it included more categories than the ones listed above, which were then further split into a wide variety of subcategories (*ibid.*, 62-63). The exponential growth in performance categories led to similar increases in participants. In total, there were seven iterations of the event, lasting from 1976 to the fall of the regime in 1989. The inaugural event featured over 6,400 theatre troupes, 5,000 choruses, 1,070 contemporary dance bands, 8,300 artistic brigades, 3,900 creation circles and over 560,000 amateur artists (Mihăilescu 2008:66). Each year the number of ensembles and groups grew, with the final event boasting over five million participants – more than 20% of the entire population of the country—not including the presence of the judges, audiences, and organizers (Oancea 2007:41).

In parallel with the event itself was an enormous publicity campaign, which included daily newspaper updates and editorials, television and radio broadcasts of the event and separate programs showcasing individual performers, specialty magazines with individual participant case studies and interviews, official academic reports of regional music, poetry anthologies written by participants, and reports in local publications. As Oancea discovered, most of these publications relied on similar, repetitive official-speak, with only extremely veiled criticisms of the event itself, and virtually no criticisms or investigations of the government's role in the event (*ibid.*, 38-40).

The official goals for the competition were twofold. First, it served as a means to motivate the creation of new artistic works inspired by "present-day realities, by the history of our people, by the glorious historical past of our Party and of the working-class" (*Scînteia* Nov. 1976, 1, quoted in Oancea 2007:43). Second, the competition was tasked at creating "the widest possible framework for the intensification of cultural and educative activities, for the participation of the mass of the people in the development of the homeland's new spiritual assets" (Ceauşescu, 1978:316, quoted in Giurchescu 1987:165). In a word, the event acted to generate and spread artistic creation that was in line with Ceauşescu's particular vision of Romanian socialism.

Unsurprisingly, the judges tasked with vetting the quality of these new artistic manifestations were largely government officials. Rădulescu, who served as a judge during the contest, writes:

> A jury had to include one member of the *Securitate* (secret service), one representative of the army, and another of the Ministry of Culture and Socialist Education. Theoretically, these were charged with the efficient management of the competition; in practice, they took care that 'convenient' persons won suitable prizes. (1997:10)

Moreover, before posting the results the judges were required to first report to the Department of Propaganda, which would approve them or "request" that judges reconsider particular contestants for nomination (Nixon 1998:439 fn 78). As Giurchescu notes, the competitive format of Cântarea României thus allowed the Party not only to cultivate the development of new artistic works of all kinds in line with socialist ideology, but also, by delivering awards, possible recording contracts, and a degree of fame to winners of the contest (1987:168).

Goals and Functions

Without a doubt Cântarea României was an enormous undertaking—one can imagine the economic expenditure required not only to organize the festival, but also to release close to 20% of the population from their work and provide them transportation and lodging in order to engage in an eight-month-long cultural arts competition. Multiple explanations have been forwarded regarding the regime's specific purposes for the event, and the goals behind its lavish production.

According to Gilberg, the large-scale amateur arts festival was a means to disenfranchise professional musicians, artists, and intellectuals, of whom Ceauşescu, like any good totalitarian ruler, was deeply suspicious. In this capacity Cântarea României acted as a "control mechanism" which showcased Ceauşescu's complete control of cultural production in the country—his ability, so to speak, to divert the national spotlight away from professional musicians and towards amateur musicians. The focus on discovering hidden amateur talent that was foundational to the competition furthermore promoted the leader's image as being one with the working-class masses and not the intelligentsia, thereby gaining the support of the majority of Romanian citizens (or so it was hoped). In the same vein, he adds, the event served as an attempt to divert the spotlight away from Western popular music forms, which were popular especially among the youth (1990:50).

Rădulescu holds a similar vantage point, arguing that "the basic idea which was supposed to shine through [at the festival] was that amateurs, that is the representatives of the popular masses, were on a higher artistic level and, in the final analysis, were not less capable than the professional whose place they might even have been able to take" (1997:10). She supports this argument elsewhere by noting that the number of professional *muzică folclorică* orchestras declined in the 1970s, being overtaken by state-sponsored amateur musical manifestations. As

she argues, having created and disseminated *muzică folclorică* as the preeminent Romanian nationalist genre, the purpose of the professional folk orchestras was complete. The next step was to facilitate the performance of this state-approved music by the masses (2002:139). At the same time, Rădulescu notes that Cântarea României also acted as a convenient means through which the Party could observe the actions and attitudes of people in rural areas (ibid., 89-90).

The idea that the event was a way to divert the attention away from one type of artistic expression and toward another is also shared by Beissinger, who specifically notes that Cântarea României served to subtly separate ethnic Romanian musicians from the Roma community. By privileging amateur musicians over the Roma, who historically acted as a caste of professional musicians in the country, the Roma communities were thusly disenfranchised (personal communication).

There were also economic motivations for the festival. In accordance with the doctrine of multilateral development, the artistic competition between the various regions participating in the festival was supposed to parallel and inspire economic competition. As Ceaușescu himself wrote:

> One cannot conceive or understand a genuine Cântarea României without the tumult of the mine banks, of the top gases, of the rolling mills, of the heavy machineries, nor without the rustling of the work in the fields of electronic industry, of light and alimentary industry. Nor can one conceive a genuine Cântarea României without the buzz of the tractors and of the agricultural machines or without the enthusiastic work done by the labourers and by the peasants (quoted and translated in Mihăilescu 2008:64)

With such guidance, the artistic manifestations during the festival were accompanied by various lectures, roundtables, and demonstrations related to economic achievement. Titles of such events

included: “Perspectives on Commune Development”; “Political Work for Everybody, an Important Way of Action for the Workmen – Mobilization for Accomplishing the Scheduled Duties”; “Science, the Vital Force for the Progress of Socialist Romania”; “Industry, a Decisive Agent in the Economic and Social Progress of Our Country”; and “Order and Discipline in the Process of Production, Decisive Agent in the Livestock Field” (*ibid.*, 64-65).

Finally, it bears mentioning that the development of Cântarea României paralleled the development of similar competitions throughout socialist Eastern Europe at the same time, including Bulgaria’s *Koprivshtitsa* Festival (initiated in 1965) and Albania’s *Gjirokastër* Festival (initiated in 1968) (Sugarman, personal communication). Such simultaneous developments point to the possibility of greater, pan-Eastern Europe cultural determinants for Cântarea României, though this kind of comparative analysis is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Regardless, these suppositions of the goals of Cântarea României should not be viewed as mutually exclusive. To this end it is telling that Oancea, who has perhaps written the deepest analysis of Cântarea României, variously cites many of the above assertions as essential aspects of the competition (2007, 2011). He seems, however, most indebted to Giurchescu’s account of the purpose behind Cântarea României, an account I too find the most compelling. Giurchescu argues that the festival acted primarily as a means to deploy poetic “master symbols” to the populace, symbols that would “gloss over” the deep material contradictions of the socialist system.[22] In other words, through constant invocations of nationalist and ethnic pride, the event

[22] Such contradictions are many. For example: the closure of borders and limitation of travel in spite of the ideological emphasis on freedom; the continued exploitation of workers within a state supposedly developed by and for the workers; and the vast economic inequalities between the Party (especially the Ceaușescu family) and the rest of the country within a socialist system whose primary task was supposedly complete economic equality.

created an "institutionalized misrepresentation" of the current leadership within Romania (1987:165-166).

Initially, such an argument might be construed as meaning that Cântarea României was simply a spectacular distraction from the harsh realities of the Ceauşescu regime. This explanation is in fact the one that was most often given to me when speaking to people who participated in or observed the event: the competition was a way to prevent people from spending their free time, as one interlocutor summarized, "to think and to plot against the regime." Such an argument was supported by, of all people, Ceauşescu himself, who stated in speeches that the purpose of Cântarea României was to mobilize "the pleasant and educative organization of free time," and thereby maintain "the unitary management of the entire social system" (Giurchescu 1987:166).

However, I believe with Giurchescu that there was a deeper motivation for Cântarea României. Of the "master symbols" deployed during the competition, Giurchescu lists four of the most prominent: 1) national identity; 2) national unity; 3) ancient heritage and ethnic continuity; and 4) the egalitarian nationalities policy of the Party, which celebrated all ethnic and cultural groups in the region (1987:169).[23] By invoking this specific collection of symbols, the regime attempted through performance to perpetuate a very specific image of Romanian leadership, one which propelled the idea of an "uninterrupted link" between the "revolutionary cultural tradition" of Romania and the present government (*ibid.*, 165). In a word, through Cântarea României, the regime was equating itself with the folk heroes of the past, particularly those who stood up

[23] It could convincingly be argued that the fourth of these goals, the celebration of "all ethnic and cultural groups in the region," existed in name only. Indeed, given the chauvinistic aspects of the Ceauşescu regime's ideology, multicultural celebration was not rigorously pursued and other ethnic groups, particularly the Hungarians but perhaps most directly the Roma, were often vilified in the name of promoting a greater Romanian nationalism.

against aristocratic oppressors. As one interlocutor recalled, there was a campaign to even link Ceaușescu with the legendary *haiduci* of Romanian cultural heritage, promoting Ceaușescu's involvement as a communist guerilla during the Second World War and his continued fight against imperialists and conquerors.

In addition to Cântarea României being a spectacular means to legitimate regime rule, it was also, like *muncă patriotică* and political rallies in general, a way to instill a new subjectivity into the populace, to build a community of nationalist socialist Romanian citizens. Such a function is clear when one considers the political genealogy of mass theatrical performance within the communist movement in Eastern Europe. As Fischer-Lichte describes, since the beginnings of the Bolshevik Revolution the performance of mass political theater was developed to achieve a single purpose: the "enlightenment" of the masses towards the communist cause (2005). Despite a harrowing wartime economy, the Bolsheviks spared no expense producing enormous theatrical spectacles that would garner sympathy towards the Red Army and build a populist Bolshevik base. Drawing upon Nietzsche's (1872) argument that new forms of community are created through collective immersion in the ecstatic Dionysian revelry that theatrical performance offers, early Bolshevik intellectuals such as Nikolai Evreinov, Anatoly Lunacharsky, and Vyacheslav Ivanov operated within a model of a mass political theater wherein spectators would unite "like the mystic commune of the ancient 'orgies' and 'mysteries'"— in other words, a ritualistic theatre where new communal subjectivities would develop and emerge in alignment to the Bolshevik mission (quoted in Fischer-Lichte 2005:100).

Early in revolution, these spectacles sought to build a communist community by articulating shared antagonists who threatened the sovereignty of the Russian people: notably, the bourgeoisie and the Tsarists. Mass spectacles such as the Overthrow of the Autocracy and

The Storming of the Winter Palace were therefore framed by a teleological, almost religious character, in which the good and enlightened communists sacrificed themselves to bring an end to the aristocratic/bourgeois age of darkness (*ibid.*, 101-102). After the end of the Revolution in 1920, articulations of such antagonists were given less priority, as the Bolsheviks were firmly in power of the country. The primary defining element uniting the Soviet people thus shifted from being a common enemy (although those certainly continued to be articulated), to a shared idol: first Lenin, then Stalin, and then during the Khrushchev and Brezhnev regimes, Lenin once again (Yurchak 2006). Moreover, rather than the trained actors and performers that participated in earlier theatrical dramas, these spectacles were increasingly performed by workers' collectives, who enacted "propagandistic plays, mock trials, solo or choral declamation of verse or slogans, songs, dances, and games" (Binns 1979:593). The avant-garde freedom associated with the early spectacles faded, overtaken by repetitive litanies honoring Lenin and Stalin, as the aesthetic of international proletarianism was replaced with an increasingly chauvinistic nationalism under Stalin (*ibid.*, 600).

Whether drawing from the history of Bolshevik mass theater in thought or simply in practice, the psychic goals of Cântarea României were remarkably similar: to build a community of loyal subjects based upon the approved model of the New Man, and the figure that gave the New Man flesh, Nicolae Ceaușescu. Indeed, such an intended purpose was more or less an open secret in Romania: the fact that Cântarea României and other such festivals were less artistic events and more vehicles to cultivate correct socialist behavior were widely acknowledged. Ceauşescu himself was prone to publicly criticize the judges and organizers of arts events for putting greater emphasis on the artistic qualities of a given performance than its ideological content (Nixon 1998:439 fn 78). Despite the fact that Cântarea României was ostensibly

developed for the creation of new works, Ceauşescu and the upper echelons of the Party revealed the true intent of the competition in no uncertain terms.

Performing Hegemony in Ceauşescu's Romania

Ceauşescu's Romania (Revisited)

To review, the political environment in Romania in the late 1960s to early 1970s might well be characterized by what Gramsci would term an "organic crisis" (1971). Gheorghiu-Dej's unexpected death in 1965 expedited the decline of an ideology based upon Soviet alignment and international proletarianism. This decline reached an essential dissolution three years later, during the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. After Prague Spring, it seemed clear that a continued relationship with the Soviets was a precarious position for the Romanian government to uphold. Yet, dissociating with the Soviet sphere threatened to create an ideological vacuum that might delegitimize the Party leader who, for most of 50s and 1960s, defined their role as part of the international socialist project, fraternally tied to the USSR. With the election of Ceauşescu, a new avenue towards hegemony was established through a unique embrace of Romanian nationalism, which by the mid-1970s evolved into a governing structure based upon a paternalist cult of personality.

This shift of ideology associated with the Ceauşescu regime was carried out by a mini-cultural revolution which served to both educate the populace on a new version of uniquely Romanian nationalist socialism, and train them in how they were to perform citizenship within this new ideological regime. It is these two processes that were the primary methods the regime drew upon to maintain power. Both inherently ideological and coercive, they operated however according to different logics. Realizing nationalism remained a discourse with positive valence among the citizenry, that "virtually all Romanians accepted . . . the importance of the national

ideal," the Party seized upon patriotic sentiment and spent great effort educating (i.e. convincing) the populace of their rightful place in the Romanian national project (Verdery 1991:11). At the same time, they sought to mold this sense of mass patriotism into manifestations they saw fit, coercing the populace to perform within a particular subjective framework which would ensure the continued leadership of the Party. Both these processes formed a singularity during mass events, which simultaneously acted *ceremonially* to solidify government legitimacy and *ritually* to alter the subjectivities of Romanian citizens. I will conclude this chapter by examining the particular hegemonic logic in which these ceremonial and ritual aspects of mass performance in Romania operated.[24]

Mass Performance as Social Ritual

Most of the scholarly accounts of state-sponsored artistic performances in socialist Romania discussed in this chapter characterize Cântarea României and other festivals primarily as political rituals, by which the state could normalize and legitimate its existence through the invocation of particular symbols which held value to the masses. As mentioned, Giurchescu argues that such festivals were replete with symbolic "poetical" discourses which, in their "specific syntagms and hyperbolic images," served to "gloss over the deep contradictions in [socialist Romanian] society" (1987:163-164). Oancea similarly argues that such festivals were "erected as sources of political legitimization by establishing a network of social relations and a new cultural discourse" through the invocation of symbols (2011:36). Kligman, finally, adds that festivals focusing on arts and music, particularly those that co-opted traditional performances associated with life-cycle rituals such as weddings and funerals, allowed the paternalistic

[24] Note that in this context the terms "ceremony" and "ritual" serve heuristically as productive entry points to more deeply interrogate the political performances described throughout this chapter, not as categorical definitions.

socialist state to insert itself into what were previously intimate familial or local performances (1988:277).[25]

While seemingly not directly articulated by Kligman, Oancea, and Giurchescu, implicit in characterizing mass performance as ritual is the idea that such events acted to alter the subjectivities of their participants. Indeed, in the anthropological tradition, the creation or development of new individual or communal subjectivities is one of the primary functions of ritual. Channeling Arnold van Gennep's influential work *The Rites of Passage* (1960), Victor Turner argues that rituals occur in order to remedy breaches within the subjective status of individuals, allowing them to transition more easily from child to adult, criminal to citizen, unmarried to married, unhealthy to healthy, and so on. Through ritual the subject(s) in question enters into a liminal environment where quotidian social relations and norms are broken down or reversed entirely. This leads to the development of *communitas,* or a shared feeling of egalitarian camaraderie rich in affective and imaginative potential. Through *communitas* new subjectivities are inscribed upon the participant(s), so that by the conclusion of the ritual, both subject and community emerge with their social relations renewed, thereby redressing the original breach that occurred before the ritual.[26]

One can locate with little difficulty connections between Turner's theoretical approach to ritual and the mass artistic performances developed and sponsored by the Romanian government. Through Cântarea României and other such events, the regime was addressing a sort of breach in official ideology, removing the Romanian masses from their everyday lives as workers and citizens and placing them in a liminal environment wherein, through the invocation of particular

[25] For a more detailed examination of the paternalistic tendencies of the socialist state, including state intervention into previously private familial relations, see Gal and Kligman 2000.
[26] See Turner 1969, 1987.

symbols in imagery and song, their social relationship with the new nationalist socialist nation under Ceauşescu could be established. In a word, by singing Romanian songs and dancing Romanian dances *en masse*, it was hoped a sense of *communitas* would develop not only among the citizens themselves, but also between the citizens and the leadership. The same phenomenon might equally be applied to *muncă patriotică*. While such work was materially productive (at times), it also acted as a ritual whereby groups of people would perform labor together in an atmosphere of constructed solidarity. The results of both performing arts festivals and patriotic work would, it was hoped, further crystallize a sense of socialist-national subjectivity among the citizens. These rituals persisted throughout the Ceauşescu regime as a means of continually solidifying relationships between the citizens and the Party. As Ceauşescu said himself, Cântarea României was an essential tool for the "unitary management of the entire social system" (Ceauşescu 1979:659-660, quoted in Giruchescu 1987:166).

Of course, this *communitas* that was hoped to develop between the Party and the populace was not unilateral: it was the citizen's task to be more like the socialist New Man that the Party idealized. Mass performance events, after all, were scripted by the party, and thus the roles performed by citizens (whether acting as musicians, dancers, speakers, or otherwise) were equally scripted to ensure that citizens not only were subservient to the socialist system, but also enthusiastic participants in it. By coercing the populace to perform particular roles repeatedly in these mass events, the Party hoped to influence the populace's own subjective perspectives and positions after the performance was over.

This potential mass spectacle offers to alter the subjectivities of the performers is due to the inherent blurring of boundaries between subjectivity and objectivity that occurs during performance. Drawing from the history of Western theater from the 19th century to the present,

Erika Fischer-Lichte argues that, when performing on stage, one embodies a dual presence: the phenomenal body, or the body "as it is" in its very biology; and the semiotic body, i.e. the role or what the body represents within the frame of the performance. This dichotomy forms what she terms "perceptual multistability" during performance, or the continued vacillation between recognizing the performers as themselves and the performers as the roles they play. Such vacillations often create a sense of psychic confusion during performance, which in turn leads to the creation of an "autopoietic feedback loop," where notions of subjectivity and objectivity collapse totally to be rebuilt in a new configuration (2008:149, 172-173). According to Fischer-Lichte, the potential for performance to create new lasting forms of individual or group identity lies in its ability to destabilize notions of objectivity and subjectivity. By performing a role while still being oneself, the notions of "self" and "not self" become blurred. For those on stage, at the close of the performance there may very well be remnants of the role played within one's personal sense of identity.

When taken as ritual in the ways delineated above, mass political performance in Romania was in many ways effective. Even in spite of the highly coercive nature of these rituals, I discovered through my interviews that even the staunchest critics of the regime nonetheless experienced moments of liminality and ecstatic *communitas* while participating in these events. However, the question as to whether the results of such instances of *communitas* served to benefit the regime by altering the subjectivities of the participants is the topic of discussion for the following chapter.

Mass Performance as Ceremonial

In addition to serving ritualistically to mold citizen's subjectivities vis-à-vis their relationship with the state, mass festivals also attempted to act as preeminent moments in which

the party could ceremonially legitimate its leadership position within the country. That is, these events additionally served as an act of discursive articulation, a spectacular moment through which political, social, and cultural discourses could be effectively linked or re-routed. Such a process of legitimation is a quintessential example of what Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe conceptualize as hegemonic practice (2014). As they argue, hegemony is formed by discursive acts of articulation that operate on logics of equivalence or difference. Those seeking to mold society in a manner that supports their material interests do so by connecting their vision of society with visions of society that already have a strong positive valence among the populace, or dissociating themselves from aspects that have a powerful negative valence.

In a logic of equivalence, politicians and governing bodies often prove their legitimacy most successfully by connecting themselves to those aspects of their societies that have become *doxa*, or ideas so embedded that they are taken simply as common sense. These acts of articulation are at their most powerful in large ceremonies, where such connections are forged before a mass audience.[27] In Romania, one of the most foundational doxic ideas is the perpetuation of the nation. A region that for most of history was in various ways at the subservience of the empires that surrounded it, Romania only achieved the status of a nation in 1878, and from there continued to negotiate territory with the surrounding countries. To gain legitimacy in the eyes of the populace, the Party associated itself with the national project by linking Ceauşescu to the lineage of Romanian rulers. This was done by the creation of mass ceremonial spectacles that more or less presented the figure of Ceauşescu as a monarch.

[27] For example, one may look at an American presidential nomination, which connects the incumbent president directly to the democratic process: he or she is granted legitimacy through democracy. In other times and places, such legitimation and hegemonic articulation operate along entirely different criteria. For instance, in his classic work *Negara*, Clifford Geertz illustrates the extent to which Balinese royalty maintained power not by representing the will of the people per se, but by ceremonially connecting themselves to the sacred hierarchies of Indic metaphysics (1980).

Yet, this association between the Communist Party and the Romanian nation was continually threatened by the fact that communism in itself was not a particularly Romanian innovation. As mentioned, the Romanian Communist Party early in the century was practically non-existent, and many of the initial officials of Romania after World War II were not particularly "home grown," but were educated in Moscow. To remedy this fact, events like Cântarea României co-existed with a "protochronist" movement which sought to historically locate "developments in Romanian culture that anticipated events in the better-publicized culture of Western Europe," as a means to legitimate the Romanian influence towards communist ideology (Verdery 1991:167). It is thus not surprising that one of the first figures to receive a protochronist reading, so to speak, was Mihai Eminescu, the famed national poet whose ideals, or so it was proclaimed, were shared by his German contemporary, Karl Marx. [28]

Between protochronism and the legacy of Romanian rulership, the regime sought first to articulate a glorious Romanian history of intellectual and cultural achievements that predated those of Western Europe, and then to equate the Ceauşescu family with this long line of cultural innovators. Such is a primary reason why, as mentioned previously, Nicolae and Elena lavishly bestowed upon themselves all kinds of honorary diplomas and honors. In addition to declaring himself part of an exceptional lineage of past Romanians, Ceauşescu also declared himself the head of the vanguard paving the way to a utopian future. The adopted mythology of the Romanian nation was no longer Christianity, but Marxist-Leninist dialectics. Such a mythology promised an inevitable complete communism, which would lead to the eradication of inequality and a true freedom for all people. Within mass performance events/ceremonials such as Cântarea României, Ceauşescu gained legitimacy by positioning himself as a necessary stepping-stone

[28] For a fuller discussion of Protochronism, see Verdery 1991: 167-214.

between the great Romanian kings and leaders of the past and the inevitable communist utopia to come.

The Interrupted Reign of the Communist King

In *Reflections on Violence*, Georges Sorel (1950) famously argued that the true function of labor strikes lay not in their immediate efficacy, but in their ability to further cultivate a proletariat mythos, which in turn further defined working-class subjectivity and strengthened resolve. In a particular way, one could draw connections between Sorel's analysis of mass strikes and the performative environment in Romania under Ceauşescu. Much as the general strike reinforces the myth of proletarian subjectivity, the various musical festivals, competitions, and performances in Romania from the 1970s to the 1980s sought to strengthen the myth of Ceauşescu, the native communist king who would lead Romania into a utopian age. Every composition, song, and dance was inevitably incorporated into the cultivation of this myth, and through various forms of "patriotic work," Romanian civilians were coerced into performing their own myths as loyal socialist subjects with their eyes fixed upon the communist horizon. Ultimately the goal was to ultimately further define what Romanian citizenship entailed, with the figure of Ceauşescu himself acting as the ideal model. Mass performances were then less celebrations of the cult of Ceauşescu, and more practices to help develop a future subservient populace that defined itself entirely in accordance with the regime's image of the Romanian nation.

Except it did not work. Despite the rituals binding social structure, the ceremonies legitimating socialist rule, the *muncă patriotică* reinforcing and building the subjectivity of the New Man, despite all the songs and dances, the utopia led by Ceauşescu never came. Rather, along with his wife he was granted a final honor, one which no other European socialist leader

would attain during the Cold War: execution at the hands of his own countrypeople. Whereas this chapter offered insight into the regime's vision of mass spectacle and what it was meant to achieve, the following chapter addresses the ways it was actually received by citizens, and how such modes of reception ultimately contributed to the downfall of the Ceauşescu government.

CHAPTER 3: LOCATING RESISTANCE IN THE SOCIALIST MUSICAL LANDCAPE

Having now discussed the development of music and mass performance from the perspective of the socialist regime and their desire to maintain political hegemony, this chapter details how such state-developed musical projects were received by the populace. Drawing from both my own fieldwork among past participants of events such as Cântarea României as well as ethnographies conducted during the socialist period, I argue that despite many successes, the regime's attempt to influence Romanian subjectivity through musical production and performance largely failed to maintain Ceauşescu's vision of dynastic socialism. I elaborate two possible reasons for this failure. First, the development of Ceauşescu's extreme cult of personality led to an increasing awareness among the populace of the inherent contradictions of Socialist ideology, contradictions of which became unsustainable by the late 1980s as economic austerity was coupled by increasingly expensive projects towards glorifying Ceauşescu, such as Cântarea României. Second, as Erika Fischer-Lichte argues, mass performance is simply "not a suitable means of manipulation," given that the inherent unpredictability of performance always leads to unintended consequences. As I argue in the Romanian case, such unintended consequences evoked during performance demonstrated what I term *subversive commitments to ruling ideas*. This widespread practice allowed citizens to appear to be in support of the regime during performance while at the same time maintaining their own, often subversive approaches towards the promoted ruling ideology. Finally, drawing from the work of James C. Scott, I consider whether such acts as I describe them can appropriately be described as resistant, especially considering the history of relations between the rulership and disenfranchised within Romania.

Romania 1980-1989

The Final Performance

On December 21, 1989, Ceauşescu acted one final time as impresario for a spectacular political performance devoted to his cult of personality. The purpose of this final performance was to demonstrate popular support for the regime in order to quell any possible dissidence sparked by demonstrations that occurred a few days earlier in the city of Timişoara. Ceauşescu himself believed the uprising was simply the work of "hooligans" (*golani*) and reactionaries manipulated by imperialist instigators. Indeed, the uprising had such minimal significance for him that he felt little need to cancel a diplomatic trip to Iran, rather delegating the task of ending the demonstration to subordinates (Tismaneanu 1992:232-233). What Ceauşescu did not or perhaps refused to realize was that, through foreign radio broadcasts, thousands of Romanian citizens were aware of the resulting violent crackdown his subordinates carried out in Timişoara days before. Initially, the speech on the 21st was similar to the countless other political speeches that had occurred during the past decade. Masters at creating "organized spontaneity," Party officials collected and transported thousands of citizens into Palace Square in Bucharest, giving them each placards, flags, banners, or images of Ceauşescu and his wife to display at the event. As was usual, the citizens were under the directorship of such officials, who told them what to sing and chant, and when to applaud during the President's speech. From the balcony of the Central Committee building, the mayor of Bucharest introduced "the beloved and esteemed leader of the Party and the country," "the eminent Revolutionary patriot," Nicolae Ceauşescu. After the chanting of the crowd faded, Ceauşescu began his speech, replete with socialist platitudes and entirely lacking in content, as was usual with the highly scripted nationalist socialist language of the time.

As clearly seen in the national broadcast footage of this event, less than three minutes into Ceauşescu's speech the performance went off script. While he was thanking the "organizers and initiators" of the demonstration in Palace Square, the cheers and chants of the crowd slowly transformed into screams of anger and terror. The President surveyed the audience in confusion, as his speech slowly ground to a halt. His wife Elena screamed "someone is shooting!" and a *Securitate* (secret police) officer spoke into the President's ear to "come into the office." Refusing to leave the balcony, Ceauşescu tried in vain to calm the audience, raising his hand and shouting "hello," "comrades!" and "sit quietly!" while tapping on the microphone. Behind him Elena yelled "silence!" After over two minutes of trying to calm the crowd, it became abundantly clear that the Romanian citizens were no longer willing to perform the script given to them by the Party. Increasingly desperate, Ceauşescu began offering minor placations: a raise in worker's salaries, youth allowances, and pensions. He then denounced the Timişoara uprising as the work of foreign conspirators and their Romanian sympathizers, and reiterated multiple times the need for the nation to continue the fight "to live free and independent" against foreign threats. Yet after twenty years of repression, such invocations of foreign threats to Romanian sovereignty fell upon deaf ears. In response to Ceauşescu's offers the crowd resumed chanting, but the message changed from the usual pro-Ceauşescu litanies: "Ceauşescu and the people!" became "Ceauşescu the dictator!"; "The Party, Ceauşescu, Romania" became "Ti-mi-şoar-a!" The broadcast ended with a shot of Ceauşescu waving to the crowd, a look of worry and confusion on his face.

As Ceauşescu returned to his office, the scripted demonstration in support of the regime continued to transform into an unscripted protest against it. As was done in Timişoara less than a week before, Ceauşescu ultimately resorted to military force to quell the protests at his front door. But the following day, the Romanian Minister of Defense (who in Timişoara had had

reservations about firing on Romanian civilians) was found dead under suspicious circumstances. As the protesters stormed the palace, the newly appointed defense minister secretly ordered the military to stand down, as Nicolae and Elena Ceauşescu fled in a helicopter on the roof. Abandoned by both the population at large and the military, the Ceauşescu's were caught, and four days after the speech at Palace Square, tried and executed.

The suddenness and violence of Ceauşescu's downfall easily marks it as one of the seminal moments in the history of communist Eastern Europe. It has prompted a variety of people, from political scientists to conspiracy theorists, to attempt to explain how a cult of personality as omnipresent as Ceauşescu's so spectacularly collapsed in such a short time. In this chapter, I add to this ongoing conversation by arguing that it was precisely the bombardment of nationalist socialist ideology through performance that cultivated an environment in which the dissolution of the regime could be effectively realized. As I will describe in this chapter, the more the Ceauşescu regime rigidified and expanded its ruling ideology, the more the inherent contradictions of that ideology were held in relief. As much as musical performance acted to perpetuate the regime's ideology, it simultaneously served as a space for people to contest and even resist it. In support of this argument, I will draw upon my own interlocutors' recollections of their experiences performing in such mass spectacles, as well as ethnographic accounts of performers' reception of such events written during the period.

A Decade of Austerity

Easily the clearest examples of the inherent ideological contradictions that emerged from the increasing proliferation of Ceauşescu's cult of personality were economic. Indeed, the contrast between propaganda's promise of a future communist utopia and the realities of a draconian austerity program was a contradiction countless Romanian citizens confronted on a

daily basis. Given this fact, it is no surprise that the vast majority of my interlocutors who left Romania during socialism left in this decade—most doing so for economic reasons.[29]

One of Ceauşescu's first moves upon becoming head of the country was to focus the Romanian economy more on heavy industry than agriculture. In the mid-to-late 1960s such an economic policy led to an improved standard of living, making Ceauşescu a popular leader. By the 1970s, however, the continued push toward rapid industrialization led to an increasingly unstable economy. Erecting factories faster than materials could be nationally produced, the government began to rely on imported iron and oil. To offset diminishing agricultural production as more rural farmers migrated to factories, the regime enacted increasingly repressive policies of agricultural centralization: all animals raised in villages were to be registered and became exclusive property of the state, and the private slaughter and consumption of livestock was strictly forbidden. With severe floods in 1970 and 1975 a food crisis developed, and with most rural regions exporting produce to cities, disenfranchised villagers were barely surviving. To add insult to injury, they were equally unable to migrate to urban areas in the hopes of a better standard of living, as the government began "closing" cities, making migration impossible for those who weren't allocated jobs in the city (Treptow 1996:542).

Due to this policy of industrialization, as well as more global factors, by 1980 Romania was operating with close to a ten-billion-dollar debt. Eager to close this debt as soon as possible, Ceauşescu enforced increasingly draconian austerity measures: gas heating was rationed during the winter, nearly all imported food items were prohibited, wages were lowered and prices rose, and peasants were unable to purchase food from cities (*ibid*:542). To spur development in the

[29] The specific motivations for leaving Romania that immigrants expressed to me are presented in much greater detail in chapter 5.

agricultural sector in order to maintain rapid industrialization, he accelerated a program of "systemization." Beginning in the 1960s but gaining momentum in the 1970s, this program sought to maximize the economic impact of settled areas, both rural and urban. The regime hoped such a policy would raise the standard of living throughout the country, though in reality it simply became a means of applying urban planning to villages, creating higher density settlements via the destruction of homes and the construction of high-rise apartment blocks. Additionally, systemization led to the complete dissolution of villages deemed "irrational" to national economic planning. As a centrally planned program, officials often ignored the individual needs of rural citizens, leveling villages and ancestral homelands under the highly ambiguous justification that such actions promoted "general economic interest."[30]

Perhaps the most draconian of policies during the 1980s, however, was the dual imposition of the "scientific nourishment" and the pro-natalist demographic programs. The former was a nutrition program purportedly developed by scientists that determined the exact amount of food required to keep citizens of various ages and situations healthy. Adopted by the government, it essentially acted to legitimate the centralization of produce, and kept food re-allocations at an absolute minimum. Even still, the recommendations set forth by the scientific nourishment study were often not met, as the nation was exporting the majority of produce in order to repay foreign debts (Kligman 1998:140-141). The government coupled this program with a demographic policy which sought to increase the country's population (and thus the number of workers). Since 1966 abortion had been outlawed in Romania, and divorce only possible in "exceptional cases" (*ibid.*, 50-51). Despite such legislation and a ubiquitous natalist

[30] For a detailed, monograph-length account of Romanian systemization, its history, and its effects, see Sampson 1984a.

"pro-family" propaganda campaign, the population in the country continued to decline, and the government placed all medical practice in the country under increasing surveillance. By the 1980s, contraception was virtually unattainable, gynecological checkups were mandated, and abortion increasingly dangerous, both legally (as one could be thrown in jail if caught), and medically (as illegal abortions were often performed without proper medical devices and training). The combination of these two policies effectively forced women to give birth to children in an environment that could barely feed them. The results of such policies—thousands of malnourished and sick orphans, a population of handicapped children due to botched abortion attempts, and one of the highest childhood mortality rates in Europe—are without doubt one of the most tragic legacies of the Eastern European socialist experiment.

Direct Resistance and Subsequent Repression

Given the environment of the country during the 1980s, it is not surprising that the events that occurred in December 1989 were preceded by other manifestations of dissidence or opposition, both by the public and by Ceauşescu's political opponents within the Party. However, these acts of direct resistance were crushed almost immediately by the military and security apparatus under Ceauşescu's control, serving to dissuade future acts of organized dissidence and forcing possible acts of resistance further into the private sphere, (as will be discussed later in the chapter).

The largest of such dissident mobilizations occurred approximately a decade before the 1989 Revolution: the Jiu Valley miner's strike of 1977, which some 35,000 miners pursued a protest to the elimination of certain pensions and the rise of the retirement age. Predating by a few years similar tactics developed by Solidarity in Poland, the miners articulated the inherent contradictions that the government's ideology particularly invoked: they demanded the Party

account for the plight of workers in a system that supposedly claimed to represent them. Initially, Ceauşescu accepted their demands. However, he quickly went back on his promises, and had the engineers of the strike arrested, fired, intimidated, sent to labor camps, and in some cases, made to disappear entirely (Deletant 1998:130-133, Tismaneanu 1992:226). While seemingly a failure, the strike in the Jiu Valley opened up the possibility of collective action against government austerity, and strikes among various worker and student groups proliferated throughout the 1980s, although only with a modicum of success (Deletant 1998:134-135).

By the early 1980s, individuals and factions within the Party began threatening Ceauşescu's absolute rule. In 1982, Mihai Botez, an economic adviser for the Party, issued a statement that the growing prevalence of strikes throughout the country signaled a wholesale "rejection of the leadership's economic and political strategies," and enunciated "a severe warning to the leaders" (*ibid.*, 135). Botez's statement followed the resignation of Party official Károly Király in 1978, who affirmed he left due to the treatment of the Hungarian minority in Romania (Fischer 1989:239). The most damaging act of dissidence within government circles, however, occurred just a month before the revolution. In November 1989, two anonymous letters were circulated to Party members and Western media, one urging members to not re-elect Ceauşescu, the other protesting the increasing human rights abuses occurring in the country. The letters were signed by the clandestine *Frontul Salvării Naționale* (National Salvation Front), a group of dissenting political and cultural officials which, after the revolution, emerged from the shadows to become the ruling party of democratic Romania. While Ceauşescu was nonetheless elected, the group continued its activity by distributing leaflets and flyers in selected locations throughout the country in December (*ibid.*, 142-143).

While one might argue that such acts of direct, organized, or public resistance began to unveil the cracks in the regime's hegemony, they were in themselves largely inefficient. Gilberg notes that these strikes were never national in scope, but rather localized and easily contained by local authorities (1990:239). Additionally, Ceauşescu's policy of cadre rotation discussed in the previous chapter repressed coherent governmental dissent up until a month before the revolution. According to Gilberg, these policies, coupled with an ideology of "nationalism and chauvinism," allowed the perpetuation of Ceauşescu's hegemony well into the 1980s (1990:240). Nonetheless, they opened up a space in which citizens became aware of the growing contradictions within the nationalist socialist ideology they were inculcated into daily.

The Efficacy of Mass Performance in an Era of Austerity

Successes in Romanian Mass Performance

As discussed in the previous chapter, Giurchescu asserts that one of the primary functions of Cântarea României was to "gloss over" the material contradictions of socialist policy through sheer spectacle; what Mihăilescu described as a "staging [of] the *whole people,* a kind of emerging society without social, geographical, or even professional differences" (2008:59). Drawing from the recollections of such events by my interlocutors, as well as other ethnographic accounts, this section examines the extent to which this goal was achieved: the extent to which Romanian citizens willingly participated and were effected by mass political spectacle. As I will argue, despite some clear successes, Cântarea României failed to "gloss over" the public's awareness of the myriad of contradictions that Ceauşescu's brand of socialist ideology promoted.

The successes of Cântarea României were due in large part to the fact that it acted as a sort of bottleneck for displaying creativity and talent in the country. As the event persisted it incorporated increasing modes of cultural activity, eventually encapsulating fields ranging from

agricultural science to art music composition. It became such that if artists had the desire to express their creative work to the general public, Cântarea României was one of the few avenues that allowed them to do so. Thus, most professional musicians and composers with whom I spoke conceptualized their participation in the festivals less as ideological compliance and more as simple common sense, in the sense that the festival provided the most public opportunity to showcase one's artistic talents. Given Romania's closed borders and the difficulties entailed in getting any sort of artist visa to attend other competitions, Cântarea României was one of the few places where artists might be able to elevate their cultural standing within the country. This especially applied to students. As Sorin, a past winner of the competition, expressed to me: "by doing something like this [competing in the festival], it is likely much easier for you to get into the college of music, because it was not very easy to get into all these colleges and schools and high schools." In a word, Cântarea României was a successful way for the regime to monopolize opportunities for public performance, and people willingly participated because it offered material rewards.

The musicians and composers I spoke with were aware of the pervasive chauvinist and socialist propaganda surrounding such competitions. But at the same time most felt the musical work they composed or performed had little to do with politics directly, thus making their participation in the event personally non-political. In particular, many pointed to the non-lexical quality of instrumental music which removed them, they felt, from explicitly adhering to ideological discourse (although how one might incorporate socialist-realist ideology into instrumental music was a common debate within the Composer's Union). As Aurel, a music publisher, explained to me, while everything was "controlled" under socialism, "the arts were kind of at the periphery of the demands of the communists, because we were kind of neutral . . .

you know, we couldn't cause that much trouble." Another interlocutor similarly expressed to me that classical musicians held more distance from the aesthetic demands of the regime because "with classical music it was easier to create a music that does not have a direct political substract [sic]." Professional pianist Anca similarly stated that "luckily, classical music is not as overtly political as theater and literature." One of the strongest of such dissociations between one's art and the politics of the era came from Ana, a composer who related to me that, while her life personally was difficult under the socialist regime, her professional life as a composer "was beautiful, more than beautiful."

Such careerist and artistic motivations for participating in these spectacles were not only found among the cultural elite, such as art music composers. Amateurs also often conceptualized the event as a means to gain recognition. A past promoter of the festival expressed to Oancea that "the festival was the main means for ordinary people to make themselves noticed, stating that 'everybody wanted to be taken into consideration,' and that workers especially were proud of having their names on posters, which mentioned their participation and their eventual awards won" (2007:73). Oancea notes that this sentiment was shared by many workers and amateurs who performed during the event in the past, most of whom were enthusiastic about the possibility of achieving a "shift of professional status," transitioning from a worker to a state artist. The possibility that such a dream might come to pass was strengthened by a handful of exemplary amateurs who through the festival became household names. Perhaps the most famous of these was the affectionately named "Mama Ghiţa," an unassuming elderly peasant who, after working her way up the Cântarea României competitive ladder, achieved national prominence as a poet and "living legend" (Mihăilescu 2008:68).

Despite their explicit promotion of nationalist and socialist ideology, then, mass festivals such as Cântarea României often attracted people for non-ideological reasons, being no more coercive than any other competition whose prize was a greater audience and the possibility of career advancement. Even those not particularly ambitious for the national spotlight were excited by the prospect of leaving their mundane day jobs to display their artistic talent. Take, for example, an interview I had with Cristina, an avocational musician whose father regularly participated as a folk musician in Cântarea României: "They all enjoyed it," she told me, her father and his village ensemble "were so proud of themselves. . .I mean, it was their only life, you know. . .they would go and would sing and be proud." For people simply with a need for creative expression like Cristina's father, Cântarea României served as a high point in their perhaps otherwise monotonous lives as collective farm or factory workers.

Interviews with immigrant musicians such as Cristina and Sorin lead me to conclude, then, that Cântarea României was fairly successful at drawing in artists to participate. As one of the few opportunities to advance one's artistic career, or initiate the possibility of an artistic career, participation in the event seemed common sense for aspiring cultural workers throughout the country, whether they be professionally trained art musician or avocational laborers. What bears mentioning here is that, among all of the interlocutors I interviewed who performed or attended Cântarea României, no one explicitly and entirely dismissed the event as simply serving to glorify Ceaușescu's cult of personality. At most, some approached the event with a degree of ambivalence, noting its propagandistic tendencies but at the same time emphasizing the opportunities it presented. Such a position among my interlocutors might be informed in part by a sense of nostalgia, or even by the simple fact that they are attempting to recall the emotions and dispositions they had decades earlier. Indeed, ethnographies written closer to the socialist period

often provide mixed accounts of citizen's opinions of the festival (Kideckel 1993, Beissinger, personal communication). At the same time, as immigrants many of these interlocutors were art musicians and composers so displeased with the Ceauşescu regime that they pursued years-long tactics to get out, in the process becoming *persona non-grata* in their country, losing their elite positions and even their ability to perform in public. That such subjects still view an event as explicitly ideological as Cântarea României with ambivalence reveals the extent to which ideology, even when explicitly articulated, can be received with a degree of ambiguity.

While my interlocutors were able to find a way to dismiss Cântarea României's explicit connections to Ceauşescu's cult of personality (at least to a degree), they largely accepted the underlying meritocratic ideology upon which the competition was based. That is to say, my interlocutor's assertion that it was "common sense" to enter into these competitions speaks to their interpellation into an educational and cultural system based upon an idea of socialist meritocracy, of "each according to their ability." Indeed, to this day many of the professional musicians I spoke to continue to exalt the socialist music education system in Romania, emphasizing that while its competitiveness was difficult, it resulted in a pool of highly skilled artists.[31] Many offered their own success as musicians in the United States as a testament to the virtues of the educational and cultural system. While the merits of such a system could be debated, I got the sense that many of my interlocutors accepted the more meritocratic aspects of musical festivals almost unconsciously.

But was the event successful in its goal of coercing participants to perform as ideal citizens, as discussed in the previous chapter? In spite of their expressed non-political motivations for participating in competitions such as Cântarea României, did the political aspects

[31] The model of the music education system is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

of mass festival nonetheless have a lasting unconscious impact upon these musicians and composers? Did they leave the events as "better" nationalist socialist citizens? Rădulescu, noting similar sentiments among composers in her ethnographic work, thinks such ideological effects were unavoidable:

> Educated (literate) composers from Romania today strongly think—with few exceptions—that during the communist years music allowed them a real and beneficial social isolation, sheltered them from moral compromise, and allowed them to preserve their personalities and even freely express themselves. This proud conviction had a credible basis: music did not necessarily operate with words, and those [art forms] that did were constrained to political subordination. But this fact is both convenient and the product of self-deception. The truth is that terror plagued absolutely all music creators in Romania, be they cultivated or "non-cultivated," compliant or rebellious. This changed more or less, in one way or another, the worldviews, existential pathways, creative ideals and compositional styles [of composers]. (2002:68)

Admittedly, Rădulescu here is making a difficult case to prove: that despite protestations otherwise, musicians and composers during the Ceauşescu era were in fact deeply affected by the socialist government and by socialist ideology. While I personally hesitate to discount my own interlocutors' emphasis on the relative freedom they felt they had and the non-political essence of the art they felt they produced, at the same time I sympathize with Rădulescu's assertion. In terms of mass spectacle, it seems to me the ideological factors of such events were so pervasive, immense, and explicit that they forced participants rationalize them, in one way or another. They

were, in other words, impossible to ignore. They became part of everyday life in Romania, and by doing so, played a role in cultivating a particular sense of subjectivity.

I am emboldened to make such an argument by my experiences speaking with musicians who eagerly performed in mass spectacles, despite holding a great animosity toward the regime. For instance, Cristina, whose father's participation in Cântarea României was discussed previously, also participated herself. Throughout the interview she made clear in no uncertain terms her view of the Ceaușescu regime, relating to me how, during the revolution in 1989 she enthusiastically joined the public protests at the risk of being shot by the army. But in her youth, she sang in a local choir, performing nationalist songs to glorify Ceaușescu, despite admitting to having no musical talent whatsoever, and lip-syncing the text most of the time. When I asked why she continued to participate, she said she was forced to, as choirs were just another means through which the government could "enslave us in all forms possible." *Yet,* when I asked her if she felt patriotic and proud while performing with the choirs, she responded immediately "yes – utopic even!" As she grew older her sense of patriotism grew: she told me she began to write nationalist poetry for fun.

Perhaps the strongest case for the success mass festivals had in altering the subjectivities of their participants, however, comes from an interview with Daniela, who performed in her youth in socialist mass performances. Daniela immediately expressed to me that "if the revolution never happened, I would have grown up to become the perfect communist citizen." She then proceeded to describe to me how as a child in school she enthusiastically participated in a variety of choirs developed by the socialist government, and she relished singing nationalistic songs with her fellow students. As she got older, however, her singing voice started to falter. She visited a doctor for a possible diagnosis, and learned that the physical construction of her throat

would prevent her from ever attaining a strong, clear singing voice. “I was crushed,” she told me, “I stayed in my room and cried for days.”

Daniela’s account reveals the extent to which the socialist government was able to cultivate a new socialist subjectivity through mass festivals. By performing in choirs and various festivals, this amateur musician felt part of a community, a community delineated and defined in accordance with socialist ideology as uniquely propagated by the Ceauşescu regime. Because socialist ideology was intimately associated with embodied cultural performance, Daniela’s growing inability to sing led to a subjective crisis. She stayed at home “crying for days” not because she had ambitions to become a professional singer, as she told me, but because she felt removed from the Romanian national community.

Finally, it bears mentioning that the sheer ritualistic repetition of these events, from local competitions to regional to national, also succeeded to a degree in cultivating the sense of socialist citizenship Ceauşescu desired among the populace. Speaking of her time in a youth choir, Cristina recalled: “they had all kinds of songs made for us. Those are the songs I [still know today]. [It shows] how much they brainwashed us, because I don’t have any talent in singing, and I don’t know any song from the beginning to an end. The only thing I know are those songs that I used to sing even to my son when I had him like a baby, to put him to sleep.” Here we see the success with which the regime was able to infiltrate the quotidian musical lives of Romanian citizens: political anthems glorifying the Ceauşescu regime became so omnipresent they were utilized as lullabies.

Failures in Romanian Mass Spectacle

Successes aside, if the events of December 1989 reveal anything it is that Cântarea României did not ultimately achieve its purpose to maintain and propagate Ceauşescu’s vision of

dynastic socialism. It did not, in the end, create a national community of socialists as ideologically inculcated as my "perfect communist" interlocutor mentioned above; nor was it able to completely "gloss over" the inherent contradictions of Ceauşescu's ideology, as Giurchescu asserts. I argue this is primarily because the explicit promotion of strict ideology at these festivals unexpectedly opened up a space for participants to consider the contradictions contained within that ideology. As I alluded earlier in this chapter, it is quite likely that the most overt of such ideological contradictions realized during these events was economic. Like the Danube-Black Sea Canal and the construction of the People's Palace, mass political spectacle was an enormous expenditure during a time of harsh economic austerity—a fact that surely did not go unrealized among the populace.[32] Indeed, the truth is that no matter how spectacularly presented, ideology is not particularly successful when citizens go malnourished and hungry, and no amount of discourse will legitimate a government's supposed beneficence when people are freezing in their apartments. Speaking of the construction of the People's Palace, for instance, Ana, a composer who immigrated in the 1980s, expressed to me: "It is painful when you think what a contrast it was between this for instance, and how people had to live."

Through the act of choosing spectacular mass performance as the preeminent vehicle to disseminate nationalist socialist ideology, then, the regime was playing a dangerous game. If the mass adoration-turned-protest in Palace Square in December 1989 proves anything, it is that mass performance is always unpredictable. Such an attribute ultimately makes it, as Fischer-Lichte directly states when she discusses Soviet mass performance, "not a suitable means of manipulation" (2005:110). As she writes, "performance can never be completely planned and

[32] Created at the behest of Ceausescu, the People's Palace in Bucharest is the parliamentary building. Completed in in 1997, it remains the fourth largest building in the world, and the heaviest.

controlled by individual subjects, or be completely at their disposal" (*ibid.*, 111). Despite the political and ideological motivations behind their creation, then, performances constantly evolve and reproduce themselves (autopoiesis) in accordance with the unique and ever-changing relationship between the performers and the audience—a relationship that can never be strictly controlled by managing authorities.

In terms of performance's ability to maintain hegemony, then, the most important question to ask here concerns the extent to which the possible ideological deviations that occurred within mass performance were simply "variations on a theme," as Sugarman describes, easily incorporated back into ruling ideology, and to what extent they represented a "direct challenge to the status quo."[33] Here I would again argue that the more strictly a particular iteration of ideology presents itself within performance, the more damaging minute variations in the populace's reception of such ideology may be. The question then in understanding mass performance during the Ceauşescu era is not in locating a certain "counter-ideology" that acted as a resource for resisting the regime's rule, but rather evaluating how small variations on the theme of nationalist socialist ideology, so to speak, eventually formed a critical mass which ultimately lead to a mass failure to "reproduce hegemonic appearances," to borrow the term from James C. Scott, which in turn led to the downfall of Ceauşescu's rulership (1990:204).

Subversive Commitments to Ruling Ideas

The Virtues of Duplicitousness

In order to understand how such variations within the reception of ideology ultimately affected the hegemony of the Ceauşescu regime, it is first necessary to define what such

[33] Sugarman 2016, personal communication.

variations consisted of, especially during the performance of music. Such an investigation will reveal the extent to which Romanian subjects both "lived in ideology," but also lived in the contradictions that ideology presented, allowing them a sense of agency in how they operated artistically and socially within socialist Romania.

No more clearly were such variations of living within state ideology revealed than through *dedublarea*, a practice that became endemic during the socialist era in Romania. While roughly translated as "duplicity" or "duplicitousness," the term can better be understood as "not simply a case of lying, or secrecy, but something much deeper—a separation of private and public spheres from each other as if one will contaminate the other" (Sampson 1984b:174). In many ways, *dedublarea* was the unintended result of the state's two-fold approach to attempting to cultivate a perfect subjectivity within its citizenry: first by providing an official framework within which one could rehearse one's ideal citizenship through mass spectacles; second by creating a pervasive secret police force to ensure such acts of proper citizenship were carried in more quotidian circumstances. But rather than cultivating within the populace a single ideal subjectivity with this method, the combination of state spectacle and secret police created a split subjectivity, a way of being and acting in a public sphere ideologically controlled by the secret police, and a second way in the private sphere, which (one hoped) was considered a space that granted one the ability to act less in accordance to how state ideology compelled one. Rather than being a simple dichotomy (i.e. the streets are public, the home private), sites relegated to being either private or public were always discursively negotiated, and nested within one another (see Gal and Kligman 2000).

In regard to musical performance, one of the most direct examples of such a practice of *dedublarea* comes from Nixon's description of an evening he spent with one of his musician interlocutors in a small village:

> After I had enjoyed a long and fruitful discussion at home with a Gypsy fiddler and his companions, he withdrew from the group in order to change clothes for a wedding engagement. Re-emerging in sparkling Hodac peasant garb, he was regaled by shrieks of *"Vezi! Vezi! Vezi! Vine Dacu!"* – "Look! Look! Look! Here comes the Dacian!"—followed by peals of laughter and glances of complicity. But ridicule of established peasants could only take place in the security of the home, with doors and windows tightly shut. Stepping out into village realities, another demeanor was required. In public, the group of whom our fiddler and his network deferentially said *they* was not to be mocked. (1998:292)

In this example, the musicians are mocking an aspect of state ideology which emphasized and glorified the Dacians, the ethnic group that occupied Romanian lands before the Roman invasion shortly before the 1st century and have since become part of the national myth. The musician's Roma background, which has historically marked Roma as the quintessential Other in Romanian national discourse, make them all the more cognizant of the contradictory role they needed to take as public performers: historically placed apart from Romanian society, they were required nonetheless to take on the role of Romanian indigeneity in accordance with state ideology.

While such a duplicitous stance towards officially mandated public performance may have been most pronounced among Roma musicians, it certainly also existed among ethnic Romanians. Writing on the paganist rite of *Căluş*, for instance, Kligman provides the following ethnographic example of a young man negotiating between an official state ideology that

discouraged mysticism and a rural tradition in which mysticism was of important cultural significance:

> He lived and worked in the city, although his family resided in the village. It so happened that he visited his family during *Rusalii* [the time when the *Căluş* rite normally occurs], whereupon he too wore garlic on his belt [an act with paganistic/mystical significance]. For him, it was unthinkable not to wear garlic while in the village; in turn, it was equally unthinkable for him to wear garlic on his belt while in the city. (1977:143)

We see in this instance a similar alteration of behavior as determined by whether a particular space was considered public or private. This particular person read the village as a private sphere, wherein people could conduct themselves in certain ways outside of what state ideology prescribed. The fact that the regime may have allowed the existence of more "traditional" or "mystical" manifestations of *Căluş* to be performed in rural areas (whether due to lack of resources to enforce the "appropriate" performance of *Căluş* in rural areas, or simply to a selected blindness to such performances) is essentially of little consequence. The point is such practices of *dedublarea* created split subjectivities ("I perform *Căluş* in the city as the government tells me, and I perform *Căluş* in the village as rural tradition tells me"), essentially propelling one to live within ideological contradictions.

It is not enough, however, to note that musicians approached performance in different ways depending on their immediate physical and social surroundings. Indeed, the simple argument that musical performances could be approached with reverence in public where governmental eyes were watching and with subversion in private amongst colleagues discounts Gal and Kligman's assertion that public and private distinctions are a nested dichotomy: that in

any given space there exist dispositions, vocabularies, and general ways-of-being that are inscribed either as public or as private. If we acknowledge the fact that the regime had far less hegemonic power within the private sphere than within the public, and that the private sphere naturally allowed more opportunities for citizens to criticize or subvert the government, then carried to its logical conclusion Gal and Kligman's arguments imply that *within any given space one had the potential to be both in deference and in irreverence to hegemonic ideology*. I describe this seeming paradox in which one can operate in ways within ideology while also subverting it as *subversive commitments to ruling ideas,* which I argue are manifested in two ways: through *affective realignment* and *discursive reassociation.*

Affective Realignment

Sampson describes *dedublarea* as being conceptualized by Romanians primarily as a "dichotomy between public face and private sentiment" (1984b:174). Such a dichotomy between outward performance and inner sentiment, between what people do versus how they *feel* about what they are doing, is possibly the most pervasive form of the public/private distinction that existed in socialist Romania. One's private thoughts and unexpressed emotions are always, after all, a private sanctuary in even the most public spaces. In my fieldwork, it was thus unsurprising that discussions over one's affective or emotional commitment to mass performances were common. Practices of affective commitment seemed for many I spoke with to be a means to rationalize their participation within an ideological environment they didn't agree with—a sort of "yes, I performed, but this is how I secretly felt about it," or "yes, I performed, but this is the *real* reason I did it" defense. I have discussed such an approach previously: that art musicians I spoke to, for example, enthusiastically participated in Cântarea României simply because it was good for their careers; they cared little about honoring Ceauşescu. At the very least this mentality

points to the possibility of a subversive approach to ideological performance, a means in which one can do one's duty and perform, but embody such performances on one's own terms, at least to a certain extent. This phenomenon is what I term *affective realignment*, or the process by which one performs publicly in accordance with ideological scripts, but commits to such performances in ways that might be considered counterproductive to the perpetuation of such ideology—for instance, performing not with dedication, righteousness, or pride, but with a strong sense of apathy, indignation, or cynicism. In other words, the act of *affective realignment* is one of supporting ideology at a discursive level, but privately re-aligning one's affective commitment to such public displays of support.

It is, of course, very difficult to determine whether a person's possibly subversive feelings towards state music and ideology actually occurred in the process of performance, or if such feelings developed afterwards, as a way of rationalizing participation in these events. This is especially a concern in my own interviews, as the musicians I spoke with were recalling their experiences in such festivals long after the end of socialism. However, one might find clues to understanding how participants truly felt about such performances while they were occurring by locating moments in which such "true feelings" were physically manifested. Within ethnographies written at the time, such physical manifestations were cited regularly, most operating to depict the musician's *apathetic* approach to performance in mass spectacles. In his ethnographic work with villagers, for instance, Kideckel notes that many of the villagers with whom he worked clearly took an apathetic approach to performing in Cântarea României:

> [The villagers] made light of the national folklore contests, Cântarea României. All institutions were required to take part, and many people used their forced participation as an occasion for symbolic resistance. High school teachers and

> students in Făgăraş [a city in central Romania and site of Kideckal's fieldwork] often begged off by feigning injury or claiming lack of talent for singing and dancing [. . .] still others acted, sang, and danced as clumsily as possible in the hope of being eliminated (1993:192)

Even more directly, it is Nixon's account of the rehearsals of a village flute ensemble that illustrate the clear apathetic approach to performance taken by not only musicians, but their audiences as well. I quote at length:

> [After winning a prize at Cântarea României] back in the village people seldom listened to their playing. They seemed to have little public profile or function beyond their prize-winning appearances; they gave no performances other than playing under orders, as at *Tîrgu Fetelor* [a performance at Târgu-Mureș, a large city in central Romania]. They were certainly not available for study of the sort I had hoped to carry out. Repeated requests to attend practices were resisted by the director, who refused on all but two occasions. With national competitive festival appearances looming large for the group in mid-summer and autumn, rehearsals were held twice monthly in a Party Committee room. I could not presume to call there unannounced. I had to abide by rules laid down by my hosts and attend when beckoned. The two sessions I witnessed revealed, it seemed clear, the sources of official reluctance to admit a stranger to Hodac's most prestigious music activity.
>
> First, I must remark on the amount of shouting and wheedling necessary to get things started. The full complement failed to turn out on both occasions, so runners were send by the Party Cultural Secretary with orders to return with

> recalcitrant fluters, all adults of mature years. Many players seemed unwilling to attend. Those present were more interested in drinking *ţuică* (plum brandy) than in playing, and amounts consumed were great; the strong liquor was competed for from common glasses and bottles. There seemed no end to imbibing until the Secretary forcibly took away the bottles, like a bossy parent, and placed them on the top of a high cupboard out of reach. He kept guard while hectoring the men to play. This seemed to be the routine of rehearsal. The men were promised a drink if they practiced for ten minutes. This they did throughout, but with heavy drinking allowed at progressively shorter intervals.
>
> [. . .]
>
> Rehearsals I attended never progressed beyond this routine. Interposing between bouts of drinking and noisy conversation among the players, Mr. Deputy Secretary would remonstrate: '*Atenţie! Aşteptăm. . .*'—Attention! We are waiting! WE ARE WAITING! You will be playing at the Festival! You will be playing in front of Avram Iancu's statue in Târgu-Mureș! This appeal, invoking an important Transylvanian hero, was not effective in ensuring order and concentration. (1993:436-437)

According to Nixon's account, despite being a recognized award-winning folk ensemble, the flutists were largely met with indifference when they returned to the village, and seemed indifferent about the honor themselves. If anything, Nixon's description of the rehearsal process, in which drinking and chatting were prioritized over rehearsing, speaks to a sort of "Bartleby politics" that existed among citizens, referring to the famous Herman Melville character who,

while doing his work (at least initially), makes increasingly clear in no uncertain terms that he "would prefer not to."

An apathetic approach to performance is, however, just one side of the story. As has been discussed, there were plenty of people who enthusiastically performed in accordance with state ideology, who waited with bated breath every year for their chance to perform in a state festival. However, while many enthusiastically performed for ideological reasons (i.e. in direct support of the regime), one shouldn't assume that this was the only way to enjoy such performances. That is, *it was quite possible to enjoy ideological spectacle without agreeing with the ideology put forth while performing it.* Here Žižek's reading of Rammstein, an industrial metal group that flirts with Nazi and other totalitarian symbolism, is relevant. For Žižek, the debate over whether Rammstein's pervasive use of totalitarian symbolism is pursued in earnest or with ironic distance is unimportant. What is important is that their over-identification with totalitarian images acts in most ways not constatively, but affectively, as a Lacanian *sinthome* ("a formula-knot of jouissance"). That is, Rammstein's over-identification with totalitarian symbols is the very thing that disassociates them from any sort of totalitarian message: through their continual proliferation the symbols become empty signifiers simply deployed to elicit a strong affective response without any explicit political association. Of course, among certain audiences the use of totalitarian imagery by the band can lead to totalitarian thinking, but Žižek urges the reader to consider the possibility that one can affectively enjoy such images without adhering to the ideological environment from where they arose (2010:385-386).

It seems to me something very similar occurred during the mass ideological spectacles occurring in Ceauşescu's Romania. Because mass spectacle over-identified with ideological discourse to such an extent, citizens were more freely able to enjoy the spectacle without

adhering to the message. Contrary to Giurchescu's argument that the "over saturation" of patriotic and socialist symbols counterproductively resulted in their depreciating emotional impact among audiences, I would say that in many cases the emotional impact of these massive spectacles proved quite effective, but that the constative impact—that is, the process of connecting the affective power of the performances to the ideology of regime legitimation— was far less successful (1987:166).

This notion of being able to enjoy ideological performances without necessarily accepting the ideology they promote was greatly facilitated by what was in Russia known as *svoi*. Roughly translated as "us," or "our own," Yurchak asserts that *svoi* represented a kind of camaraderie and socialization that didn't necessarily adhere to socialist ideology, but was framed by it; a sense of community marked neither by shared support nor dissent of ideology, but simply by the shared experience of operating within it (2006:102-114). It makes sense then that large-scale musical and artistic festivals, where thousands were able to leave their workplaces and gather, became preeminent spaces to enact *svoi*. As Yurchak writes of Russian parades:

> May and November parades, which at one level were seen as unpleasant obligatory duties, often became appealing celebrations. With their massive scale, parades were a powerful machinery for the cultural production of the publics of *svoi*, creating temporary collectivities of friends and strangers who marched together through the streets, carried the same portraits and slogans, shouted "hurray" in response to the same appeals blaring from loudspeakers, and publicly displayed the same celebratory mood. Participating in these events reproduced the collectivity of belonging that was enabled by these slogans and portraits but no longer bound by their literal sense. (2006:121)

As Yurchak's discussion of *svoi* details, mass performances did aid the development of a national community or sense of camaraderie, but not in a way strictly aligned with state ideology.

While not having an exact term for it themselves, my interlocutors often recalled experiencing collective feelings of what could be considered *svoi* during the socialist era. Again, speaking of her father's participation in a village choir that competed in Cântarea României, Cristina told me that "all those people in the village, starting from the farmers to the teachers were a part of a choir. And they would have like festivals, and they would go from place to place in Romania, and they would make this change of experience, or a cultural exchange as I could translate. And they would visit: like this village would visit with another village and they would become part of the families. And they became friends. They would come from one village to another." Assuredly in this instance, the mass competition served to build a community that hadn't existed before. But the extent to which this community was bound by socialist ideology rather than another delineation of camaraderie (perhaps relating to each other as villagers, amateur singers, or simply citizens under the regime) merits consideration

Discursive Reassociation

Žižek's illustration of mass performance as a Lacanian *sinthome* and Yurchak's assertion that mass performance invokes a sense of communal *svoi* allude to the fact that it is quite possible to enjoy the affective aspects of political performance while ignoring (at least somewhat) their ideological significations. However, I would argue that the emergence of positive affect during ideological performances is greatly broadened by an accompanying discursive process, one in which participants redirect the ideological messages delivered during

performance to meet their own ends. I term this process *discursive reassociation,* wherein one is able to ascribe alternative, possibly counter-hegemonic significations to the texts and symbols of propagandistic media. Such a process is made possible by the very fact that, like hegemony, ideology is forever incomplete; there always exist contradictions which, when articulated in perpetuity, may destabilize a particular regime's hegemony.

As an example of such a process of discursive reassociation, take Rădulescu's account of the typical Romanian villager's reception of *muzică populară:*

> . . . ordinary townspeople, for the most part recently urbanized peasants who were still only precariously integrated in urban culture, approached popular music in a much more nuanced way [than urbanized intellectuals and cultural authorities]. They went in not for theoretical reflection but for actions: they made use, in different circumstances, of one or other of its forms, each with a different function. When they took part in festivals organized by the rural branches of their families – weddings, baptisms, birthdays and name days – the townspeople immersed themselves in the musical atmosphere of the village and promptly changed into demanding, competent and passionate listeners to a music with which they identified smoothly. In daily life, they consumed with the same conviction the popular music transmitted almost non-stop by the media. (1997:9)

As discussed in the previous chapter, *muzică populară* or *muzică folclorică* was a genre that developed through the ideological cooption of traditional Romanian rural musics. However, as Rădulescu implies, audiences of the music were able to re-associate the new ideological associations of the genre by selectively focusing on the historical cultural meanings: in other words, focusing on the functional significations of the music (a music to dance to, to celebrate

to) in lieu of their ideological meanings. Rădulescu's argument was corroborated in my fieldwork interviews. For example, when I asked musician Sabina why *muzică populară* remains popular among the Romanian community in New York despite its political connotations, she responded: "It does have that political stigma, of one branch of it being very much associated with the politics of the regime. And then there is another component which is, locally, at the village level, people loved to dance, and they love this music. And it's a community thing, it's very much a social and a romantic thing, people would go and they would dance, and they would get to know their potential mate." Dragoş, a professional musician who emigrated in the early 2000s, related to me that "During communism frequently we heard that, like 'oh, this dance started in the 1848 failed revolution, when the people tried to rid themselves from the oppressors' and all that crap. But you know growing up with it you know that this is traditional and this is Romanian." In both instances, this music could continue to be positively received because audiences would ignore its political significations, rather focusing on the traditional functions the music possessed.

My impression through fieldwork is that many of my interlocutors received the officially sanctioned versions of traditional music aligned with socialist ideology not as an exciting contemporary improvement upon Romanian musical heritage, but rather an inevitable and ubiquitous part of the Romanian mediascape—the background noise, perhaps, of an authoritarian regime. As such, while this music was widely disseminated, it did not necessarily inspire mimetic performance on an amateur level as the regime might have hoped. Rather, many ignored state-mandated musical genres and continued at the village and local level to perform traditional songs. I once asked Antonia after a rehearsal with the Roadrunners if she ever sung state-approved secular winter songs in the town in which she grew up instead of more traditional

colinde. She immediately responded, "I didn't. Just TV." Then she clarified: "*Colinde* were banned in schools, on TV, in public. As a child, I never sang them in schools. We went caroling with friends, neighbors. My teacher had interdiction to go to church, but some teachers would just go and take the risk [. . .] even though they were banned, people kept the tradition and went caroling. On TV, they showed songs for 'winter holiday' but not specifying the meaning of Christmas." Antonia's account of traditional and co-opted music is largely corroborated by Nixon's fieldwork (1998). As was described above, while glorified in national festivals, the official state village ensemble was met with ambivalence in the village, and even the musicians themselves treated their role as state musicians with a fair degree of indifference. Yet, according to Nixon's account, the same villagers also organized and enthusiastically participated in village *joc*s or dances, traditional events for comradeship and match-making that were discouraged, if not made illegal by the government. Here again the public/private dichotomy so much implicated in *dedublarea* manifests itself: often officially sanctioned music was received and performed publicly, with ambivalence while a wholly other type of music was performed in the private sphere.

The poignant discursive ambiguity implicit in the performance and reception of musical genres based on traditional practices such as *muzică populară* and *colinde* also existed within popular music genres like rock and folk. With everyone well aware of the existence of censorship, the meanings of popular songs were topics of constant debate among audiences: what was censored, and what made it past the censors? What was the artist *really* trying to say? I experienced such debates, decades after the initial releases of the songs, in my rehearsals with the Roadrunners. Whenever I asked what the lyrics were for a particular song we were rehearsing, it was all too common for the response to be something akin to "well this is what the

lyrics say, but what the song is *really* about is. . .” To provide an example, I will discuss two such songs which the members of the Roadrunners particularly felt were strong examples of such “hidden meanings,” songs that spoke to the inherent *dedublarea* within popular music: Valeriu Sterian’s “Amintire cu Haiduci” (“Memories of Haiduci”) (fig. 2.2) and Corina Chiriac’s “Strada Speranței” (“Hope Street”) (fig. 2.3).

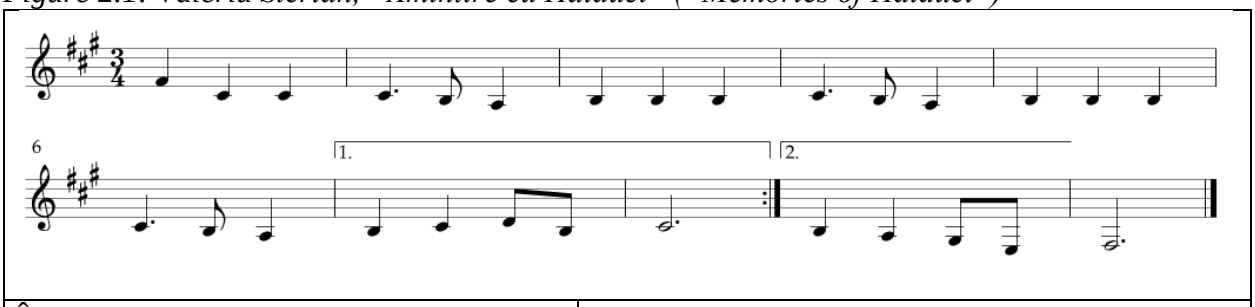
Recorded in 1978, Valeriu Sterian’s “Amintire cu Haiduci” is one of the most well-known songs in the folk/rock genre. *Muzică folk* and *muzică rock,* as they are termed in Romanian, were Western imports arriving in the 1960s. Like their Western counterparts (Crosby Stills and Nash, Bob Dylan, or The Byrds, for example), the border between the two genres is tenuous, with many musicians complementing their harder-hitting electrified rock songs with acoustic pieces. Lyrically, both genres were steeped in romanticism and sentiment, regularly invoking themes of love, nostalgia, national myth and history, and the Romanian landscape. As is common internationally, the lyrics in both genres also often drew upon themes of social injustice, the disenfranchisement of the poor, and the promotion of world peace. As genres of popular music, they relied upon catchy riffs and memorable choruses (as well as a certain amount of virtuosity in the case of rock), with the poetry of the lyrics often as valued as the music itself.

Perhaps the lasting popularity of “Amintire cu Haiduci” is due to its poetic encapsulation of all the characteristics listed above. The song combines traditional rock and folk instrumentation (electric and acoustic guitar, electric bass, and drumset) with a rollicking 6/8 meter. The strophic form of the lyrics recalls more traditional music while also serving to solidify the melody in the memories of the audience. The melody is further emphasized by being set to a simple harmonic progression which utilizes only three chords (i, III, VII). Finally, the

chorus of the song, set upon the sole syllable "lai" (in some performances "nai"), all but demands audience participation. Because the strophic melody is already repeated twice before the first chorus, even those who are unfamiliar with the song would likely be able to sing along.

Lyrically the text is unmistakably nostalgic, as the singer remembers longingly the "glory years" of Romania when good-natured bandits (*haiduci*) roamed the forest imposing their own form of egalitarian justice upon the rich and corrupt. The lyrics also evoke the romantic, mysterious, and adventurous landscape of Romania, with images of pistols and daggers, horses galloping and drinking at the springs, and shadows in the green woods. The political connotations of the lyrics, however, emerge when one considers the long historical associations of the *haiduci* as cultural figures. As one interlocutor explained to me, the *haiduci* represent nothing less than a "fundamental archetype" of the Romanian people. As he recounted, the forest-dwelling *haiduci* are the personification of the historical Romanian adage *Codru-i frate cu românul*, ("The woods is a brother to the Romanian") which speaks to what my interlocutor described as a "symbiosis that is central to our culture." Perhaps more to the point, the *haiduci* represent Romanian sovereignty itself. As my interlocutor emphasized, Romania was "never completely conquered —ever" partly because there were always *haiduci* or "freedom fighters" resisting full national incorporation into the various empires that historically attempted to control the land, from the ancient Romans to the Ottomans and Hapsburgs to the communists. Indeed, the popular notion is that the *haiduci* were just as much enemies to invading powers (particularly the Ottomans) as they were to rich landowners and nobles who exploited the peasantry. In this sense, any invocation of *haiduci* will always simultaneously invoke a citation of the various forms of power which threatened the sovereignty of the Romanian people. As mentioned in the

Figure 2.1: Valeriu Sterian, "Amintire cu Haiduci" ("Memories of Haiduci")



În codrul verde nu se mai pierde, Nu se mai vede urmă de cal, Pe la izvoare nu mai apare Umbra călare a vreunui haiduc.	In the green woods, no more getting lost No more traces of a horse No more appearing at the springs The shadow of an outlaw (*haiduc)* on horseback.
Unde s-au dus, când au apus Anii de sus ai gloriei lor? Unde-s pistoalele? Unde-s pumnalele? Caii și flintele haiducilor?	Where have they gone, when did they vanish? The years from on high of their glory? Where are their pistols? Where are their daggers? The outlaw's horses and muskets?
Lai-lai-lai-lai-la...	(Refrain)
La drumul mare nu mai apare Să mai omoare câte-un ciocoi Să ia toți banii pentru țăranii, Pentru sărmanii plini de nevoi.	On the highway he no longer appears To keep killing the rich oppressors To take all the money for the villagers For the poor full of needs.
Unde s-au dus, când au apus Anii de sus ai gloriei lor? Unde-s pistoalele? Unde-s pumnalele? Caii și flintele haiducilor?	Where have they gone, when did they vanish? The years from on high of their glory? Where are their pistols? Where are their daggers? The outlaw's horses and muskets?

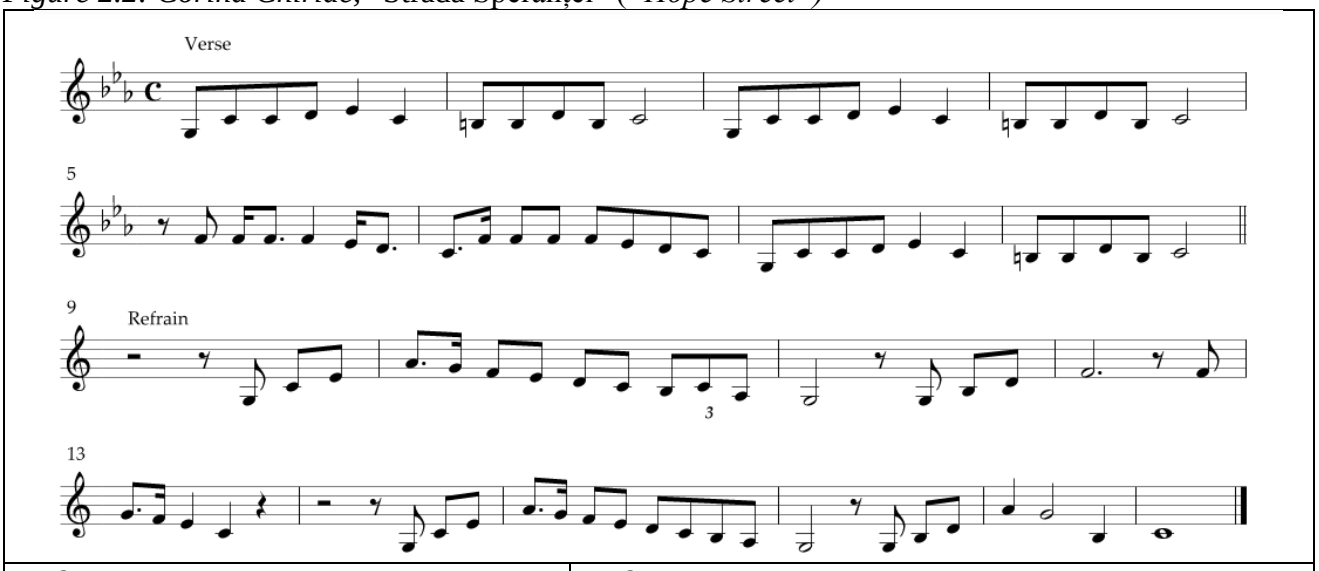
previous chapter, even the communists sought to associate themselves with the *haiduci*, using this distinction to align themselves with the Romanian history of resistance to wealth, corruption, and imperialist power. It is here that Sterian's song becomes inherently subversive: a Romania without *haiduci* is a Romania that has lost its very sovereignty, its ancient connection with the past and the land—it is a conquered Romania. At a surface level, "Amintire cu Haiduci" invokes Romania's national history and the importance of the land in a romantic nationalist sense—themes that aligned perfectly with the nationalist socialist ideology of the regime. But for many of the interlocutors I spoke to, it was also read as a call to action: where are the modern freedom-fighting *haiduci*, Sterian asks, that will defend Romanian sovereignty against this new corrupt empire of the Ceauşescu regime?

Corina Chiriac's "Hope Street" ("Strada Speranței") invokes many of the same themes and images as "Memories of Haiduci"—romanticism, nostalgia, mystery—though set in a very different genre framework. While she had a varied career, Chiriac is most associated with *muzică ușoară,* or "light music." Always a commercial genre, *muzică ușoară* began to be broadcast in Romania in the 1950s. Drawing upon French *chanson* and Italian light music, *muzică ușoară* during this time approached themes of love and romance in all their varied forms, but often with bucolic associations specific to the Romanian landscape. By the 1960s, the genre began to draw less upon French and Italian sources and more upon American and British ones, with greater emphasis on rock instrumentation (drumset, guitar, bass, keyboard) (Rădulescu 2002:115-116). Like their folk and art music counterparts, *muzică ușoară* artists in the Ceauşescu era often attained higher visibility through their inclusion in various mass-mediated singing competitions, such as *Steaua Fără Nume* ("Star without a Name") which, much as the title suggests, sought to find hidden amateur singing talent.

Released in 1983, “Strada Speranței” became one of Chiriac’s biggest hit songs, solidifying her position as one of Romania’s top performers and granting her the rare privilege of being able to tour outside the country. Written by Vasile Veselovski, the song follows a binary verse-chorus format. Harmonically, the verse and chorus are strongly differentiated, the verse set in minor, largely alternating in a stepwise progression between the root and flatted subtonic, while the chorus modulates to the parallel major and alternates between the tonic and dominant in the new key. The song ends with a modulation of the chorus up a major second, with multiple repetitions in the new key. The orchestration is a mixture of popular instruments (drums, guitar, electric bass) and orchestral strings, with a funky beat and string fills recalling disco-era hits.

Initially the lyrics, written by Mihai Maximilian, seem to speak of a protagonist pining for a word from a long-lost lover. Like “Amintire cu Haiduci,” there is an undeniable feeling of loss, perhaps already placing it in an ambiguous position within a society that stressed that everything was being provided for. In the song, one gets the sense that, despite the seeming bucolic comforts of her life (living in a house among the poplar trees, a welcoming table in the kitchen), the protagonist remains bitter and unhappy. The seemingly saccharine lyrics become instantly political, however, simply by conceptualizing the vacancy at the core of the protagonist’s melancholy not as a person but as an event. Indeed, such a displacement is made all the more possible given the linguistic ambiguity surrounding the object of the protagonist’s desire. In the first verse, the desired object is rendered genderless (“where did it go? “to know of its existence would be enough”), allowing the reader to conceptualize the missing object as practically anything. By the chorus, the desired object becomes clearer, however, as the pronoun shifts to the feminine singular, implying that what the singer is pining for is not a person, but the feminine noun *fericire*, or happiness. This is reinforced further with the first two lines of the

Figure 2.2: Corina Chiriac, “Strada Speranței” (*“Hope Street”)*



Refrain: Să-i amintiți vă rog frumos de adresa mea Când vă întâlniți cu fericirea Casa cu plopi, strada Speranței la parter O mai aștept și mai sper.. Să o poftiți vă rog frumos la masa mea, Când vă-ntalniți cu fericirea... Să-mi toarne doar o picatură de nectar, In cupa plină de amar...	**Refrain:** Kindly please remind it of my address When you meet happiness The House with poplars, on Hope street on the ground floor I still wait for it and hope Please invite it to my table (to dinner) When you meet happiness Let it pour just a drop of nectar Into my cup full of bitterness
Verses: Vine sau nu vine, dați-mi un răspuns Nu cred chiar de mine să se fi ascuns. Unde umbla? Unde este? De mi-ar da măcar o veste Să știu că există și mi-ar fi de ajuns. Și într-o dimineață dacă va veni Poate sta și-o viața, poate sta și-o zi Pân' la răsărit de lună Și să-mi spună "Noapte bună" Dar să plece numai când voi adormi.	**Verses:** Is it coming or not, give me an answer I don’t believe it’s hiding just from me. Where did it go? Where is it? If it would just give me news Of its existence, that would be enough for me. And if it arrives one morning It can stay a lifetime, it can stay a day Until the moon rises And it can tell me “Good Night,” But leave only when I go to sleep.

chorus: “kindly please remind it of my address, when you meet Happiness.” Happiness in the song thus becomes personified: it is something on the way, perhaps, but one is never sure, and always looking for signs of its arrival. The ambiguity in which happiness will arrive for the melancholic protagonist is what grants the lyrics the possibility of a political interpretation. As Antonia expressed to me, the “hidden message” of the song was not that the singer was waiting for a partner to deliver her happiness, but an event. What she wanted, ultimately, was a sign of social change. My interlocutor thus spoke bluntly on the meaning of the song: “the hope one day happiness and freedom will come. That was the message.”

Whether Chiriac and Sterian personally intended such songs to be taken as secretly subversive towards the Ceauşescu regime is, given the circumstances of the era, difficult if not impossible to decisively determine. The fact that Sterian penned other songs banned by the government might speak to his attitude regarding the regime. A case in point may be his song “Nopți” (“Nights”), a song censored in the 1980s that became a sort of anthem for the revolution in 1989, being one of the first to be broadcast on television after the revolution. Similarly, in our conversation of “Hope Street,” Antonia told me that Chiriac, in an interview after the revolution, admitted the song was meant to be about hope for political change—though I have been unable to locate such an interview. Even still, one may justifiably critique the veracity of such post-revolution admissions of subversion, even if they were made by the musicians themselves. To an extent, after the revolution Sterian and Chiriac continued to be public figures relying on public approval in order to maintain their careers. Dissociating themselves from the Ceauşescu regime would seem in this case, especially during the turbulent years following the revolution, potentially necessary to sustain the precarious career as an artist in a burgeoning capitalist economy.

But if such ambiguities in intent point towards anything, it is the atmosphere of *dedublare* endemic in socialist Romania. Indeed, even if the intention behind "Memories of *Haiduci"* and "Hope Street" only operated on the most superficial levels, being simply a sentimental love song and a harmless description of the adventurous lifestyles of bandits, the reception of the songs as subversive would likely remain. Sampson writes of Romania during the socialist era: "It is a society of conspiracy, a society in which public utterances, conversations, and behavior are *by definition* to be interpreted to mean something else. Hence, one 'reads between the lines' in a newspaper even where there is nothing there" (1984:174). Ultimately, such modes of reception towards these songs serve only to underscore an essential point: even with the socialist regime's strong effort to control discourse in Romania, they were never successful.

In fact, it was precisely the ambiguity of official discourse that resulted in some of the grandest and most influential artistic products of the Ceauşescu regime. Personal politics aside, artists during the era had a knack for exploiting the inherent contradictions of nationalist socialist ideology in order to pursue their own artistic projects. Pieslak's research of the choral ensemble Madrigal provides one such example. Founded in 1963 by conductor Marin Constantin, the ensemble would become one of Romania's most well-known, and one of the few performing, groups during the Ceauşescu era that was granted the ability not only to conduct world tours, but to publicly perform religious music (Pieslak 2007a:135).

Like the rest of the choirs functioning during the Ceauşescu era, in order to maintain state financial support, the group was required to sing patriotic and socialist music, including various folkloric arrangements. However, Constantin was able to greatly expand this repertoire by exploiting the contradictions within socialist ideology. With the rise of protochronism, Madrigal

could perform music outside the nationalist repertoire because Constantin was able to convince authorities that the music he wished to perform represented Romanian culture more than it did anything else. An endemic intellectual and cultural love affair with the notion of Romanian autochthony that existed during this time allowed the group to perform and specialize in Renaissance music particularly. Despite the fact that most of the Renaissance repertoire performed by the group was composed by Western Europeans, such performances nonetheless "implied that Romania was on a par with the cultural and historical achievements of other nations in Europe" (*ibid.*, 138). Moreover, Madrigal was allowed to perform explicitly religious music, including *colinde*, so long as the music was framed as part of the country's political "Byzantine" heritage rather than its religious Eastern Orthodox heritage (*ibid.*, 139).

Through its performances of such diverse repertoire, Madrigal attained star status in the country. The choir often went at state expense on rehearsal "retreats" to vacation spots throughout the country, where they were fed and treated lavishly (*ibid.*, 147-148). Madrigal became an ensemble that provided a "positive image abroad" and as such had the rare opportunity to tour festivals and competitions throughout Europe and the United States. At these concerts, the choir performed explicitly religious *colinde* as a representation of Romanian culture. The success of these foreign concerts allowed what was up until that point considered the unthinkable: the public performance of religious *colinde* domestically. Occurring during what was considered a brief period of liberalization, Madrigal performed for the opening of the 1966-67 concert season at Bucharest's Radio Hall, thereby opening the doors to *colinde* performances throughout the country. This openness was short-lived however, as *colinde* music began to be linked to specifically political movements against the regime (*ibid.*, 148-151). After this,

Madrigal was still allowed to play *colinde,* but only outside of Romania, as it promoted the ideas of Romanian (protochronist) heritage abroad.

Another example of an artistic manifestation that emerged thanks to the ambiguities of socialist ideology was Cenaclul Flacăra, ("The Flame Literary Circle"), a festival primarily for youth that rivaled Cântarea României in scope and popularity. The festival was the brainchild of poet Adrian Păunescu, who masterfully negotiated both socialist ideology and the practical politics of the Ceaușescu government in order to create a spectacle that allowed the public performance of what was largely Western-inspired folk and folk-rock music.

Păunescu was able to pursue such a project largely due to his high visibility within the Union of Writers in the 1950s. In his open conflict with the leader of the Union, Dumitru Popescu, Păunescu quickly established himself as an advocate of the "New Wave" of Romanian literature, which distanced itself from socialist realist aesthetics. After an attempt to become the head editor of the union's flagship journal failed due to accusations that his poetry had "mystical accents" and invoked religious figures, in 1973 Păunescu was instead awarded the head editorship of *Flacăra*, or "The Flame," a weekly journal published by the Union. Through the editorship Păunescu was able to further promote a *cenaclu* (circle or cadre) of like-minded poets and writers that assembled around him a few years earlier (Pavelescu 2008:11-13). Later that year, The Union of Young Communists, recognizing Păunescu's growing popularity with the new generation, entrusted the poet to develop performances that would instill the values of the "New Man" (see Chapter Two) into the youth. From this point until its final manifestation in 1985, the resulting Cenaclul Flacăra festivals were a resounding success, with 615 total

performances and an average annual attendance of 543,000 spectators (Dragomir 2003:2; Pavelescu 2008:14).[34]

There were thematic and practical similarities between Cenaclul Flacăra and the larger Cântarea României festival, as can be seen Pavelescu's description of the festival:

> Under the slogan 'Light, struggle, liberty!', the Circle revived the line of literature and patriotic Romanian music from the end of the 19th to the beginning of the 20th century, which fueled the national spirit of Greater Romania and added an anti-Soviet militancy, to the appreciation of the Romanian public. (2008:13)[35]

However, the musical vehicle through which such a patriotic message was promoted was not traditional *muzică populară*, but folk and rock music imported from the West. The resulting product was a Woodstock-like festival, as my interlocutors lovingly referred to it, in which crowds of generally educated young people sang along with patriotic folk-rock songs such as Ștefan Hrușcă's "Tu Ardeal" (fig.2.4) and Nicu Alifantis' "Trăiască România" (fig. 2.5). The lyrics, usually invoking themes of Romanian national exceptionalism, were often set to strophic forms and a strong beat, compelling participants to sing and clap along—thus creating, as in Cântarea României, a means of coercing Romanians to perform as perfect Romanian nationalist socialist citizens. The broadcast of Cenaclul Flacăra on radio and television, coupled with the

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[34] *Cenaclul Flacăra* ended tragically in the summer of 1985, when scaffolding collapsed during a concert in Ploieşti, killing or wounding several people. Afterwards, government officials investigating the accident found bottles of alcohol and loose undergarments at the site. They soon deemed the event immoral and banned all future installments. Rădulescu hypothesizes that the banning of the event might have been partly influenced by the growing popularity of Păunescu, which threatened Ceaușescu's cult of personality; or simply because the regime felt Păunescu's task to "capture" the younger generation who were not properly indoctrinated through *Cântarea României* was completed (2002: 119-120)

[35] "Greater Romania" generally refers to the country as it existed during the interwar period of 1918-1940. Compared to the country today, Greater Romania would further encompass all of Moldova, as well as small parts of Hungary, Ukraine and Bulgaria. Suffice to say, during socialism calls for a Greater Romania were somewhat perilous, given that they included the nationalization of parts of the Soviet Union.

obligatory glorifications of the Ceauşescu family, further support this comparison (Pavelescu 2008:15). As many argued, Cenaclul Flacăra was a means for the government to "catch," for lack of a better word, those youth not interested in Cântarea României, who were often part of the urban, educated middle class (Dragomir 2003:17; Pavelescu 2008:14).

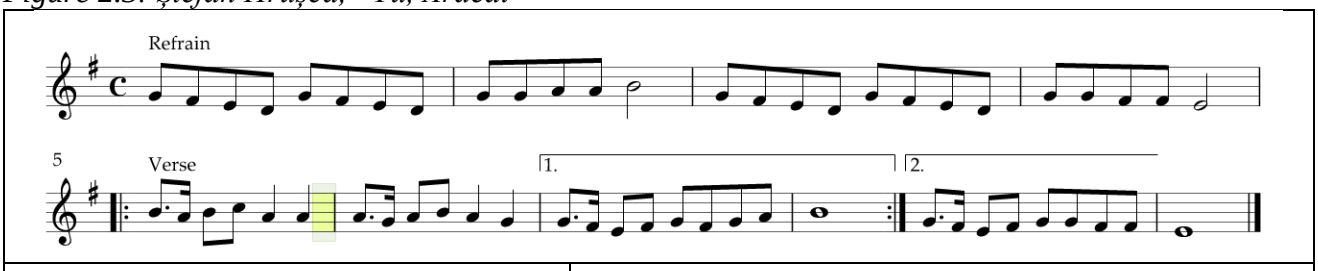
Yet the same scholars also note that Cenaclul Flacăra had a more contentious relationship with the regime ideologically than Cântarea României, as Păunescu was a quintessential figure of the ambiguity and *dedublare* inherent during the Ceauşescu regime. Both Dragomir and Pavelescu thus refer to Cenaclul Flacăra as a "dual game" for Păunescu. On the one hand, he played the part of the sycophantic "court poet" of the Ceauşescu regime (as Rădulescu refers to him), announcing in both the print version of Flacăra and at performance events constant veneration for "our great leader," "our example," "the destined leader of Romania," and "the wise and great leader of our country" (Dragomir 2008:9; Rădulescu 2002:119). But on the other hand, it was precisely such outward veneration that allowed the poet to organize a concert which explicitly performed Western rock music: Pavelescu notes that in addition to original songs and poetry, Cenaclul Flacăra would feature arrangements of songs by the Beatles, Bob Marley and Janis Joplin (2008:13). Like Madrigal, the singers and poets in Cenaclul Flacăra were additionally able to articulate explicitly religious references (see Hrușcă's "Tu Ardeal," fig. 2.4), a fact that even Rădulescu, who clearly sees Păunescu as staunchly aligned with the regime, admits as "interesting" (2002:119). Pavelescu perhaps conceptualizes this ambiguity at the heart of the Cenaclul Flacăra event most concisely, writing:

> With his high political connections and his development into an idol of the young generation, Păunescu felt entitled to pass beyond the traditional schema of relations between the actors involved in the production of nationalist discourse in

> Ceauşescu's Romania. He did not hesitate at all to establish himself as a mediator between a regime in which daily crises became increasingly obvious and a society whose disillusionment and discontent were becoming increasingly apparent. (2008:16)

Păunescu revealed his stance as a self-appointed mediator not only in Cenaclul Flacăra, but also in a series of open letters to Ceauşescu himself which, in between constant venerations, also contained pleas and requests. Generally, such letters followed a standard modus operandi of Păunescu's which glorified the upper echelons of the regime while admonishing lower officials—a tactic he likely picked up in his work with the Writer's Union, where such politicking was usual (*ibid.*, 16). Finally, Păunescu's ambiguous position was not lost on those people who frequented Cenaclul Flacăra performances. Most interlocutors I spoke with shared the sentiment that Păunescu was a brilliant poet who "shouldn't have been so involved in politics." The contentiousness surrounding the poet became most visceral to me while speaking to a couple who got into a small argument with each other as to whether Păunescu was truly aligned with the regime or putting on airs to continue performances of Cenaclul Flacăra. The argument was effectively diffused when one of the interlocutors concluded, "well, he manipulated us [the Romanian audience/citizenry] a little bit, and he manipulated them [the government] a little bit." Importantly, this ambiguity seems not to have diminished the enthusiasm for the music and musicians associated with Cenaclul Flacăra, especially in the Romanian-American community, a phenomenon which will be much more deeply considered in the following chapters.

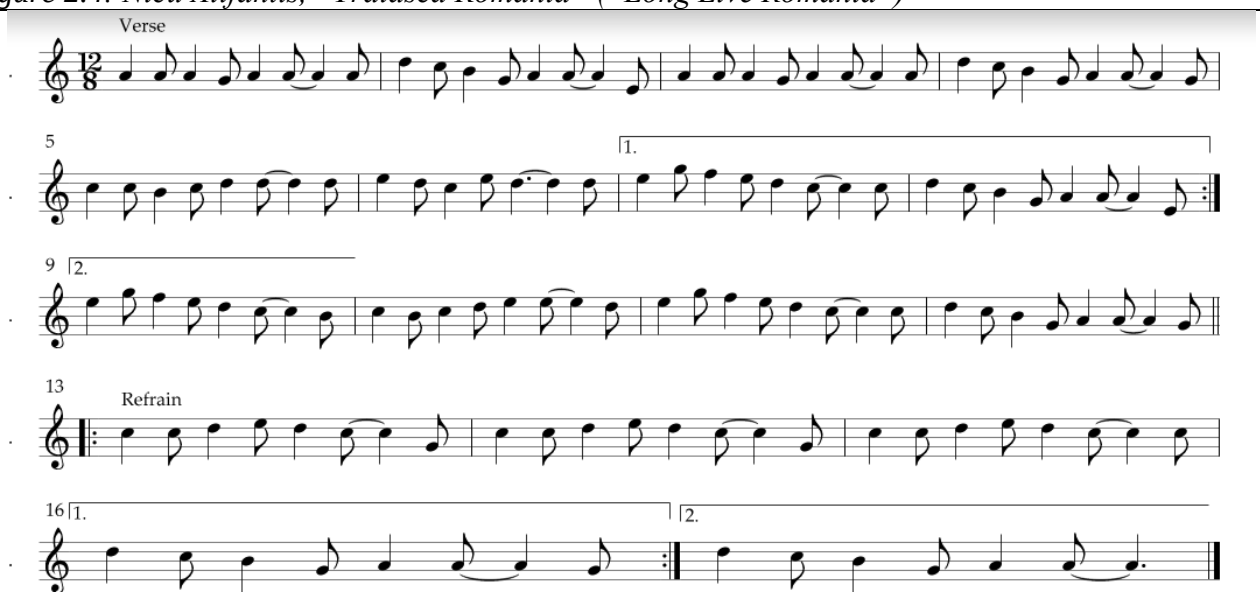
Figure 2.3: Ștefan Hrușcă, "Tu, Ardeal"



Refrain: *Tu Ardeal*, *Tu Ardeal*, îți suntem oșteni, Templu sfânt, templu sfânt—Munții Apuseni.	**Refrain:** You Ardeal [Transylvania], You Ardeal, we are your soldiers Holy Temple, Holy Temple—The Apuseni Mountains
Verses: Că tu ne ești vatră și din piatră-n piatră, E tăria unui neam de moți, Asta-i țara noastră, noi nu stăm în gazdă, Horea nostru-i risipit pe roți.	**Verses:** You are our hearth, from stone to stone You find the strength of the *moți* (Free peasants) This is our country, we don't pay rent Our Horea was pulverized on the wheel
Ne-au furat barbarii, ne-au caznit mai marii, Dar avem în piepturi șapte vieți. Ne vibrează-n sânge, pân' la Putna plânge, Clopotul ce bate la Râmeț.	Barbarians stole from us, the powerful oppressed us, But in our chests we have seven lives In our blood vibrates all the way to Putna sobs The bell that rings in Râmeț
Nu vrem răzbunare, dar atât ne doare, Că se pierde amintirea-n van. Doamne, dă-i tărie unei mâini să scrie, Biblia latinului Ardeal.	We do not want vengeance, but it hurts us so badly That the memory is lost in a wave. God, give strength to some hand to write The Bible of Latin Ardeal
Râuri prescurtate, țări ce nu sunt toate Dar veni-vor și mai bune vești Pentru toți romanii care-și sunt stăpânii Soarele răsare-n Bucuresti	Diminished rivers, countries that are not whole But even better news will come For all Romanians, who are their own masters The sun rises in Bucharest
Unde-i Avram Iancu, să mai frângă rangul, Celor ce Ardealul vor pustiu. Iată că răsare, Iancu din oricare, E-n puterea fiecarui fiu.	Where is Avram Iancu, to keep on breaking rank With those who want Ardeal to be a wasteland Behold there rises, Iancu within each of us He's in the strength of each son
Pentru această țară, poate să și moară, Fiecare dintre noi râzând. Restul e *dor*ință, de îngăduință, Și să fie pace pe Pământ.	For this country would even die Each one of us gladly The rest is a merciful desire That there be peace on earth

Nu uitați aceasta, dreaptă ne e brazda, Ce-am lucrat cu ale noastre mâini. Fiecare munte știe aici să cânte, Imnul "Deșteptați-vă românï".	Do not forget this, our fields are righteous Those that we worked with our own hands Each mountain here knows how to sing The anthem “Arise, Romanians”

Figure 2.4: Nicu Alifantis, "Trăiască România" ("Long Live Romania")



Refrain: Trăiască libertatea, trăiască România, Trăiască în fericite şi linişte poporul, Trăiască România trăiască tricolorul.	**Refrain:** Long live liberty, long live Romania Long live the people in happiness and peace Long live Romania, long live the tricolor
Dacă ne-nfruntă munţi, cu munţi ne vom bate, Pentru lumina ţării şi pentru libertate, Aici ne e cuvântul când îl avem de spus, Decât slujirea ţării nimic nu-i mai presus. Jurăm credinţă luptei oricât ar fi de grea, Jurăm că pentru ţară şi viaţa ne-o vom da, Jurăm să nu ne mintă nici clipa, nici vecia	If the mountains stand against us, we will fight with the mountains, For the light and liberty of the country Here is our word when we have to speak Nothing is greater than serving our country We swear faith no matter how hard the fight We swear to the country we will give our lives We swear not to give up, not for a moment nor for eternity
Dar ţara nu se face cu lănci, cu apatrizi, Iubirea nu te scuză când ochii îi închizi Să curăţăm tot răul din viaţa României, Că noi sîntem partidul şi ţara omeniei, Nu creadă hoţii muncii că ei sînt mari şi tari, NoI sântem patrioţii revoluţionari, Avem contract pe viaţă cu visul şi cu glia	But the country is not made with spears, nor with foreigners, Love is not an excuse when you close your eyes To cleanse all of the evil in Romanian life Because we are the Party and the country of benevolence Those who steal our labor should not think they are big and strong, We are revolutionary patriots We have a contract for life with our dream and with our land

A noastră este ţara, o moştenim deplin, Va trebui, întreagă, s-o dăm celor ce vin, La cei născuţi şi astăzi şi mâine şi poimâine,	The land is ours, we have inherited it in its entirety, We will give it intact to those who will come To those born today and tomorrow and the day after tomorrow
Nici pâine fară muncă, nici muncă fără pâine, Nici călăreţi pe aer, nici cai fără călări, Nici ţară fără lume, nici lume fără ţări, Să crească-n lume pacea, dreptatea, bucuria	Neither bread without labor, nor labor without bread Neither riders in the air, nor horses without riders Neither a country without people, nor people without countries May peace, justice, and joy increase in the world
Trăiască municitorii, tăranii, cărturarii, Trăiască demnitatea cea fără de avarii, Dacă renunţi la luptă n-ai ce să mai aştepţi, Nimica nu se face-n poziţie de drepţi, Să facem România prin toţi şi pentru toţi, Un teritoriu liber deorice prejudecăţi, Să fie al nostru dreptul şi a noastră datoria	Long live the workers, the peasants, the intellectuals Long live dignity without danger If you renounce the fight, there is nothing left for you You can’t take the position of the righteous Let’s make Romania be by all and for all A territory free of all prejudice Let it be both our right and our duty
Jurăm din milioane de inimi şi destine, Din orice fel de sânge ne murmură în vine, Jurăm bătrân şi tânăr, femeie şi bărbat, Credinţă României, necondiţionat, Că ţara-i bogăţia ce vejnic ne rămâne, Şi glasul ei ce îndeamă 'Deşteaptă-te române', Nu ne-nspăimântă nimeni cu forţa sau pustia,	We swear by our millions of hearts and destinies, By any kind of blood flowing in our veins, We swear old and young, woman and man, An unconditional faith in Romania, Because our country is a treasure that remains ours And its voice that urges, “Awaken Romania!” We are not frightened by anyone’s force or madness
Sîntem de e nevoie, o ţară de soldaţi, Sîntem de e nevoie, un lanţ de munţi Carpaţi, Durerea tări noaste facută-i să ne doară, Ne place libertatea ca oameni şi ca ţară, Şi soarele dreptăţii să lumineze sfânt, O ţară în roşu, galben şi albastru pe pământ, Acesta-i viaţa noastră, aceasta ni-i tăria	If need be we are a country of soldiers, If need be we are a chain of Carpathian Mountains The pain of our country’s creation hurts us We love freedom as a people and a country And may the sun of righteousness shine with holiness A country in red, yellow and blue on earth This is our life, this is our strength

It bears mentioning that one of the primary contradictions that both the Madrigal choir and Cenaclul Flacăra exploited was between Romanian domestic and foreign policy. As discussed in the first chapter, Ceaușescu attained popularity both within Romania and abroad through his public dissociation from the USSR. However, such dissociation had to be enacted subtly, as the possibility of Soviet invasion perpetually loomed over the country. At the same time, Romania sought economic ties with the West. On an international level, then, the Romanian position became a fine balancing act of diplomatic relations within not only the growing contentiousness of the second world (specifically between the USSR, East Asia, and Yugoslavia), but also between the first world and the second. In this capacity, most historians conceded that Ceaușescu was quite successful, allowing increasing Romanian sovereignty from the USSR while also developing stronger relationships with countries with antagonisms towards the Warsaw Pact countries (Romania achieved, for instance, "Most Favored Nation" status in 1975 with the United States) (see Fischer-Galati 1981:8; Georgescu 1985 62-63; Jowitt 1971 252-268; Linden 1981).

As Pieslak argues, it is precisely this contradiction that allowed Madrigal to operate as it did, being allowed the opportunity to perform *colinde* throughout the world, but not domestically. As she argues:

> . . .throughout the presidency of Ceaușescu, Romania's relations with the Soviet Union entailed maintaining domestic control of religious expression in order to prevent Soviet interference in Romania's domestic affairs. Conversely, the Madrigal choir presented an image of religious tolerance to developed Western nations in order to promote economic ties with the West (2007a:237).

Pieslak thus concludes that "the wide discrepancy between Romania's foreign and domestic policies regarding the performance and commercialization of Madrigal's religious music was motivated by the economic and political goals of the Romanian state"—goals that were, I would reiterate, contradictory (*ibid.*, 236).

Romania's foreign policy additionally necessitated particular domestic ideologies. Given its history of invading countries seeking sovereignty (as occurred in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968), the Soviet Union could be articulated as antagonistic within Romanian propaganda only to a certain point. Additionally, with growing economic relationships with the West, Romanian national identity could not be delineated in the Zhdanovist fashion as anathema to "Western" bourgeois imperialism. Thus unable to define Romanian identity as against the West or against the East, the ideology during this time became articulated in a historic sense. That is, Romanian nationhood was discursively structured upon two master symbols or images: first, the history of Romanian defense against tyranny and the promise that contemporary Romania will defend its sovereignty at all costs; and second, the desire for world peace. This double articulation provided a compromise in Romania's foreign policy position, solidifying national patriotism without specifically articulating any specific threat to Romanian sovereignty, which might have hampered Romania's relationships abroad.

It was precisely this expression— "we want world peace, but if it comes down to it we will defend ourselves" that was the overarching theme for Păunescu's Cenaclul Flacăra. Both Hrușcă's "Tu Ardeal" and Alifantis' "Trăiască România" are exemplary illustrations of this sentiment. In "Tu Ardeal" Hrușcă glorifies Transylvanian moți (freed peasants) and other revolutionaries who fought against foreign powers (specifically Vasile Ursu Nicola or "Horea," and Avram Iancu, who led revolts against the Hapsburg Empire in the 18th and 19th centuries,

respectively), and historic locations in the region (specifically the Apuseni mountains, where Iancu gathered his troops). Hrușcă additionally emphasizes that despite the pain caused by living in a land "stolen by barbarians" who worked the peasants "to death," Romanians "do not want vengeance" but desire "peace on earth." Such peace can only be guaranteed, however, as long as Romania remains a sovereign nation, and the "sun rises in Bucharest" and not, as the implication would have, Moscow. Alifante's "Trăiască România" reflects remarkably similar sentiments. The lyrics also note that, despite the fact that the Romanian people were forged from the pain of foreign rulership, by "those who steal our labor," all they wish for the present is to "grow world peace, justice, and joy," and achieve "dignity without danger" [i.e. sovereignty without violence]. Yet the lyrics remind us, "if need be" Romania is ready to become a "country of soldiers" to defend its dignity. Both songs mention "Deșteaptă-te, Române" ("Arise, Romanian,") the anthem written during the Romanian revolution of 1848. Moreover, through these invocations Hrușcă is able to slip in religious imagery, mentioning the Latin Bible, as well as Râmeț and Putna, the sites of two well-known monasteries. I would argue that by adhering to the double articulation of Romanian patriotism and the desire for world peace that was foundational to Romanian ideology under the Ceaușescu era, Cenaclul Flacăra was granted certain liberties: not only the incorporation of religious themes in the lyrics, but also the ability to set such lyrics to the Western idiom of folk and folk-rock music, which themselves were associated to a degree with the call for world peace.

Mundane Resistance in a Spectacular Age

Resistance . . . or Cognitive Dissonance?

If nothing else, the discussion thus far illustrates the extent to which music always possesses polysemous capacities. Just as Daughtry asserts in relation to national anthems, the

significations of socialist music in Romania could never be invariable for the reason that "ideologies and collective self-images are subject to the conflicting and ever-changing interpretations of groups and individuals within nations and as such are always conditional, contestable, and fluid" (2003:42). Despite the increasingly rigid policy of artistic censorship that defined the Ceauşescu regime, audiences were still able to receive officially sanctioned music in a subversive manner, subjectively interpreting both the discursive message and affective potential of a given song in ways that, while still adhering ostensibly to nationalist socialist ideology, served equally to destabilize its rigidity. Likewise, artists were able to produce work that didn't fall directly in line with Romanian aesthetic or political ideology by locating and exploiting the contradictions within such ideology. In fact, one might say such contradictions were increasingly brought to light as the regime's ideology increasingly encompassed all forms of life. Perhaps the most lucid example of living through such contradictions came from Ana, who worked as a composer in Bucharest in the 1980s. During the winter, she related to me, she composed music for the "Great Leader" in close to freezing temperatures in her apartment, as the heating was often cut off in the name of austerity. As she composed she gazed out her window, which serendipitously looked out at the construction of Ceauşescu's enormous so-called People's Palace. As the revolution in 1989 proved, such lived contradictions were unsustainable.

But to what extent can we conceptualize processes such as affective realignment and discursive reassociation as acts of resistance? After all, regardless of my interlocutors' convictions of the inherent subversive messages within the songs they enjoyed, or the process through which they re-interpreted mass performances in a way that granted them affective enjoyment without compromising their critical stance towards the government, they continued to operate largely within the confines of the system. They continued to go to Cântarea României,

they continued to go to Cenaclul Flacăra, and the artists among them continued to negotiate with the censorship office. Is this then truly resistance, or simply cognitive dissonance, a way for Romanians to justify their participation in the glorification of an authoritarian regime they hated? Was this ultimately yet another mode in which Romanians, to quote Sampson, "muddled through" a difficult era in their history (1984b)?

In this final section, I argue that the processes delineated above, that is, these subversive commitments to ruling ideas, can in fact be defined as acts of resistance. While they were often pursued internally by atomized agents and did not articulate any cohesive ideology in their own right to counter that of the ruling regime, the anger, apathy, and cynicism which they invoked paved the way for the organized mobilization of the populace. To only label the mass resistant movement that occurred in December 1989 as resistance as such is then to discount the decades of small invisible acts of resistance—acts of affective realignment and discursive reassociation—that made it possible.

Defining Resistance

In our attempts to define resistance and what constitutes a properly resistant act, one of the most vital questions to be asked is, *can acts of resistance exist if they do not define themselves as such?* That is, do acts of resistance first pre-require their own adopted ideology, their own counter-hegemonic articulations, their own socio-political organization? This of course has been a central question in Marxist theory. For Marx and Engels, revolution (which by its very nature is an act of resisting the social status quo) requires firstly that the oppressed classes collectively realize the nature of their oppression (Marx and Engels 1998). In post-Marxist terms, this simply means that the oppressed collectively adopt the ideology of historical dialecticism, and act as socio-political agents in accordance with it. The logical question that follows this

assertion regards how the oppressed masses make this realization, how they collectively adopt Marxist ideology, and here answers seem to follow two trajectories. For Lenin (1969) and Gramsci (1971), such an "elevation of consciousness," so to speak, requires devoted leaders, a vanguard of either intellectuals or those within the working class to properly organize the resistance movement. Luxemburg (1906) on the other hand, while surely recognizing the use of organized resistance movements, nonetheless equally stresses the importance of spontaneous resistance: singular, temporary acts that are pursued by atomized agents. Such acts, she asserts, come not from a specific counter-ideology, but through the lived contradictions of capitalist society. For the purposes of this dissertation, what is vital to Luxemburg's arguments isn't her adherence to the idea that the supposed contradictions of capitalism will inevitably lead to communism, but rather that acts of resistance can exist as such without a particular ideological framework supporting them. To be blunt, "being sick and tired" of the hypocrisy and contradictions within any particular social system is more than enough motivation to resist.

Perhaps more than any other scholar, it has been James C. Scott's work which has revealed the extent to which atomized acts of what Luxemburg might call "spontaneous" resistance have had meaningful material effects. Scott argues that acts of social resistance are deployed along two interrelated planes, which he terms the "public" and "hidden" transcripts. The public transcript, he asserts, occurs between "the open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate" (1990:2). Acts of resistance on this plane encompass what may be traditionally considered organized dissident activity: mass events such as public protests and strikes, larger-scale artistic works and "happenings" of explicit dissidence, and armed uprisings. Regardless of their particular manifestations, the primary goal of such acts within the public transcript are to (as Laclau might describe) publicly articulate particular demands that would,

should they be acknowledged, partially alter the hegemonic landscape or socio-political status quo of a given society (2005:127-156). Scott is quick to note however that such demands, such public articulations of resistance, are always dangerously pursued, as they are enacted within a space that is largely owned and scripted by the dominant class. Drawing upon a theatrical metaphor, Scott writes:

> The theatrical imperatives that normally prevail in situations of domination produce a public transcript in close conformity with how the dominant group would wish things to appear. The dominant never control the stage absolutely, but their wishes normally prevail. In the short run, it is in the interest of the subordinate to produce a more or less credible performance, speaking the lines and making the gestures he knows are expected of him. The result is that the public transcript is—barring a crisis—systematically skewed in the direction of the libretto, the discourse, represented by the dominant. (*ibid.*,4)

Given that the public transcript is largely scripted by and for the dominant class, and that often it is the most disenfranchised groups who have the least opportunity to re-write or edit it, the notion that resistance can only occur through direct organized public action assumes a sense of privilege that the most subjugated of people rarely have. As Scott writes:

> . . . to reserve the term "resistance" for collective or organized action is as misguided as the emphasis on "principled" action. The privileged status accorded organized movements [i.e. those in the public transcript], I suspect, flows from either of two political orientations: the one, essentially Leninist, which regards the only viable class action as one led by a vanguard party serving as "general staff,"

> the other more straightforwardly derived from a familiarity and preference for open, institutionalized politics as conducted in capitalist democracies. (1985:297)

Given this dynamic, Scott holds that the vast majority of resistant activity that gets carried out by subjugated communities occurs within the "hidden transcript," wherein the subordinate group is able to critique power "behind its back" (Scott 1990:xii). The forms of "everyday resistance" that occur not within the public transcript but the hidden transcript are in many ways antithetical to those acts of resistance in the public sphere: they are often carried out individually rather than in organized groups; they focus on achieving small, almost miniscule demands over large hegemonic changes (additional wages or extra time off, for example); they do not adhere to romantic notions of resistance as "speaking truth to power," but rely on a variety of tactics deemed, at least according to bourgeois ideology, as unvirtuous, such as lying, pilfering, laziness, false compliance, feigned ignorance, slander, sabotage, and gossip (Scott 1985:xvi, 33). While carried out by singular agents, in perpetuity such acts slowly reform the ideological landscape into one that offers greater possibility that subsequent organized acts within the public transcript will succeed. As he colorfully describes:

> just as millions of anthozoan polyps create, willy-nilly, a coral reef, so do the multiple acts of peasant insubordination and evasion create political and economic barrier reefs of their own . . . and whenever, to pursue the simile, the ship of state runs aground on such reefs, attention is usually directed to the shipwreck itself and not the vast aggregation of petty acts that made it possible. (1985:xvii)

To discount the spontaneous, hidden acts that occur every day against the dominant class, Scott argues, is to discount the very groundwork which makes larger-scale, organized, public acts of resistance possible.

Real and Mythic Resistance in Romanian History

The inspiration for Scott's theorizations of resistance derives largely from his fieldwork in a Malaysian village, where he observed the "prosaic but constant struggle between the peasantry and those who seek to extract labor, food, taxes, rents, and interest from them." The constant struggle that marks the political dynamic between village landowners and the peasants, Scott writes, leads to acts of everyday resistance within the peasantry that "stops well short of outright collective defiance," but rather encompasses "the ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups: foot dragging, dissimulation, desertion, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so on" (1985:xvi). It is this sort of class guerilla warfare that is often embraced by subjugated groups, a strategy in which the individual pursuit of modest goals by whatever limited means is preferred over direct organized confrontation with the ruling class. That is, it is a tactic of adhering to the public transcript, while working for change within the hidden transcript.

While ethnographic comparisons between two diverse cultures are often problematic, the various tactics employed by the Malaysian peasants against the ruling class as described by Scott are remarkably similar to those exercised by Romanian peasants throughout the history of the country. Indeed, Verdery's (1983) ethnographic and historic account of peasant-landlord relations in Transylvania is replete with what Scott would consider quintessential examples of "everyday resistance" among the peasantry. As Verdery discovered, many of the villagers whom she interviewed explained their surface compliance towards the ruling class (whether during socialism or before) with the turn of phrase "you sing the song of the one who feeds you," speaking directly to Scott's assertion that the peasantry rarely enacts resistance within the public transcript (*ibid.*, 266).

The Romanian peasant's reticence to pursue acts of resistance within the public transcript has a legitimate basis, as the long history of populist revolts in the country (parallel to the history of peasant revolts in general) has not been particularly rewarding. Already discussed was the Jiu Valley miner's strike in 1977, which ended with harsh repression and little gains. In 1907, peasants in Moldavia and Wallachia revolted over land rights, which also resulted in little gains in addition to the deaths of thousands of peasants at the hands of the army (Treptow 1996:359-360). Going back much further, the Peasant Uprising of 1437 in Transylvania, after an initial victory, was crushed and an even more draconian form of feudalism was installed (*ibid.*, 79). Perhaps the most well-known of such uprisings was colloquially termed "Horea's Revolt," which occurred in 1784 when Vienna, under the wishes of the Hungarian nobility in Transylvania, revoked the right for peasants to be freed of their bondage by enlisting in the army. In addition to over 500 peasant casualties, the uprising culminated with the three leaders of the revolt (Vasile Ursu Nicola ["Horea"], Ion Cloșca, and Marcu Giurgiu ["Crișan"]) being captured, driven in chains from village to village, broken on the wheel, dismembered, and strewn across the countryside (Pop 1999:90-91). As Verdery notes, after Horea's Revolt "the peasants returned to an existence almost as miserable as before," though Horea, Cloșca, and Crișan remained martyrs of Romanian nationalism whose legend continues to be invoked (as seen is Hrușcă's aforementioned song "Tu, Ardeal").

The limited historical successes of such public acts of resistance necessitated more hidden, deceptive acts. Throughout Verdery's (1983) ethnography multiple examples of such acts are given, including feet dragging (72), tax avoidance (92), theft of grain (259), the exploitation of law and convention for material gain (268), false reporting of quotas (37) —the list could go on. The necessity that such acts were pursued in lieu of more public forms is

articulated particularly well during an interview Verdery conducted with a Transylvanian peasant born during the turn of the century, which I quote at length:

> Q: If they [Hungarian landlords] were such nasty people, why didn't Romanians do something about it—rise up and throw them out?
>
> A: Well, we did a couple times, you know, with Horea's revolt and with Avram Iancu in 1848. But mostly we were afraid, because we knew if we did anything they'd beat us even worse. My grandmother used to say, "Heaven keep us from the *domni's* ["masters'"] rage 'cuz then there'll be real trouble." As it was, they beat us up all the time over nothing. We were afraid. What could we do against them with our pitchforks and rakes? You know those old proverbs: "The sword does not cut off a head that is bowed," and "A docile lamb suckles at two ewes," and "Sit tight and shut up if you want to survive." That was us.
>
> Then too, we tricked them a lot. We'd get as much as we could when they weren't looking. I remember hearing about how grandmother used to go to work for the *domn* wearing huge leggings under her skirt, and while she worked she would stick grain into her leggings through a pocket, then three or four times a day she'd say she had to go home to feed her kids and she'd empty those leggings so she could fill them up again. I also heard that the *domn* would take his cart to the village wheelwright, who was a Romanian, and instead of fixing it the wheelwright would take all the good wheels off and put on worn ones. We'd steal chickens and pigs from their courtyards when we were leaving for home, and sometimes at night we'd even steal their gates off the hinges. Then they'd really

> get mad, but by that time there were fewer of them and they were afraid to beat us up so much. (1985:263)

Such acts continued into the socialist era, when the state forced peasants to work on collective farms. This point was made clear from my own interview with Cristina, who recalled to me the agricultural labor she was forced to do as a student on the weekends: "We were working in the fields for about two weeks, three weeks, or four weeks, at the beginning of each school year. So, I don't know how much we contributed to the economy, probably a little bit, but it was a waste [because] the civic consciousness was very poor in Romania. [So] we would go there where we would have to pick apples and put them in boxes. They [other workers] would just destroy those apples. It was heartbreaking for me to see such a lack of respect. They did not care; the communist system didn't care about us, so they didn't care about them. . . Everyone was disrespectful, they just felt exploited, so they were doing a mess of their work." While seemingly such careless work was done out of apathy, the justification for this apathy—"they didn't care about us, so we don't care about them," "we were exploited"—is enough to show the link between past acts of resistance in the "hidden transcript" and those that occurred during socialism.

Given the fact that for centuries the Romanian nation (i.e. the Romanian ethnic and linguistic group) was largely agrarian and subservient to foreign empires (whether Roman, Ottoman, Romanov, or Hapsburg), resistance and survival through theft, subterfuge, and withdrawal became an endemic part of the national character—that is, such attributes developed a mythos that has influenced national culture on all levels. For instance, one might cite a myriad of traditional jokes and anecdotes that portray Romanian wiliness against their oppressors, or

speak of the Romanian tendency towards theft and subversion. Verdery offers such a humorous anecdote in the epigraph of her book *Transylvanian Villagers:*

> A deputation consisting of a Magyar, A Saxon, and a Romanian was sent from Transylvania to Palestine to retrieve the body of the Savior. Upon reaching Jerusalem, they were dismayed to find the Sepulcher heavily guarded by numerous Roman soldiers, and they stopped to discuss what to do. The Magyar urged the others to let him cut into the soldiers at once with his sword, but the Saxon restrained him, observing that they were outnumbered and might be harmed; it would be wiser to try bartering for the body. The Romanian had still another solution: "Let's wait until nightfall and then just steal it." (Gerard 1888:124, quoted in Verdery 1983)

Obviously, the humor in the story lies in the stereotyping of the three major ethnic groups (today in the West colloquially considered Hungarians, Germans, and Romanians) present within Transylvania. However, it should be noted that these stereotypes are to a degree based upon the means of action historically available to each of the groups: as the feudal lords backed by the Hungarian Kingdom, the Magyars possessed the monopoly on violence in Transylvania, which made armed intervention a perpetual option; the Saxons, who acted as the proto-bourgeoisie during Transylvanian feudalism, possessed capital which allowed barter; the Romanians, largely dispossessed peasants, had little option other than theft.

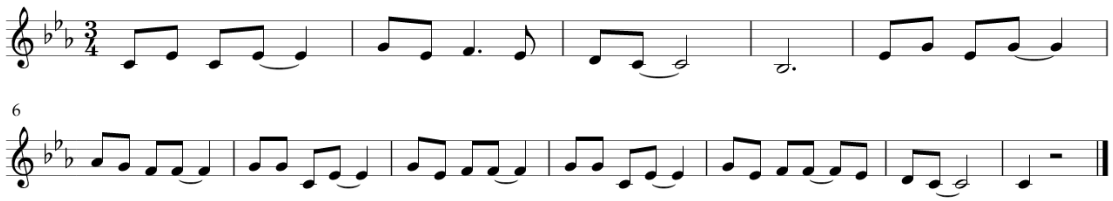
Additionally, a cultural reliance on resistance within the hidden transcript is implied in a unique sort of fatalism that is pervasive in Romanian culture. Perhaps the most well-known example of such fatalism is the epic poem *Miorița*, ("The Little Ewe"). The poem tells the story of a small sheep who, upon learning that her beloved shepherd will be betrayed and murdered by

his fellow shepherds, warns him of his impending fate. Upon receiving the news from his devoted ewe, the shepherd chooses not to flee or prepare to defend himself; rather he accepts his fate and asks the sheep to tell an elaborate and gorgeously illustrated lie that might explain his disappearance. The shepherd asks the ewe to tell the rest of the herd and his mother that he was married to a princess in a beautiful wedding where the sun and moon came down to earth to provide the bridal crown, where the trees acted as the guests, mountains were the priests, and the fiddlers the birds in the sky. Another example of such fatalism is the traditional ballad "Când s-o-mpărţit norocul" ("When Luck was Handed Out") (fig. 2.6), a song whose fatalistic and existential themes are so apparent that it warrants little further analysis. Note that both examples simultaneously conjure themes of fatalism and sorrow, but also a sense of oneness with the Romanian landscape, two of the perhaps most pronounced themes of Romanian culture and Romanian national identity.

It is vital here to note that this mythic history of Romanian resistance and fatalistic non-resistance deeply influenced the way Romanians comprehended their own acts of resistance during the Ceauşescu regime. For example, on the way home from a performance with the Roadrunners, Mircea mentioned off-hand that Sterian's "Memories of *Haiduci"* (which is a staple in our repertoire) was secretly critical of the regime. I followed up with an email asking him to elaborate. He responded by presenting three themes around which the song was based, the first of which is reproduced below:

> <u>Theme 1:</u> The very fiber of our nation is that it was never completely conquered – ever. As Dacians, the Romans took a very small percentage of Dacia—they called it Dacia Traiana. The vast majority though, rested unoccupied. The region of Maramureș had never been occupied. Fast forward 1000 years. Then as Austrian

Figure 2.5: Traditional, "Când s-o-mpărţit norocu" ("When Luck was Handed Out")



Şi-aşa-mi vine câteodată, dorule, Şi-aşa-mi vine câteodată Să dau cu cuţâtu-n chiatră, Să dau cu cuţâtu-n chiatră, dorule.	And so I feel sometimes, o my sorrow And so I feel sometimes Like striking a stone with my knife Like stabbing a knife at a stone, o my sorrow
Din chiatră să iasă foc, măi dorule, Din chiatră să iasă foc, Dacă-n viaţa n-am noroc, Dacă-n viaţa n-am noroc, măi dorule.	From the stone would come a spark, o my sorrow From the stone would come a spark If in life I have no luck If in life I have no luck, o my sorrow
Când s-o-mpărţit norocu, măi dorule, Când s-o-mpărţit norocu, Fost-am eu dus la lucru, Fost-am eu dus la lucru, măi dorule.	When luck was handed out, o my sorrow When luck was handed out I was away at work I was away at work, o my sorrow
Şi la tăţi le-o dat cu caru, dorule, Şi la tăţi le-o dat cu caru, Numa mie cu păharu, Numa mie cu păharu, dorule.	And everyone was given a cartful, o my sorrow And everyone was given a cartful But to me only a cupful But to me only a cupful, o my sorrow
Nici acela n-o fo plin, măi dorule, Nici acela n-o fo plin, Jumătate-o fo venin, Jumătate-o fo venin, măi dorule.	It wasn't even full, o my sorrow It wasn't even full, Half was full of venom Half was full of venom, o my sorrow
Nici acela n-o fo ras, măi dorule, Nici acela n-o fo ras, Jumătate-o fo năcaz, Jumătate-o fo năcaz, măi dorule.	Even this was not to the brim, o my sorrow Even this was not to the brim Half was full of troubles Half was full of troubles, o my sorrow
Nalt îi ceriu şi senin, măi dorule, Nalt îi ceriu şi senin, Pe-a me parte norii vin, Pe-a me parte norii vin, măi dorule.	High and clear is the sky, o my sorrow High and clear is the sky On my side the clouds are gathering On my side the clouds are gathering, o my sorrow
Nalt îi ceriu şi (in)stelat, măi dorule, Nalt îi ceriu şi stelat,	High and starry is the sky, o my sorrow High and starry is the sky

Pe-a me parte norii bat, Pe-a me parte norii bat, măi dorule. Şi-aşa-mi vine câte-un gând, măi dorule, Şi-aşa-mi vine câte-un gând, Să plec pe păduri cântând, Să plec pe păduri cântând, măi dorule.	On my side the clouds remain On my side the clouds remain, o my sorrow And so the thought comes to me, o my sorrow And so the thought comes to me To go sing it in the forest To go sing it in the forest, o my sorrow

> occupation (it went on for 1000 years) took place, there were vast territories that went on as 'impossible to rule'. They produced the likes of Mihai [Michael] the Brave, but also Vlad the Impaler. Read about Rascoala De la Bobilna, Horea, Cloșca şi Crișan, etc. — massive revolts that rose up the whole population of Transylvania, not just a few hamlets. They shook off the empire, all based on this fundamental thread. During the more modern history, the *haiducs* came about as free fighters against the occupation (the Turks and the Austrians). And then, the Communists—they ran a program to collectivize all of the farms, but they never quite succeeded. The exact same territories resisted and, in fact, as unbelievable as it sounds, in a regime as oppressive as that one, they never were collectivized. People there evoked the *haiducs* as the one true fiber to oppose the regime. As matter a fact, many flew into the mountains and continued the resistance, exactly as they did for centuries.

As is clearly revealed, his response to the question invokes a substantial portion of the Romanian national myth—freedom fighters from the ancient Dacians to the anti-communists, fleeing into the woods to resist an oppressive regime. What is vital to note here is that *this national myth is the exact one drawn upon to legitimate the Ceauşescu regime.* Indeed, an endemic part of Ceaușescu's own myth-building emphasized his upbringing as a disenfranchised peasant, his time a guerilla fighter against the fascists, his imprisonment, and so on. The only real difference between the official socialist account of its historical legitimacy and my bandmate's counter account of its illegitimacy essentially concerned who could be properly labeled the *haiduc:* to the socialist regime, they themselves were the continuation of the *haiduc* spirit, engaging with the empires to the East and West for the Romanian people; for my bandmate, the government itself

served as the empire, the *haiduc* being the peasants who resisted its socialist policies. This, I argue, is the way resistance largely operated during socialism in Romania: not through two contesting ideologies, but two articulations of the same ideological framework—in other words, through acts of discursive reassociation.

The Revolution Revisited

Using musical performance as the site of analysis, this chapter has sought to address a single question: why did the enormous efforts put forth by the Ceaușescu regime to inculcate ideal socialist citizenship within the Romanian populace ultimately fail to produce a long-lasting system of dynastic socialism that Ceaușescu envisioned? As we might imagine, while such a question may be easily stated, it is less easily answered, and any answer that does not acknowledge that the rapid and complete dissolution of Ceaușescu's cult of personality during the events of December 1989 was due to a coalescence of multiple political, economic, and cultural factors is hopelessly limited.

For my part, I hope to have provided some insight into one possible reason for this failure. As I argued, just as the state coerced citizens through musical performance into embodying a type of perfect Romanian citizen, they were at the same time forced to confront the inherent contradictions such interpellations invoked. Regardless of the social structure in which they live, citizens are always simultaneously living within ideology promoted by the dominant class, and also within the contradictions of that ideology. As such, agency, including one's ability to resist specific hegemonic assertions, is made possible by the ability the subject has to operate within both the "positive" aspects of ideology (what is expressly proscribed and forbidden by it) and the "negative" aspects (what is left out, what is contradicted). Moreover, the

more encompassing the dominant class seeks to make a particular ideology, the more damaging variations within such ideology may be to its continued hegemony.

Finally, as an inherently unstable and polysemous phenomenon, mass performance is a site *par excellence* to analyze how such a negotiation between deference and irreverence to ideology is manifested. As I have argued, through practices of affective realignment and discursive reassociation, citizens who performed in mass music festivals were able to perpetuate and even enjoy the highly ideological genres performed in public, while in private they were able to approach such music critically and even subversively. Such processes, of course, were largely atomized and pursued by individual or small groups during performance. But in perpetuity, they provided an affective landscape through which organized acts of resistance (such as that which occurred in December 1989) could succeed. In such a way, against all the goals envisioned for festivals such as Cântarea României and Cenaclul Flacăra, these events in a certain way also cultivated an environment of hidden regime resistance.

Recalling his life as an orchestral musician in Bucharest in our conversation, Vasile, a current professional musician in Cincinnati, ended the socialist chapter of his biography by turning to the revolution. “So finally,” he related to me, “people could freely speak against the regime, but on the other hand they kept their national identity. It was the first time they could say, ‘these are two different things, and you don’t represent us, Mr. Ceauşescu.’ Before that you couldn’t say that.” With respect to my interlocutor, my fieldwork leads me to disagree with his assessment. Perhaps the revolution allowed people for the first time to publicly state that “Mr. Ceauşescu” doesn’t represent Romania, to directly separate the two, but through subtle acts of affective realignment and discursive reassociation, average Romanians were saying specifically

this for decades—and it was state-sponsored mass musical performances that provided one of the largest avenues for them to do so.

CHAPTER 4: POSTSOCIALIST MUSIC AND NOSTALGIA IN ROMANIA AND NORTH AMERICA

A fundamental question this dissertation asks is why the Romanian immigrant community with whom I worked maintained both a deep criticism of the socialist period and an appreciation, even enthusiasm, for the music that came out of it. Without even broaching the topic of the Romanian-American immigrant community, this question has at this point already been answered. Considering the cultural history of the Ceauşescu regime as described in the previous chapters, it is clear that the Romanian immigrants with whom I worked are able to continue to perform and listen to art music, *muzică populară*, *muzică folk*, or *muzică uşoară* without issue because the socialist government was never able to completely control the significations of those genres. In fact, the inherent contradictions of socialist ideology during the Ceauşescu era made the music even more polysemous. As such, Romanians in North America are able to continue to perform and consume socialist-era music because they can unproblematically dissociate it from the policies and politics of the Ceauşescu era. Moreover, they are free to add new meanings to the music as needed by their immigrant circumstances. In a quintessentially academic way, I have thus spent the last three chapters elaborating upon what took one of my interlocutors approximately one second to summarize: when I asked him bluntly why the Romanian-American community continued to listen to and perform socialist-era music, he responded: "Well, the message was bad, but the music was good."

Given that the polysemous potential of socialist-era music allowed its perpetuation into the present, the next three chapters examine the specific ways Romanian-Americans have been able to incorporate new significations into socialist-era musical genres that reflect the unique experiences of the North American Romanian community. In this chapter, I consider the ways the

continued performance of socialist music among Romanian-Americans in the United States serves a unique articulation of *dor,* a prominent concept in Romania describing a painful longing for another place or time. Through comparing the differences between musical invocations of *dor* in the postsocialist homeland and in North America, this chapter reveals the extent to which a community's present material circumstances are always inscribed upon their shared articulations of longing, memory, and nostalgia. At the same time, I recommend a hesitancy towards conceptualizing the continued performance of socialist genres as *simply* a means by which the community may affectively invoke *dor*. Such an approach, I argue, is not only biased by Western conceptions of the Cold War, but also limits the extent to which we may conceptualize these genres as serving practical, present-day functions.

***Dor*, Longing, and Social Memory in Music**

Dor: A National Manifestation of a Universal Sentiment

In his interpretation of the concept, author and poet Lucian Blaga writes, "for the Romanians, existence is *dor*" (1969:222; cited in translation in Teletin and Manole 2015:162). A favorite theme for Romanian folklorists, poets, novelists, and philosophers, the "undefinable" affect best described as *dor* has served as a historic cornerstone to Romanian identity and, as Teletin and Manole describe, "the ancestral Romanian *Weltanschauung"* (2015:159). Tracing the term's etymology, Teletin and Manole locate the origin of *dor* in the Latin terms *dolere* ("to hurt") and *desiderium* ("desire"). From these dual origins, the contemporary usage of the term has exploded into a wide range of significations: citing the *Dicţonarul Explicative al Limbii Române* (1998) (The Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language), the authors note the concept simultaneously evokes connotations of pain, desire, nostalgia, aspiration, lust, suffering,

and love (*ibid.*, 157-158). Manifesting physically, emotionally, and spiritually, *dor,* as Sofia explained to me, speaks to the embodied state in which "your whole body aches for the past."

The affective potential of *dor* lies in the term's association with a contradiction that is all too human, between love and heartache, desire and pain. Indeed, for Romanian philosopher Constantin Noica, it is this very contradiction that grants the term its greatest significance. Playing with notions of contradiction in his own language, Noica writes: "[*dor*] is an unmade making, a whole without parts . . . it is a fusion, not a compounding. Pain, that originates the word, fused with pleasure, grown out of pain, one can't really understand how" (1987:206, cited in translation in Teletin and Manole 2015:160). Unsurprisingly, the emotional potency of the concept combined with its discursive ambiguity has made *dor* a prominent theme in both folk poetry (see Bradea 2009) and among established poets, perhaps most notably national poet Mihai Eminescu (see Teletin and Manole 2015:166-167). Folkloric music too has long been associated with *dor*, with the *doină* (as described in Chapter One) being deeply tied to the concept. Indeed, the image of the shepherd's sung *doină*, expressing both the beauty of the Romanian fields and a yearning to return home to his family, is perhaps the quintessential personification of *dor* (Iorga 1925:64). Additionally, the derivative of the term *dorule,* variously translated as "my love," or "my dear," or "my sorrow," is a widely-employed refrain in traditional song and poetry (as was already seen in the song *Când s-o-mpărţit norocul* in the previous chapter).

Despite nationalistic arguments to the contrary, concepts similar to *dor* can be found in cultures spanning the globe. Romanians Mircea Eliade (2006) and more recently Mihaela Ghiţescu (2000) have drawn parallels between *dor* and the Portuguese concept *saudade.* The Albanian concept of *mall* carries similar connotations as *dor* (Pistrick 2015). In *enka* music in Japan, concepts such as *koishii* and *akogare* are similar attempts to define complex feelings of

love, heartbreak, and longing in both time and space (Yano 2002:148). Conceptions of longing have also long been the basis of poetry and song throughout the Middle East: described as *hasret* in Turkish (Stokes 1993) *zahirok* in Baloch (Badalkhan 2009), and *hanin* in Arabic (Shannon 2006), for instance.[36] Finally, one might draw connections between *dor* and the term widely described in the West as nostalgia, which began as a medical concept similarly denoting a painful sickness wherein "the afflicted lose touch with the present" by dwelling in the past (Boym 2001:3-7).

In fact, while Romantic poets and philosophers might claim intense national ownership over the significations of *dor*, Romanian-Americans I have spoken with are much less invested in such ownership of the term. The musicians with whom I work seem cognizant of *dor*'s overtly nationalist associations, and their more global vantage point as immigrants perhaps adds to their skepticism of the term's supposed uniqueness. As such, they treat the concept with a degree of irreverence. When I asked members of the Roadrunners in an email, for instance, for suggestions of a traditional song that best expresses *dor*, Ioan, the bass player for the band, responded sardonically: "Traditional song that speaks about *dor*: Everything but the Girl: 'Missing.'" To my friend's credit, the 1990s British pop hit and its well-known refrain, "I miss you like the deserts miss the rain" expresses *dor* quite well, but his response to my question betrays both his acknowledgment of the claimed Romanian ownership of *dor* as well as an awareness of the sentiment's actual universality. Additionally, his citation of a Western pop song may signify a reluctance on his part to associate himself with traditional Romanian music. My follow-up question for the band, "Do you think what we do in the Roadrunners evokes *dor*?" was met with similar irreverence. The singer responded: "Sure, the Roadrunners evokes *dor de țară*, *cultură*,

[36]Thanks to Joseph Alpar and George Murer for their input on Middle-Eastern associations with longing.

limbă, şi. . .fete faine," being sure to first mention to the ethnomusicologist the appropriate manifestations of *dor* the Roadrunner's music might evoke in the audience—a longing for the Romanian national landscape ("*ţară"*), culture ("*cultură*"), and language ("*limbă*")— before pausing and then mentioning "*fete faine,"* a slang term which might be best translated as "cool chicks." That the Romanian homeland has all the "cool chicks" led to a further lighthearted discussion on the *dor* for Romanian women, as various band members sardonically and with self-awareness promoted another universally nationalist assertion: that their country had the most beautiful women. The irreverence expressed in this email exchange should be considered, however, along with the multiple experiences I have had with the group wherein sincere notions of *dor* were expressed. As will be discussed later in the chapter, the idea that the Roadrunners evoke for the audience a *dor* for the Romanian country, language, and landscape was articulated clearly and often during both shows and rehearsals.

As I would define it, *dor* is, at least in the context of this chapter, an expression of a sentiment widely felt across cultures, but revealed through the particular vocabulary of nationalist belonging. It is a painful love and longing inflected to a greater or lesser extent by a shared sense of Romanian cultural heritage and history. *Dor* therefore encompasses both the shared human experience of longing for one's family, one's love, and one's home, and the discursive criteria upon which the family, the home, and love are articulated. In short, *dor* can evoke particular affects while also defining the objects upon which such an affect derives.

Dor, Music, and Social Memory

Musical performance is a vehicle *par excellence* for the expression of *dor* (and its international equivalents) because it opens up an affective space that offers participants what Boym would term a "mythic return" to another time (2001). Poetically speaking, by producing

and receiving music people are offered the possibility of inserting themselves into an ulterior time and space, to become a part of a particular historical or biographical lineage. Such a phenomenon associated with music has been well established, especially by those who work with diasporic or immigrant communities. Speaking of Southeast Asian refugees in the West, Deborah Wong considers the metaphor of a song as a pathway back to the homeland through time and space, made all the more important for those traumatically ripped from it (2004:24-29). Kay Shelemay similarly conceptualizes music making among the Syrian Jewish diaspora in New York City as an act which triggers memories of the homeland, made all the more visceral through embodied performance (1998). In her analysis of Sudeten-Germans in the Czech Republic, Ulrike Präger notes that the performance of traditional music for the community is an act of invoking the *Heimat* or "homeland," which proves "essential to the creation of social meaning because representations of the past constitute social groups and reconstruct the individual and collective belonging of the groups' members" (2013:159).[37] Finally, in her examination of Greek-American *glendi,* a highly affective communal gathering usually including musical performance, Anna Caraveli writes that, "through performance, the guests of a *glendi* symbolically recreate the parameters of the actual village or urban community," a "journey of increased involvement, a journey through difficult emotional stages and thematic cycles of increased intimacy" (1985:262, 267).

My own interviews with Romanian-Americans largely corroborate such scholar's connections between immigrant music making and memory. As Grigore, an engineer and avocational musician explained to me, "When we meet sometimes with friends, we have a party or something, sometimes we still sing the same songs we used to, back from the 1980s. [The

[37] Like *dor*, *Heimat* connotes longing and belonging for the homeland that is considered untranslatable.

songs have] pretty much the same meaning, except now the social meaning is completely different. . . The regime has changed and everything, but the music is still music, you can go back with your memories from being a teenager." Grigore's wife Cristina, a doctor, also admitted her continued enjoyment of *muzică folk,* while acknowledging that the music "is a little obsolete," and "if it were [not] part of my youth or growing up, I would not listen to it." For these Romanian Americans, the admitted age and "obsolete" nature of these socialist-era genres is the precise thing that gives them value, as it provides them a pathway back to their adolescence or childhood in Romania (to borrow the term from Wong) — regardless, I might add, of the political connotations such music may have had at the time of its production.

Lastly, it should be acknowledged that a communal remembering of the past, musically invoked or otherwise, also helps define that community's present. As Diana Taylor delineates, embodied practices (which she labels the *repertoire*) act as a means of refining a community's collective recollection of the past as much as written accounts (what she labels the *archive)* (2005). And like written accounts, embodied repertoire, while helping define the present, is also always already inscribed by the socio-political power relations of the present. Remembering always entails selective forgetting, and the criteria determining what elements are remembered and forgotten are always associated with present material circumstance.

To illustrate this point, the rest of the chapter will examine how *dor* manifests itself differently among the Romanian immigrant community with whom I worked and among Romanians in the homeland, precisely because the material situations for these two groups are quite different. To make this comparison, I juxtapose my own fieldwork among Romanians in the United States and Canada with accounts on the occurrence of postsocialist nostalgia written by anthropologists and historians working Romania and Eastern Europe in general.

A *Dor* of Hopelessness: Frustration and Longing in Postsocialist Romania

Romania 1990-2016: Democracy, Capitalism, or Oligarchy?

During fieldwork in Pittsburgh, I spoke with a middle-aged couple of avocational musicians. Professionals in the fields of engineering and medicine, they regularly performed Romanian music with friends and family members during gatherings, especially the *muzică folk* of their college days. Desiring but unable to emigrate during the 1980s, the two left Romania for Canada in 1993. Naturally, I was curious why, after the difficulties of the socialist experiment ended, the two still had the desire to leave the country. Thoughtfully, one of the musicians explained to me: "I didn't plan, it wasn't my dream to leave my country because I loved my country. Even now I love Romania. But after the Revolution, at that time people were more able to talk and had all kinds of discussions and divergence of opinions, and I realized I did not have the patience to wait there for people to change their mindset for twenty years. I just realized it's a waste of my youth if I stayed there [. . .] I was young and very enthusiastic, I wanted to change the world. . .I wanted to do something for the better of public society, for my people. Then I realized, there is nobody to work with."

The dual sentiment shared by the above musician of initial excitement quickly followed by immense frustration immediately recalls what David Kideckel termed the "frustrated agency" endemic to postsocialist Romania, in which citizens' future plans (developing businesses, participating in democratic civil society, and so on) were continuously deferred in order to manage a series of economic and political crises that marked the transition era (2008:12). This sense of "frustrated agency" derived largely from the political circumstances Romanians found themselves in immediately following the revolution. Comparable to the situation in Bulgaria and Albania, Romanians never organized a strong movement for alternative politics as had, for

instance, Solidarity in the case of Poland; nor were there leading voices of dissent in the country akin to Vaclav Havel in Czechoslovakia who that could institute a transitional government. These factors, coupled with the average Romanian's lack of capital and unfamiliarity with the skills required to run a business, led to a rocky transition to capitalism. The exciting potentials of the people's revolution thus became slowly compromised by the growing realization that the transition government remained in the hands of upper-level Party apparatchiks who in many cases dissociated from Ceauşescu's policies in name only. As Zoe Petre writes, "Romania was the only one among the satellite countries of Moscow where the essential part of the elite of the Communist Party, re-baptized 'socialist' remained in power without any break during more than seven years after 1989" (Durandin and Petre 2010:217).[38] This elite took the name *Frontul Salvării Naţionale (FSN*), or National Salvation Front, and was led by Ion Iliescu, a one-time high-ranking official who, by the 1980s, was considered a threat to Ceauşescu's leadership and summarily marginalized within the Party. With Iliescu taking the reins, it seemed clear that what began ostensibly as a revolution seemed increasingly to be rather a coup, the quick trial and execution of the Ceauşescu's' a move by the FSN to "ensure a smooth transition from an unreconstructed Stalinist autocracy to a Romanian version of reformed communism" (Tismaneanu 1992:235).

Despite their deep ties to the prior regime, the FSN nonetheless sought legitimacy by promoting their image as the "emanation of the revolution" serving the masses (Gallagher 2005:73). In order to cultivate this image, they immediately initiated concrete steps towards

[38] This is not to say that "re-baptized" communists in other countries did not maintain their political status after the transition era, or that no officials re-emerged into politics later in the capitalist period. Rather, Romania might be unique in the case that the transition government was comprised almost entirely of officials from the preceding regime.

democratization, including the support of the development of multiple political parties and the promise of elections in 1990. On the surface, the FSN-led transition to democracy seemed to have been successful: by the elections in May 1990, over 80 different political parties were represented on the ballet. However, out of those 80, approximately half were simply satellite parties loyal to the FSN, which clearly desired to be more than the transitional government. This manipulation was further accentuated by frequent character attacks by the FSN towards the heads of the two rival parties, the National Liberal Party (*Partidul Național Liberal*) and the Christian Democratic National Peasants' Party (*Partidul Național Țărănesc Creștin Democrat*), both of whom lived abroad during most of the socialist era and were therefore, as it was frequently argued on government-owned media, not "with" the Romanian people during the trials of the Ceauşescu era and subsequent revolution (Gallagher 2005:91). Between such electioneering on the part of the FSN and the shared general anxiety of a country just a few months after revolution, the FSN handily won the presidency and the majority of seats in parliament. As Tismaneanu surmises, "for many Romanians, voting for the [FSN] seemed the only alternative to a slide into anarchy" (1992:271).

In truth, the FSN's readiness to fall back upon Ceauşescu-era tactics of repression to maintain power was revealed well before the elections that legitimated their leadership. As soon as they gained control of the country early in 1990, members of leading opposition parties organized in Bucharest's Victory Square, demanding the FSN leadership resign. In response, the FSN rallied a group of 40,000 coal miners to initiate what would be the first of a decade-long string of *mineriade* ("mineraids") wherein miners from the Jiu Valley region would be bussed in to break up protests through intimidation and outright violence (Gallagher 2005:80). The second *mineriadă* occured approximately a month later, and a third in March and April, when a large

group occupied University Square in Bucharest in support of the Timișoara Proclamation, a political statement that demanded in part that former communist officials could not hold office in the newly democratic Romania. After the elections in June, Iliescu again called upon the miners, who "rampaged through the headquarters of the most active independent associations, ransacked the headquarters of the opposition parties, and attacked and mutilated hundreds of college and high school students" (Tismaneanu 1992:270-271). Just a year later, the miners returned to Bucharest, this time to oust the Prime Minister of the country, Petre Roman—again at the behest, as many seem to think, of Iliescu, who had an open political antagonism with the Prime Minister (Durandin and Petre 2010:141-142). The fifth and final *mineriadă* occured in Janurary 1999, this time against the anti-FSN reformist government under Emil Constantinescu (Gallagher 2005:212-213).[39]

With the election of the FSN in May 1990, Romania thus became a democratic country under the rule of those from the older socialist regime who continued to pursue many of the strategies and tactics characteristic of the previous era. As privatization continued there remained a close relationship between ex-communist officials within the FSN government and those in the burgeoning private sphere who were more often than not themselves ex-communist apparatchiks.[40] Romania thus became as much of an oligarchy as a democracy, with a small cadre of ex-communists in the public and private sphere owning much of the wealth and

[39]Admirably, Kideckel's fieldwork with Jiu Valley miners provides a more nuanced picture of the motivations behind the various *mineriade* among mine workers, helping to dispel the simplistic (though popular) perception that the miners were simply mindless thugs for Iliescu. His work (2008) reveals the extent to which miners approached *mineriade* with extreme ambivalence, themselves at times manipulated and facing a difficult future in an industry that, at the end of socialism, had decreasing state support, profits, and general popularity.

[40] The elevation of ex-communist apparatchiks into capitalist positions was fairly common in postsocialist Eastern Europe. For the Russian case, see Yurchak 2002.

controlling much of the policy.[41] Moreover, given the early status of the newly democratic country, few political institutions were established to monitor and end such corruption (Durandin and Petre 2010:162). In sum, the Romanian Communist Party (PCR) disappeared, but what it stood for to Romanian citizens, "*Pile, Cunoştinţe, Relaţii"* ("corruption, contacts, and relations"), largely remained the hegemonic *modus operandi* (Shafir 2001:81). By the time elections were won by parties outside the FSN—notably the presidencies of Emil Constantinescu in 1996 and Traian Băsescu in 2004 (Iliescu returned to the presidency from 2000-2004) — corruption was too deeply embedded to initiate major reform, and it at times seemed that the most that either government could do was to keep together the various parties in the anti-FSN coalition.

Today, corruption and cronyism continue to persist in Romanian politics, perhaps exasperated by the global recession that occurred around 2008. Indeed, in contemporary Romania it often seems citizens are confronted with two options, neither of which is particularly desirable or even viable: the nationalist political left which, while promoting social welfare programs to protect the country's most vulnerable communities, retains the legacy of corruption and repression that began during the communist era; and the center-right, which is more cosmopolitan but adheres to the neoliberal austerity policies set forth by the EU and the IMF, and thus hardly does a favor to poor and working-class communities. In the latest presidential election in 2014, the two candidates in many ways personified these two positions, with Prime Minister Victor Ponta representing the left, and Klaus Iohannis representing the center-right. After various instances of corruption and voter suppression (especially in the diaspora, as will be

[41] Petre, for example, points to the fact that between 1996 and 2000, two of the leading figures of FSN owned over 50,000 hectares of arable land, with another FSN party member controlling one third of all the petroleum enterprises in the East of the country (Durandin and Petre 2010: 118).

discussed), Iohannis emerged the victor, though there seems to be little faith he will be able to lift Romania out of the political and economic problems that engulf it (see Ciobanu 2014).

Postsocialism's Material and Cultural Implications

Given the FSN's legacy of corruption and cronyism, consensus among my interlocutors (and a large group of published scholars) is that the Iliescu regime did little to assist the transition economy in Romania following 1989. Desperate to win elections in May 1990 and fearful of losing its constituency, the FSN promised to continue the existence of the more popular aspects of socialist state control, while at the same time awarding contracts to old Party officials who seemed more interested in getting rich from new private enterprises than helping develop national programs. Moreover, it could convincingly be argued that because the government was under the leadership of politicians who until 1989 were deeply invested in the socialist system, it was unprepared or unwilling to develop a domestic economic policy that was consistent with those policies in the West. Indeed, Alan Smith argues that Romania's poor economic development compared to the CEE-4 (Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia) was in large part due to a poor export structure which "rests on the inheritance from the Ceauşescu era" and not those established policies of Western Europe (2001:146-147). Similar arguments of government-level inefficiency towards inserting the country into the global capitalist economy have been mentioned in discussions on the development of the Romanian private agricultural sector (Swaine and Vincze 2001, Verdery 2003), the industrial sector (Ianoş 2001, Kideckel 2008), and the privatization of state enterprises (Verdery 1996).

These economic difficulties were exacerbated by the consumerist expectations that many citizens throughout Eastern Europe had upon joining Western capitalism. During socialism, fancifully colored Western products that were smuggled across the border or advertised on

Western radio programs cultivated an image of consumerist normality that existed in the West and was completely unavailable in the Eastern "economies of shortage" (Fehérváry 2002, Kornai 1992). This image of a Western consumerist paradise became a primary ideological weapon during the Cold War, as Slavenka Drakulić describes: "Sometimes I think that the real Iron Curtain is made up of silky, shiny things. . .more dangerous than any secret weapons, because they make one desire that 'otherness' badly enough to risk one's life by trying to escape" (quoted in Berdahl 2010:35-36). Such signs of this "otherness" became fetishized in the socialist East: Western fashions became a highly-prized status symbol, and many households built literal shrines to empty product containers, magazine advertisements, and cut-out product labels (see Berdahl 1999, Fehérváry 2009, Yurchak 2006). And while socialist ideology vilified such consumerism, it was at the same time perpetuated by the continued promise that communist countries would achieve a socialized utopia through technological innovation, which included household technologies (Fehérváry 2009, Patterson 2011). After decades of socialism, it seemed to many that the paradise of domestic convenience that was promised by the communists was already achieved by the West, at least as it appeared in media. As Fehérváry summarizes, "'capitalism' rapidly replaced 'democracy' as the ultimate victor of the cold war" (2009:427).

Unsurprisingly, my interlocutors regularly expressed such a desire for a more open consumerism as a motivation for leaving the country. Indeed, the majority of my interlocutors who managed to leave during the socialist era did so under primarily economic and consumerist motivations rather than political. One of the most poetic accounts of such motivations was illustrated by Andreea, a professional pianist in Pittsburgh, who recounted to me the following story: "When I was in Romania there were foreigners: Americans, French, coming to the beach, enjoying [themselves]. They had stores especially for them [. . .] At the beach there was a small

mini-golf [course], only for foreigners. And there was a tall fence, and we were crawling up there to see. And my desire was to drink Pepsi and play minigolf." The image in this story is visceral: a young woman in a socialist country, peering through a fence at the unapproachable West, desiring more than anything not a multi-party system or democratic politics, but a taste of Pepsi and a round of minigolf.

In sum, the rapid cultural changes in Romania during the postsocialist transition initiated what could be termed a mass subjective crisis. While the collapse of the iron curtain resulted in a tidal wave of imported commodities that Romanians had desired for decades, the transitional economy often did not offer the stability necessary to purchase them. To make matters worse, by leaving a communist economic ideology which privileged labor and entering a late capitalist economic ideology privileging consumption, Romanians confronted the notion that they were not only lesser citizens, but lesser people because they were unable to afford the commodities they felt they were expected to own. There thus developed what Vintilă Mihăilescu termed a "proletariat of desire," a growing community whose "huge capital of desire could find no direct satisfaction on the market and/or political scene, producing a large range of frustrations and discontents, proportional to the initial overflowing of desire" that was a vital component to economic globalized modernity (2016:250). Such a precarious landscape developed, as we shall see, into a very specific type of *dor* or longing, one articulated by the musical developments of the era.

Cynicism and Nostalgia in Postsocialist Romanian Music

Given such an environment in postsocialist Romania, one could easily sympathize with the predicament of the typical Romanian citizen, who still awaits the fulfillment of promises made by politicians throughout the 20th century: first by communists that assured citizens that

collective agriculture, the one-party system, industrialization, and other socialist policies would eventually pave the way to a utopian society; second by the same communist-era officials who promised the transition to capitalism would provide for the needs of the populace. Such broken promises and feelings of hopelessness were encapsulated by a fairly dark joke told to me by an interlocutor, who assured me it was quite common during the 1990s: "Before 1989, they raped you while yelling at you; after 1989, they raped you while smiling." A survey conducted in 2000 by the Center for Urban and Regional Sociology and the Romanian Academic Society revealed the extent of this sense of disappointment and anger towards the ruling class, showing that only 8.5% of those surveyed felt Romania was at its best after 1989. The majority of respondents, rather, felt "things went better" in the country during communism, with 34.3% seeing the years 1965-79 as the best time period and (surprisingly) 18.4% seeing the 1980s, the most repressive decade of Ceauşescu's regime, as the best time period (Gallagher 2005:245).

Such a clear sense of nostalgia in Romania, of a yearning for a time period in the past that seemed in retrospect to be more secure, is perhaps best personified in Kideckel's account of postsocialist miners and factory workers in Romania who, having been marginalized in an industry that becomes more globalized each passing day, look towards an idyllic socialist past wherein their physical labor was valued and they were economically provided for (2008). The repression and austerity that marked the Ceauşescu era, of course, were selectively forgotten. Note that such an articulation of nostalgia, in which "narratives of socialism are never solely about socialism, but typically juxtapose to it the physical threat of the contemporary [postsocialist] world" is not unique to Romania, but an endemic aspect of postsocialist Eastern Europe in general (*ibid.,* 46*)*. As Dominic Boyer similarly recounts of contemporary East Europe, "postsocialist nostalgia is most often interpreted not literally as a desire to return to state

socialism per se. Instead, it is understood as a desire to recapture what life was at that time" (2010:18). Speaking of Hungary, Nadkarni similarly notes that "the popularity of nostalgia in the Hungarian context was less concerned with reviving the Socialist past than with making sense of the postsocialist present" (2010:192).[42]

I would argue that in the Romanian case, Nadkarni's definition of postsocialist nostalgia as the process of "making sense of the postsocialist present" operates within the interstices of a globalized modernity driven by the continually deferred promise of capital accumulation and consumerist luxury; and a nationalist sense of traditionalism which looks towards an idyllic past of tight-knit communities unaffected by transnational economic and political complications. Such a positionality within postsocialist music particularly has already been clearly articulated by Jane Sugarman, who conceptualizes the development of popular music in Kosovo as a dialogue among those in the Albanian diaspora and Albanian homeland areas in Albania and former Yugoslavia; its musical juxtapositions of imagined cultural tradition and modern global belonging serving as "a forum within which Albanians of different regional and class background. . .may participate in an ongoing conversation over the course that an emergent Albanian modernity is to take" (2004:21). In sum, one might say a postsocialist version of *dor* is one that speaks to a dual sense of longing, both for the intimacy of traditional cultural belonging and for a significant position within the global modernized world.

Perhaps the greatest musical example of this dual longing in Romania is *muzică etno,* a sort of *muzică populară* of the postsocialist era. Termed by one simply as "folklore music with a disco beat" the genre is based around traditional rural song repertoire, but performed over arrangements that developed in the global music industry (Rădulescu 2016:268, fn. 3).

[42]For the spread of socialist nostalgia in Eastern Europe in general, see Todorova and Gille 2010.

Synthesizers and pre-programmed rhythm tracks have supplanted traditional acoustic instruments such as violin and accordion, and a strong percussive beat (usually in a simple duple meter) has become much more emphasized. Saxophones have become a primary solo instrument, and many songs clearly sound digitally perfected thanks to modern-day studio technology. The genre has also become synonymous with music videos, practically all of which follow the same formula. They emphasize a rural aesthetic, often featuring a singer surrounded by traditional dancers in the woods, fields, or villages. Musicians sing as they stroll down village dirt roads or stand in fields of crops—a common nationalist image throughout the Balkans (Sugarman, personal communication). While purposely appealing to a rural, nostalgic aesthetic, the videos also take on elements that seem endemic to the capitalist music industry. Horse-drawn carts are often juxtaposed with modern, at times luxury, vehicles. For women singers, the hemlines of traditional peasant outfits have been dramatically raised, cleavage drastically emphasized, and makeup lavishly applied. Indeed, it seems to me such images of women singing in agricultural fields, wearing traditional peasant outfits from the waist up, miniskirts and stiletto heels from the waist down, speaks exactly to the contradiction within what might be called the postsocialist *dor:* a longing for the past through the eyes of the present, manifested in a perhaps bizarre juxtaposition between tradition and modernity.

Another postsocialist genre that similarly operates between modernity and tradition is the *manea*, a type of hybrid dance song largely performed by male Roma. The genre became a ubiquitous presence in wedding celebrations and dance clubs throughout the country shortly after the fall of communism. While adopting modern methods of production (synthesizers, programmed rhythmic accompaniment, and so on), the music style and its accompanying dance form is fairly steeped in tradition. Mentioned in writings as early as 1851, in the 19th century

manele signified "various Oriental musics from contemporary or earlier times" performed by the *lăutari,* a professional caste of Roma musicians (Moisil 2016:53*).* The genre continued as a popular urban style up until the communist era, when it took on the term *muzică orientală* and began borrowing from Serbian *novokomponavana narodna muzika* ("Newly composed folk music") that was emerging in the 1970s and 1980s (Giurchescu and Rădulescu 2011).[43] Due to its extra-national (i.e. "Eastern") qualities that derived from its Ottoman heritage, the regime banned the music (Beissinger 2007:105). Nonetheless, while many *lăutari* began seeking more profitable work performing in *muzică folclorică* ensembles (see Chapter One), others continued to perform *manele* within the second economy, particularly during wedding receptions.

No longer limited by government censorship, after the transition in 1989 the genre became immensely popular and rapidly developed into a highly prolific commercial enterprise. By the 1990s *manele* became synonymous with synthesized or otherwise studio-produced accompaniment tracks, though traditional acoustic instruments such as the violin and accordion continued to be utilized. Into the postsocialist era it soon became a staple of wedding receptions and parties, especially in Bucharest, with the music blaring loudly and ringing throughout neighborhoods, drawing the ire of older generations and those claiming more cultural sophistication *(*Giurchescu and Rădulescu 2016).

It is perhaps in the lyrics, however, where we find most clearly the sense of postsocialist nostalgia *manele* invoke. On the one hand, the songs directly speak to the ideals of the newly Romanian capitalist landscape, focusing on themes such as wealth accumulation (often through nefarious means), conspicuous consumption, power, and sexual prowess, usually from a hyper-masculine perspective— in other words, the thrills and desires of a populace entering capitalist

[43]For more on the development and characteristics of Newly Composed Folk Music (NCFM), see Rasmussen 2002.

precarity. As Giurchescu and Rădulescu note, such a choice in the topics addressed in the lyrics was "brilliant, because it wins them [the *manelişti,* or *manea* musicians] fans from two paradoxical social categories, the nouveaux riches and the poor without hope" (2011:27). At the same time, lyrics also invoked themes of the homeland, love, and the family, images, as Marian-Balaşa notes, commonly invoked in traditional Romanian folk music (2011:298).

Whereas genres such as *manele* and *muzică etno* promoted a sense of nostalgia directly and unambiguously within the interstices of tradition and modernity, *muzică rock* approached issues of nostalgia with a much greater degree of self-awareness and cynicism. The establishment of democracy and rapid importation of Western musical instruments starting in the 1990s led to the proliferation of a variety of new groups and recording labels in the genre. Many of the most well-known groups to develop from this era were characterized by a cynical and at times absurd approach to negotiating Romania's communist past and present capitalist conditions. Bands such as Taxi, Sarmalele Reci ("Cold Cabbage Rolls," roughly translated), Ionescu, as well as singers such as Ada Milea, have been praised for their richly intellectual and ironic approach to Romanian politics in their songs.[44] Oana Popescu-Sandu's account of the 1999 Taxi song *"*Criogenia salvează România" ("Cyrogeny Saves Romania") speaks most directly toward this self-aware conception of *dor* and the impossibility of a nostalgic return to a mythic period (while not citing the concept of *dor* specifically). As Oana Popescu-Sandu argues, the song, whose chorus expounds "Cryogeny saves Romania/Let us all freeze up until 2100 or so," speaks to "the post-Communist self [that] wants to be excluded from the everyday and become suspended in time, [to] physically become a 'living dead,' not because one doesn't want

[44]On Taxi, see Marian-Balaşa 2011: 285-288; on Sarmalele Reci and Ionescu, see Marian-Balaşa 2011: 282-285, 288-292; on Ada Milea, see Georgescu 2010.

to contribute to the present in some extraordinary way but because of the fear and the inability both to face the present and to turn nostalgically to the past" (2010:115).

In sum, postsocialist *dor* in Romania is largely driven by a sense of hopelessness and frustrated agency among a people wary both of continued socialist promises of national comfort and camaraderie and of capitalist promises of commodified luxury. Postsocialist *dor* as such operates in and through a glaring contradiction: a longing for a mythic past uncomplicated by larger global processes, but also a longing to be a meaningful player in such global processes. Popular genres such as *muzică etno* and *manele*, and to a degree *muzică rock,* attempt to be a part of transnational modernity while appealing to an aching for traditional communal memory.

Dor **of Homesickness: Longing for the Simple Things Abroad**

Feeling Home Elsewhere

Very early in my fieldwork, I was invited to attend a concert in Queens featuring a variety of *muzică populară* and *muzică etno* singers from Romania. Arriving with my wife, we came upon a restaurant filled with people of all ages. We sat at a communal long table, and spent the evening eating, drinking, and watching continuous *hora* dancing as each of the six to seven singers flown in from Romania entertained the crowd. Amazed with the energy and enthusiasm of the evening, I woke up the next morning desperate to know more about the styles of music I heard the previous evening, which were at that point undefined to me. I called a friend and, with my recorder in hand, he explained to me the histories of *muzică populară* and *muzică etno.* At the end of his explanation he then admitted to me: "and by the way, I hated this music back home, I passionately hated it. But in here it actually comes in nice, it reminds me of home. It's a little bit of nostalgia." After pressing him about this confessed change of opinion regarding this music, he continued: "It's like old generation music, but it's something that reminds us of home.

. .I don't know if it is necessarily something, like for most Romanians, something to tie back home? Or just to celebrate the difference as opposed to Americans. . .It reminds me of Romania. Really just Romanian music, Romania in general. Home. I want to say parents, friends, and the atmosphere." Within less than a minute, I realized my friend mentioned the word "home" four times, and I was caught every time he articulated the word, elongated the vowels to give the word emphasis that, in a way it seemed to me, betrayed his longing. "Ho-ome."

Etymologically speaking, nostalgia could be translated as "homesickness," a conjunction between "home" or "homecoming" (*nostos),* and "pain" or "ache" (*álgos)*. As I argue, it is precisely this aspect of nostalgia that separates postsocialist articulations of *dor* within the homeland and those outside of it. Romanians in the diaspora are, at least from my fieldwork experience, intimately familiar with the everyday socio-political developments in Romania, even having a direct stake in such developments vis-à-vis family members that remain in their country. However, the sense of *dor* emphasized within the community is manifested less along notions of a mythic return to a more intimate, possibly socialist time period, and more simply as a longing for the people and traditions they feel have gone missing in their current surroundings. Such longing, I would further argue, is a product of their geographic distance from the homeland, but it is also greatly facilitated by their class position within a fairly stable economic situation—a factor that will be discussed in much greater detail in the following chapter.

As argued in the preceding section, sentiments of nostalgia within Romania proper reflect an uncertainty inherent in the country's initial entry and continuing integration into the capitalist globalized world. This entrance into the market economy places laborers especially in a precarious position, as their careers in state-run industries have been threatened, if not eliminated completely (see Kideckel 2008). But this blue-color demographic is far from the demographic

that arrived in Canada and the United States as professional and avocational musicians I worked with. The community with whom I worked is made up of professional musicians, highly trained and often from bourgeois backgrounds, as well as avocational musicians, also highly trained in technical fields (engineering, medicine) and possessing the financial comfort to take up an instrument in their free time. Indeed, access to economic, social, and cultural capital was practically essential for emigrating out of Romania during socialism and after the revolution. One needed not only money to emigrate, but also high social connections, technical skills, and an intimate awareness of bureaucratic processes of emigration. Already then, we can imagine that this group has a different vantage point on the socialist past: the Ceauşescu government indeed did provide them with employment and security, as it did workers, but it also made travelling abroad to further one's career as an artist immensely difficult, it regularly censored artistic output, and it disallowed musical or otherwise creative entrepreneurship outside the official state circles. In this context Romanian immigrants remember the socialist era far less fondly, at least according to my fieldwork experience.

Moreover, simply due to the fact that my interlocutors chose and had the means to emigrate, they were financially and psychologically better prepared to negotiate the possible culture shock associated with confronting major societal and economic changes than were those that were unprepared for the revolution and its consequences. Here it is important to note Žižek's observation on one of the underlying issues inherent in Eastern Europe's difficult transition to capitalism:

> The catch of the "transition" from Really Existing Socialism to capitalism was that people never had the chance to choose the *ad quem* of this transition—all of a sudden, they were (almost literally) "thrown" into a new situation in which they

> were presented with a new set of given choices (pure liberalism, national conservatism. . ..).” (2001:121)

This nebulous *ad quem* to which Žižek alludes, this lack of a precise course of action after the shared antagonist of communism was defeated, bears tremendous significance over how differences in *dor* are manifested between those in the homeland and those living outside of it. For those that remained in the country, clearly the transition to capitalism did not satisfy the dreams and ideals set forth during the communist era. Furthermore, the rapid changes in the country—the exponentially growing inflation, proliferation of political parties, spread of corruption, scams, and conspiracy theories—made it difficult for people to establish a firm enough foothold to initiate a more mutually beneficial change in governmental structure. It was precisely this factor that inspired the couple mentioned at the beginning of this chapter to leave the country after the revolution.

For those who managed to emigrate to the West, life may well have been just as stressful and difficult, replete with economic uncertainty and the need to function within a political system they were unfamiliar with. Yet, unlike those remaining in the country, for most immigrant musicians there was a clear path forward, a much more definite *ad quem*. The majority of immigrant musicians who arrived in North America, either before or after 1989, were already highly skilled and fairly accomplished, and their focus upon arriving in the West usually entailed the re-establishment of their credentials. For professional classical musicians, this often entailed a return to conservatories or schools for a further degree. Such a goal was made all the easier because most I spoke to were able to emigrate precisely because of their student visas. The goal then was straightforward: continue training in the North American conservatory or university system in the hopes of attaining a professional position as a musician. For avocational musicians,

the goals were remarkably similar: doctors, engineers, and electricians set to work attaining certifications in their trades which would allow them to continue their vocations in the West, often taking entry-level service jobs until certification was achieved. Coupled with this were the continual struggles of any immigrant: issues of renewing a visa, getting employment without citizenship, finding employers that would provide visas, the inability to travel out of the country, and attaining permanent residency.

To make such a comparison between those Romanians that remained in the homeland and those in North America is not to imply that the predicaments of one demographic were any more or less crippling than those of the other; simply that they were quite different. Romanians in the homeland had to cope with the insecurities of an unstable system which they may or may not have contributed to creating. Those who immigrated had to grapple with surviving within a system much more stable (in terms of a clear separation between state and private enterprise and a fairly stable economy), but one that was foreign to them. Both communities were taken advantage of, whether through the *Caritas* pyramid scam that pervaded Romania in the 1990s or by unscrupulous immigration lawyers or timeshare hucksters that Romanian immigrants had no previous experience with, and both lived through economic hardship. The ultimate differences between these two groups are twofold: first, the social and economic stresses that occurred among Romanian immigrants occurred not in a transition environment, but a relatively stable one in the United States and Canada; second, the long processes of immigration, either during or after the revolution, allowed members of this community to be prepared to deal with such stresses.

As simple as it may sound, the fact that the American or Canadian economy was not forced upon my interlocutors as was the transition economy forced upon Romanians in the

homeland has led in a large way to two very different manifestations of nostalgia within these two communities. Indeed, many musicians I interviewed mentioned to me in their immigration narratives that they have always been an "explorer" or a "risk-taker," seemingly revealing that their very personality prepared them for the trials of living in a new socio-economic environment. For those in the homeland, the transition simply didn't care whether its citizens enjoyed taking risks or living with a sense of adventure. In a word, the "frustrated agency" endemic to postsocialist Romania existed to a far lesser extent among those I spoke with.

These factors are mentioned mainly to give reasons why nostalgia among Romanian-American with whom I worked seems to manifest itself generally outside of the sentiment of "postsocialist" or "a" nostalgia as it has been defined by anthropologists of East Europe (see Todorova and Gille 2010). Granted, there are complaints about the modern capitalist economic system among Romanian-Americans similar to those one might find in the homeland, most notably that it privileges the lazy consumer over the devoted producer. As Ioan lamented to me, there is no longer any need for craftspeople and artisans in the modern economy, as mass production creates every commodity required. But this is about the limit statements of "postsocialist nostalgia" have taken among the musicians with whom I spoke. In my work, I haven't met many Ceauşescu apologists, or those who think Romania or their lives in general were better under socialism. No one I have spoken with has admitted any regret leaving Romania either during socialism or after, or feels they would have been better off staying in the country. Nor have I seen Romanian establishments profiteering from kitsch from the socialist era (see Creed 2010)—especially given the fact, as will be described in the next chapter, that most of the restaurateurs and shop owners (in New York City especially) were more or less refugees from Communism. Rather, most of my interlocutors, when discussing issues of nostalgia, especially in

the homeland, are quick to remind me that people in the homeland "remember only the good things," and that "the bad memories fade away," thereby discounting any notion of achieving a "mythic return" to socialism. Such a dismissal among Romanian-Americans of the possibility of nostalgically returning Romania to the communist past has had real political significance: it should be remembered here that the election of Klaus Iohannis as president of the country in 2014—the first president without direct ties to the former Communist Party—was achieved largely thanks to the diasporic vote (Stavila 2014).

Yet, despite all this, so much of the music performed and enthusiastically received within the community I worked with remains from the socialist era. Romanian restaurants in Queens regularly pay to have socialist-era music stars fly in to perform before large audiences, and people still continue to regularly watch YouTube videos, collect albums, and talk to one another about their favorite singer or band from the socialist era. Part of this phenomenon is undoubtedly related to nostalgia, but again a nostalgia manifested in ways unique to an immigrant community. In such manifestations, what is invoked, what is nostalgically remembered, is generally not the political environment of socialist Romania, but something that was never really lost for those who remained in the country: the landscape and the everyday cultural practices associated with life in Romania. In such a way, my fieldwork with the Romanian-American immigrant community has led me to similar conclusions to that of Louise Wrazen's work with a Polish immigrant community, who notes that musical practices that seem largely quotidian in the homeland carry much more affective and semantic potential in the United States. In this sense, musical performance acts as a kind of anchor which, through its embodiment, reminds immigrants of their pasts (1987, 2007). Indeed, when discussions with my interlocutors turned to sentiments of "nostalgia," what seemed foremost on the minds of most was not a yearning for a

past life where they were somehow more comfortable under socialism, but for the simple social *hora* dances that occurred monthly during family gatherings. Alin, a member of the Romanian community in New Jersey, expressed to me, "beyond my family and friends, I miss the traditions," explaining the joys he had participating in the simple communal parties and festivals he regularly attended while in Romania. Often such memories of cultural intimate moments are set in contrast to the perceived difference of American culture. For instance, Dragoş related to me he still misses the "closeness" of everyday Romanian culture. "In Romania if you want to go see your friend, you're not going to call him," he expressed to me, "you're just going to knock at the door and he will open it . . .this closeness now sounds weird and awkward [in the United States]." Similarly, when asked to consider the value of continued performances of *muzică populară* in Romanian restaurants in the U.S., another professional musician told me: "It's definitely a more friendly atmosphere over there [at the Romanian restaurants] than it is here. And you know all that holding of hands when dancing together, it goes against what we perceived as the coldness of Americans. . .I don't know if it's not something perceived against the way of life in America, where everything is very ordered, highly structured. There's too many rules, and this is a way for us to go crazy for at least an hour or so." For these musicians, the performance of socialist-era genres speaks little of a yearning for the socialist past in the capitalist present. Rather these instances of musical performance provide a use-value to the recipients, allowing them to remember through embodied dance and audition the quotidian, non-ideological intimate experiences of their youth.

The "Afterlives" of Socialist Music?

With the Roadrunners, this nostalgic "need" among the Romanian community in New York for the music of their past was widely acknowledged and discussed. When I first joined the group, I asked directly why the various members chose to spend their free time performing covers of socialist-era songs. Antonia expressed to me that she prefers performing Romanian music she loves (rather than American pop and rock, which she has an equal fondness for), because it allows her to "bring the audience memories." Mircea, the guitarist of the group, noted that the Roadrunners exist partly because "the [Romanian] community needs us." During one benefit concert, we performed at a retirement home, Antonia opened by reminding the mixed audience (some Romanian, some not) that everyone in the band held full-time jobs, and felt the need to perform Romanian songs out of service to the community, to share with them the music they grew up with.

Indeed, from all appearances the Roadrunners seems to be a group that operates largely within collective nostalgic sentiment, a *dor* of homesickness. Our repertoire (figure 3.1) consists almost entirely of music written prior to 1989, to the point that Gavril, the youngest member of the group, admitted to me that he was not aware of the vast majority of the songs in our repertoire until he joined the band. Originals are often based around rhythmic motives found in traditional Romanian music, and are usually sung in Romanian, despite the band members' complete bilingual fluency. Frequently during concerts, we perform in front of video projections of the Romanian landscape. The majority of our performances occur within Romanian Orthodox churches, surrounded by religious iconography and non-religious national ephemera shipped over from the homeland.

Figure 4.1: Roadrunners Repertoire (Romanian Songs)

Genre	Performer (Lyricist)	Title	Release Date*
Muzică Folk/ Muzică Rock	Vasile Seicaru (Adrian Păunescu)	Treceţi Batalioane Române Carpaţii (Cenaclul Flacăra version)	1970
	Phoenix	Andrii Popa	1974
	Sfinx (Dan Andrei Aldea)	Om Bun	1975
	Doru Stanculescu	Ai, Hai	1979
	Compact	Fata din Vis	1985
	Celelalte Cuvinte	Dacă Vrei	1987
	Iris	Strada Ta	1987
	Compact	Un alt început	1989
	Compact	Mi-e Tare *Dor* de Tine	1989
	Semnal M	La Fereastra Ta	1993
	Valeriu Sterian	Amintire cu haiduci	1994
	Pasrăea Colibri	Mielul	1995
	Pasărea Colibri	Miruna	1996
	Valeriu Sterian	A Venit Iarna	1998
	Iris and Uriah Heap	Lady in Black	2002
	Phoenix	Zori de Zi	2005
	Emeric Imre (Adrian Păunescu)	Nebun de Alb	2006
	Holograf	Cât de Departe	2012
Muzică Populară	Traditional	Lioara	-
		Mocirita	
		Rău ma *dor* Ochii mă *Dor*	
		Cântă Cucu-n Bucovina	
		Hai Turai	
		Când s-a împărţit norocul	
		Lie, Ciocârlie	
		Fost-Am Omul Pădurii	
		Maramureş Plai cu Flori	
Muzică Usoară/ Muzică Pop	Mihaela Mihai (Nicolae Stroe and Vasile Vasilache)	Trurli Trurli Dragă	1934
	Laura Stoica	Nici o Stea	1996
	Dan Bittman	Si Îngerii au demonii lor	2015

*This reflects the date of the first recording, which may have occurred well after the song was first performed. This is especially the case with the *muzică folk* and *muzică rock* genres, when musicians often performed songs live well before they were recorded in the studio. It is reasonable to assume, then, that many of the songs recorded in the early 1990s were in fact penned in the 1970s and 1980s, and well known by enthusiasts of Cenaclul Flacăra performances. Recording dates for each song are drawn from discogs.com

Yet, in my experience working with the group, I've discovered that choices that seem on the surface inherently nostalgic are more often motivated by material constraints or practical considerations. We perform at churches more often than anywhere else simply because religious institutions within immigrant communities often take on additional cultural roles than they do within the homeland, simply by virtue of being gathering places where Romanians congregate within a multicultural landscape. Thus, by regularly organizing festivals, benefit concerts, and so on, churches provide the group with a built-in audience—an issue we have struggled with, as will be discussed in Chapter Six. We purchased a projector to make our performances more dynamic and, being busy with our work and family lives, figured the most effective use of the projector was to simply display images of the Romanian landscape, which were readily available on YouTube, easily downloadable, of significant length and looped with little difficulty in terms of continuity.[45] Originals are written over traditional rhythms because, as I was told, such rhythms are catchy and will get audiences moving, if not at least entertained.

In fact, whenever I directly brought up questions during rehearsals that I thought might lead to "nostalgic" responses, the explanations provided to me more often than not reflected ideas of musicality rather than nostalgia. Knowing full well my bandmates were well aware of recent musical trends and hit songs both in Romania and America, during one rehearsal I straightforwardly asked why the group only focuses on covering repertoire written before the 1990s. The collective answer had in fact nothing to do with nostalgia, nor collectively memory. Rather, their reasons were entirely based upon how easily they felt the songs could be creatively reproduced in a band setting. In their interpretation, popular music up until the 1990s was

[45] Of course, the speed in which the band, in our limited preparation time, felt videos of the Romanian landscape would be appropriate for our live shows may betray an unconscious nationalist sentiment.

produced by an ensemble, often with a group of musicians accompanying a singer. As modern Western production techniques filtered through the opening borders after 1990s, this mode of collective musical composition and realization became largely supplanted, at least in the popular music sphere, with digital loop-based production techniques pursued by a single individual behind a computer. For the Roadrunners, who very much see themselves in the vein of the cultivated, artistic rock band, trying to cover such music would be simply out of character. This argument is corroborated by the fact that, while we continue to cover music before the 1990s, many of the groups we try to emulate aesthetically (via orchestration, timbre, and rhythm) are contemporary rock and metal bands.

In fact, perhaps the clearest case in which the Roadrunners performed a song under explicitly nostalgic motivations involved a Western piece rather than one from the homeland. During one rehearsal, the group decided to work out a version of "Bow Down Mister," the 1991 hit by the Boy George-fronted group Jesus Loves You. Seeing it as a peculiar choice compared to the rest of our repertoire, I asked Antonia after the rehearsal why "Bow Down Mister" was selected. She told me that she wanted to perform it because she has fond memories of the song. As she explained, "Bow Down Mister" was very popular during her college years, so much so that she and her friends made a parody version of the song to protest the quality of the food in the university dining hall. This anecdote reveals nostalgia at perhaps its most pure: stripped of any real political or social meaning, we performed the song simply because it reminded one of the musicians of a pleasant (and wholly quotidian) moment in her young adulthood. The fact that such memories were initiated by an English pop song places into question the extent to which the textual signification, the biography of the artist, or the socio-political context in which the song derived matters for its nostalgic performance.

The Roadrunner's approach to performing socialist-era music thus seems far less a project in line with Boym's "restorative" nostalgia, a return to an idyllic past which is embraced by the disenfranchised and exploited by political reactionaries. Nor is it even dedicated primarily to a "reflective" nostalgia which Boym describes as acting primarily as "mediation on history and the passage of time" (2001:49). If anything, the motivations and reception of the group might be best compared to any other ensemble that chooses to cover music from the 1970s and 1980s. One would be far less inclined, I would imagine, to describe a Black Sabbath cover band as inherently nostalgic for the Vietnam War era. Granted, hearing a live cover of "War Pigs" may for some conjure nostalgic memories of the early 1970s, but many may simply be attracted to the aesthetic Black Sabbath introduced: the detuned distorted guitars, the vocal wailing, and the powerful drums. Such is the case with the repertoire of the Roadrunners. While I acknowledge the reality that many of these songs may recall particular memories for each member (excluding me), as a whole the band dismisses such instances of nostalgia as a motivation. Rather, they emphasize the inherent quality of the music and how conducive it is to the instrumentation of the band (acoustic guitar, electric bass, vocals, percussion). As Ana Hofman articulates in her discussion of contemporary music in former Yugoslavia, portraying songs that harken back to the socialist era instantly as a practice of "Yugonostalgia" dismisses the "'real feelings' and their materiality in the concrete spacio-temporal realities" (2015:160).

What is finally at stake in this consideration of the nostalgic qualities of socialist-era music is the ways the communist East continues to be conceptualized in the post-Cold War era by the more general public in the West. While there is little doubt the end of the Cold War was a momentous historical event which expedited the contemporary globalized capitalist system, I would venture to say that the notion persists that this event marked a sort of "end of history," that

the fall of the wall acted to dismiss the communist project entirely and erase the cultural, political, and aesthetic histories of socialist Eastern Europe. It is a view that carries the implication of socialism in Eastern Europe as a completely failed experiment, and that the only worthy aesthetic to come out of it came from artists who were clearly dissidents; all else belongs to the dustbin of history. While perhaps an exaggeration, I was surprised by how often when describing my research project, both scholars and the general public clarified my work as an investigation into the "afterlives" of socialist music. Such a phrase denotes that this music has died already, leaving only spectral remnants that a last bastion of nostalgics desperately cling to— as Boym might state, a manifestation of "restorative" nostalgia that "lingers on ruins, the patina of time and history, the dreams of another place and another time" (2001:41). I can't imagine the same term would be applied as frequently to other genres: that a 1990s night at an American club for example, as nostalgic as it might be, displays the "afterlife" of grunge and hip hop, or that a performance of *Einstein on the Beach* exemplifies the "afterlife" of minimalism. Moreover, these songs continue to be performed in Romania, often by the same bands and musicians that performed them in the 1970s and 1980s. Labelling such music as a part of a socialist "afterlife" thus seems to not only dismiss the fact that such repertoire continues to be very much present and in development within the contemporary world, but it also implies that socialist-era music can only exist in relation to its past life; that in performance and reception it cannot be divorced from the particular historical circumstance from which it was born, that it cannot take on new meanings and serve new functions in the lives of people in the contemporary world. Just as this isn't the case for the sonata form or the blues, it is not the case for music of the socialist era.

In conclusion, this chapter speaks to how material circumstances inscribe the ways in which Romanian and Romanian Americans experience *dor* through music. As I have argued, the inability to act to fulfill perceived expectations in the newly capitalist country—the "frustrated agency" endemic to postsocialist Romania—has resulted for homeland Romanians in an affective sense of *dor* that yearns for a mythic return to a more stable time period. Meanwhile, for Romanian Americans who operate in a more stable capitalist environment, with clearer paths to economic and artistic goals available to them, the affect of *dor* encompasses the bodily inability to physically remain in the Romanian homeland, which is manifested in a yearning for the simpler things in the country: quotidian gatherings and dances, and the Romanian landscape. However, while affective invocations of *dor* are prominent in musical production, I argue that, at least in the immigrant community I researched, the performance of socialist-era music is not entirely encapsulated by nostalgic yearning. Rather, as we shall see in the next chapter, this music carries more practical, less affective social functions.

CHAPTER 5: NATIONAL IDENTITY OR CLASS DISTINCTION? SOCIALIST MUSIC AMONG ROMANIAN IMMIGRANTS

Drawing on an analogy penned by Deborah Wong, the previous chapter describes musical performance within immigrant communities as a pathway to the homeland, a way to re-connect to one's heritage and past (2004:24-29). Wong is astute to draw upon the metaphor of immigrant music as a pathway and not, contrarily, a highway; for while all musical paths may lead to a memory of the homeland, each path has the potential to be individualized, wind and weave in accordance to the contingencies of an immigrant's particular narrative. Far from being simply poetic, this realization is essential insofar as it acknowledges the difficulty in proscribing any closed sense of an immigrant community's "shared" heritage of ethnic identity. As was the case of socialist ideology, the concept of ethnic identity is itself hegemonic, not determined in accordance with any objective criteria or historical circumstance, but rather based upon various articulations of what "proper" notions of diasporic, national, or ethnic identity consist. And like any hegemonic project, issues of power and influence are at the heart of determinations of diasporic or national identity. These factors complicate any assertion that musical performances exist to define or perpetuate an objective sense of ethnic identity within an immigrant community.

With this in mind, this chapter considers how issues of class distinction within the Romanian immigrant community greatly complicate any idea of an objectively shared sense of heritage. Integrating my fieldwork with Bourdieu's theorizations on class distinction and forms of capital, I argue that in the case of Romanians, particularly in New York, the performance of socialist-era music often serves not to unite the community, but to separate them in accordance with a historically defined class hierarchy, one which the socialist regime, despite its ideological insistence on creating a classless society, was never able to completely eliminate.

Immigrant Music and National Identity: Admissions and Reservations

Music as Social Glue (and Solvent)

In her introduction to the volume *Music, Longing, and Belonging,* Magdalena Waligórska writes:

> Music is perhaps the medium most commonly instrumentalised in the service of grand narratives that underpin collective identities. However, its ability to evoke human emotion is a double-edged sword. Musical experience can promote a sense of belonging and reinforce boundaries between social groups. It can also feed disaffection and create spaces of alterity. (2013:1)

Romanian-Americans continue to perform and consume socialist-era music because the polysemous nature of these styles has made them flexible enough to encompass new meanings pertinent to the immigrant experience. Beyond invoking an affect of nostalgia or *dor* for the homeland, however, this music also carries more material associations and functions for the community. Perhaps the most obvious of such associations is that of the Romanian nation itself, a connotation made all the starker given the "alien" cultural landscape that surrounds Romanian-Americans. However, as Waligórska suggests, the music's ties to the Romanian nation both define the immigrant community as a whole and functions to fracture or destabilize it. As such, musical performance can act as what Waligórska terms a "social glue," binding a community together along certain criteria—but it can just as easily act as social solvent, separating and alienating a community from the outside, or from itself (*ibid.*).

This seeming paradox within music performance is immediately clarified by the acknowledgement that, as a social practice, music by its very nature both includes and excludes—a fact well discussed in ethnomusicological literature on immigrant communities. In

her analysis of Puerto Rican and Polish ethnic parades in Philadelphia, for instance, Jo Anne Schneider notes that the promotion of a "unified" ethnic identity during such parades consists of temporary and rather superficial articulations made by a particular group within the community for socio-political reasons (1990). In an article on *bhangra* music, Gayatri Gopinath argues that the hybrid music form is less a unified promotion of British South Asians' hybrid or diasporic identity and more a diverse "response to the demand for coherence and stability within specific racial and cultural contexts" characteristic of the British socio-political landscape (1995:312). Evan Rapport details how the Bukharian Jews in New York City struggle for presence and legitimacy not only with the Jewish community in the city, but within the greater project of Western multiculturalism. In her work on Vietnamese refugees, Adelaida Reyes (1999) points to the ways the musical promotion of ethnic identity within the community largely reflects a contentious relationship between various sub-groups delineated by class and the circumstances of their displacement from Vietnam.

In each of the cases, the particular struggles communities undergo in developing and projecting a sense of ethnic or national identity are dependent on particular historical contingencies and antagonistic power relations. The Polish-American community investigated by Schneider works with and against the mainstream image of the polka-loving "Polack" that developed in the United States, Gopinath's British South Asians struggle against the legacies of British colonialism, while the fault lines within the Vietnamese refugee community discussed by Reyes are largely based on the circumstances of each community's emigration from Vietnam. After years of fieldwork, I have concluded that one of the foremost antagonisms which inform the development of a sense of "national identity" in the Romanian-American community relates to the long history of class relations affecting Romanians, ranging from feudal relations to

contemporary class struggles, which the communist government failed to overcome. While there is undoubtedly a sense of national pride and national heritage that is evoked in musical performance in the Romanian immigrant community, it is one primarily informed by claims of class distinction.

National Identity within Romanian-American Discourse

Despite my arguments to the contrary, associations between music performance and class distinction is not one expressly articulated by the community with whom I worked. Conversely, as I learned through my fieldwork, Romanian-American musicians often frame discourses on the production and reception of socialist-era genres within notions of national identity and community solidarity. For instance, the Roadrunners perceived that one of the reasons the band exists is because Romanian-Americans "need" the songs we provide. As Mircea argued, "large audiences" for the Roadrunners are guaranteed because all members of the community "want to hear these songs" which connect them to the homeland and their Romanian heritage. Indeed, such a need among the immigrant audience for our music has been acknowledged by the band to such an extent that Lucian, our violin player, once mentioned that the Roadrunners would be a profitless, if not entirely pointless, endeavor in Romania, because "everyone is doing this music [our repertoire] in the country." Knowing everyone in the band holds an equal fascination with Western popular music as they do with Romanian popular music, when I asked Antonia why the Roadrunners don't cover more Western songs, she responded: "I prefer *muzică populară* because I feel I am delivering a message to the people" within the Romanian-American community. In a word, our existence as a band is largely fed by the immigrant community's apparent need for a sense of national identity within the United States.

Beyond just signifying a Romanian heritage, the collective performance of these songs also acts as a means to strengthen bonds between members of the community who have lived through similar experiences. This factor was perhaps made most clear when I spoke to Grigore, who illustrated the way the performance of *muzică folk* in particular has long served as a way of creating bonds and a sense of unity among Romanians, from the Ceaușescu era to the contemporary immigrant circumstance: "I learned to play guitar with one of my childhood friends. And then in high school I played with my colleagues, I even taught a few of them how to play guitar. And we would play together. Whenever we had parties we would play folk music. And then when we went to the [Danube-Black Sea] canal that summer after the 11th grade we would all sing almost every evening. Then in the army—so there was a draft, we had no choice, we had to go to the army. Again, I had my guitar with me with a couple of other colleagues and we would play in the evenings. And here [in America], I think, [music] kept us united as a group, the Romanian community. We have a few friends who we get together now and then and we play Romanian songs. Because we were of the same generation from where the folk music developed in Romania, we all knew those songs so we'd play together those songs." I myself experienced such community-making during rehearsals among the Roadrunners. It was not an uncommon occurrence for the group to diverge for hours from rehearsing the pre-established set list to perform various songs that individual members would call out or simply start singing. At times, such pieces would then be refined and included in our repertoire, although it was equally the case that after a performance they would be abandoned, serving as an ephemeral moment of unification and joy achieved through the performance of old songs. It occurred to me very quickly that the Roadrunners as such existed as much for themselves as for the audience that

"needed them," the music fulfilling their own needs to bond and connect over a shared Romanian heritage.

Perhaps the most explicit articulations of the connections between music and national identity or heritage regarded the expressed importance of instilling a sense of cultural identity within the second generation. I remember the Roadrunners' first show outside of a marked Romanian space—at a small theater in Nyack, New York. As we got on stage, I was amazed how large the audience was, but what I found more amazing was the number of children at this 10pm performance. It was only later that I realized the parents who brought their children to such a late performance did so purposefully, and not, as I first assumed, due to the absence of a babysitter. As my fieldwork continued, I realized a shared value among the community members was their children's exposure to Romanian culture. This presented itself most clearly in discussion regarding language. Parents I spoke to were concerned by their children's continued use of the Romanian language (or lack thereof). Many spoke of their disappointment at their children's use of English rather than Romanian at home. During a party after a Roadrunners show, I heard one parent admonish two children speaking to one another in English, saying in a stern voice, "You both know Romanian!" Others I spoke to hoped that as their children grew into adolescents and had more desire to be "unique," they would rediscover and revalue their Romanian heritage. The performance of socialist genres of the 1960-1980s became therefore another way to expose the second generation to a sense of Romanian identity that the first generation feared would disappear within their children.

This being said, the more time I spent within the community the more I felt there was more to the performance of this music than simply the presentation of Romanian identity and an emphasis on diasporic solidarity, as my interlocutors explained to me. I discovered that just as it

was important for the first generation to ensure their children are exposed to Romanian cultural traditions through music, it was equally important that they become involved in music in general. When I asked Antonia why she joined the band initially, she explained that one of the main reasons was to inspire her children, to show them that if she could get involved and excited about music, so could they. Often at church cultural events a children's recital would precede a Roadrunners' performance, where children performed standard art music repertoire and recite memorized lines of Romanian poems.

Such practices seem to speak to the desire to instill the second generation not only with a sense of Romanian heritage, but also in a way with a sense of class distinction. As Nicholas Tawa asserts in his study of music among American immigrants in *The Sound of Strangers*, cultivating musical ability, especially in art music, was seen as a way of entering or maintaining a certain class status (1982:56-65). By promoting not only musical performance among their children, but also a specific type of music (art music and poetic *muzică folk* rather than *muzică ușoară* or even *manele*, for example), first-generation immigrants are cultivating a sense of national identity and heritage within their children, but one informed by their class status—a sense of historic class status that, as we shall see in the next section, has largely persisted despite the socialist government's attempts to create a nation without class distinction.

The Perpetuation of Class in a "Classless" Society

Maintaining Class Status in Spite of Socialist Policy

As a ruling group claiming a Marxist lineage, it comes as little surprise that one of the primary ideological priorities for the Romanian Communist Party was the eradication of class in the country. Terms such as "social homogenization," "social mobility" and "multilateral development" became somewhat boiler-plate in official documents and speeches (see, for

example, Iordăchel 1983). Policies reflecting such ideological commitments were perhaps most visible in rural areas, particularly in state attempts to eliminate the *chiaburi*, rich rural landowners (known in Russian as *kulaks*) and to supplant their land with agricultural communes. As the Ministry of Justice declared in 1956, "The poor peasant is the principal support of the working class. . .We will support the poor peasantry, tighten our alliance with the middle peasantry, and organize an uninterrupted struggle against the kulak class" (quoted in translation in Kideckel 1993:79). As can be seen in the following interviews, such policies resulted in the seizure of the homes, land, and assets of wealthy landowners. To further remove political power from this class, the government additionally remade districts in the country, replacing "a locally responsive county system with larger, state-oriented superregions" and local elected village councils with state-appointed party councils (*ibid.*, 80).

Yet, as Kideckel argues, such policies were largely unsuccessful, at least in the agricultural region where he pursued fieldwork. Not only did work towards "social homogenization" fail in the villages, but it also "forged new kinds of inequalities and reinforced the preexisting differences in wealth and privilege" (*ibid.*, 94). This is due to the fact that economic inequality and resentment weren't eliminated with socialist policy, but rather supplanted by political inequality and resentment. As Kideckel writes: "With the socialist breakthrough, economic well-being became a mark of political status. The quotas and class war generated suspicion and pervasive envy of the people who escaped them. To many villagers a household's economic stability was thus a sure sign of influence peddling, illegal activities, and political compromise" (*ibid.)* Drawing from Bourdieu, one could claim that the government's policies towards social homogenization did not eliminate the unequal distribution of economic capital, but rather tied economic capital to social capital, in the form of a particular peasant's or

landowner's personal connections with Party officials, in addition to cultural capital, or one's facility with the dispositions unique to a particular class stratum.

Kideckal's case study reveals that, while class distinctions may have become non-hegemonic in state ideology and Party literature, they very much remained part of the everyday lives of socialist Romanian citizens. While the socialist government may have ameliorated inequalities in economic capital to a degree, a reliance upon social connections and certain cultural knowledge only gained in importance, and began defining at a larger level class differences. If anything, the imposition of socialist policies led to new and different strategies through which the elite classes could maintain their status. Such strategies become visceral in the biographies of art musicians living during the socialist era, a time when class background was deeply inscribed, both positively and negatively, upon the artistic strategies pursued among this community of cultural elites.

In examining data deriving from my interviews with Romanian-American art musicians across the country (see Appendix III), what becomes most immediately apparent is the fact that, despite the socialist government's attempts to expose art music to members of the working class, the musicians continued to be largely from bourgeois backgrounds. Many of the interlocutors I spoke to admitted coming from wealthy family backgrounds. Irina noted her parents had wealth and her father's family had royal blood, Ana told me that her family resided in a "beautiful house, [with] everything very luxurious," and Dragoş noted that his parents "had the largest combined income in the town." Many of the parents of these musicians operated in intellectual and "cultured" circles, being university professors (Ana), artists (Ana, Andreea), or musicians (Sorin, Vasile). These musicians' entry into the milieu of art music was not only facilitated by the material objects available to them thanks to their parent's status (Irina's house was filled with

"books and music," Ana grew up playing the family piano), but also by the family's prioritization of high culture, which was to a degree sedimented by their class background. As Irina explains: "[My mother] was a passionate intellectual, she loved to read, she loved music, she adored classical music . . . And she promised herself that we will not have to suffer that, you know, that we won't have an improper education. So, she wanted to introduce me to [art] music just to be, you know, a complete person." Under similar motivations of raising a cultured child, Ana's father bought her subscriptions to go to "all kinds of concerts" while her mother was able to draw upon her social network of intellectuals to secure a quality piano teacher. Andreea admitted she became a pianist because her father taught piano at a conservatory, while Anca, like Ana, became interested in art music because her parents provided her an opportunity to attend "a concert a week."

As can be imagined, such bourgeois or even aristocratic backgrounds within this group of musicians presented problems vis-à-vis the adopted ideology of the socialist regime, which privileged higher attainment for the working class. Most of the interlocutors I spoke to admitted that their families had to give up their land and at times their houses in order to maintain at least some social standing within the country (see Irina's and Ana's discussions). Such "unhealthy family backgrounds" also caused issues in my interlocutors' desire to pursue musical education. As is seen best in Ana's story (see Appendix III), the aspiring composer was blocked from entering a prestigious high school due to a government policy which stressed the admission of young people with working class backgrounds over those with more bourgeois or aristocratic backgrounds.

Yet, Ana's story also reveals how, despite such institutional disadvantages, members of the pre-socialist intelligentsia were able to nonetheless maintain their educational and cultural

privilege during socialism. Blocked from an elite high school, Ana leveraged her mother's continued social connections (as well as her limited bilingual ability) to secure a place in a similarly prestigious Hungarian school. Dragoş, who came of age decades after Ana, relied on a similar method to achieve a prestigious arts education: despite being ethnically Romanian, his family was able to leverage their social connections to enroll him in a school in Transylvania specifically for ethnic Germans.

This is not to say that the government's attempts to introduce high art education to working classes were not without tangible benefits. Indeed, in Vasile we see a sort of success story in which someone otherwise outside of the art music milieu was able to nonetheless successfully enter it. Forbidden from taking private music lessons because his parents felt they were too high of an investment, Vasile nonetheless played in an ensemble in a local *casa pionerului*, or "pioneer house," which he described as free, state-funded institutions for children to learn crafts outside of school. From there he joined the army band to further his skills. By capitalizing on the free state-funded programs in art music education outside of traditional conservatory training (including the armed services), Vasile was able to eventually become a musician with the Romanian National Radio Orchestra before immigrating and becoming the principal trombonist in a major symphony orchestra in the United States.

Nonetheless, what these biographical accounts of Romanian-American art musicians speak to is the immense difficulty in practically separating the art music milieu from its bourgeois or even aristocratic history. As Bourdieu writes, capital, whether social, cultural, or economic, is simply "accumulated labor" which continues to accumulate within particular social groups each generation (1986:45). Part of the socialist project was to wipe away the differentials of capital within Romanian society: to foster social, cultural, political, and economic equity

between the working class and the bourgeoisie. This was fairly easily accomplished when it came to economic capital. As Irina's story made clear, the one-party government could with little difficulty strip families of their land and holdings, just as they nationalized private industry. There were also attempts to limit the accumulation of cultural capital by certain communities: as Ana's story reveals, government education policy prioritized students with working-class backgrounds over those who came from "unhealthy social backgrounds." Yet, as Bourdieu reminds us, the accumulation of cultural capital occurs as much in the home as it does in the school, and these art musicians' childhood access to cultural capital in its objectified state ("pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.") continued despite government attempts to limit it. More importantly, it was my interlocutors' families' accumulation of *embodied* cultural capital, defined by their "long lasting dispositions of the mind and body," which allowed these otherwise disenfranchised children of intellectuals the ability to pursue art music (*ibid.*, 47). That is, musicians like Irina, Ana, Anca, Dragoş, Sorin, and Andreea were born into families holding dispositions that privileged the high arts. Oftentimes parents were artists or musicians themselves who prioritized and therefore exposed my interlocutors to the high arts via subscriptions to concert series, playing art music in the home, or taking regular trips to the library. These musicians' early exposure to such materials—and moreover their childhood interpellation to the notion that such materials carry immense value—instilled in them a cultural competence that allowed them to pursue a career in art music, despite governmental attempts to dissuade them.

Finally, while stripped in large part of their economic capital, the families of these musicians retained and even cultivated their social capital, or what in Romanian is called *pile*, or "connections." It was through these connections, for instance, that Ana's mother was able to

procure piano lessons with a professional teacher, as well as secure her a place in the Hungarian school after her plan to go to a prestigious public school was hampered by state education policy. Similarly, it was likely due to his parents' high standing in their town that Dragoş was able to attend a prestigious German school, despite being ethnically Romanian and Hungarian. As is often remarked on literature on Eastern European socialist economies, when economic capital was largely eradicated, social capital became the preeminent vehicle to accumulate greater prestige, goods, and social standing (see Verdery 1996).

Social and Cultural Capital at Work: Getting Out of Romania

Undoubtedly, the Romanian-American art musicians whom I interviewed are not representative of the entirety of Romanian art musicians. In fact, in many ways they represent only the top elite of the community in the sense that they were not only able to procure the few jobs available as art musicians in Romania, but they also found the means to leave the country. They did so, as I will argue, by again drawing upon their accumulation of social and cultural capital, endowed upon them for already being distinguished musicians within their home country.

First, however, it is beneficial to elaborate on my interlocutor's motivations for leaving the country in the first place. Within the migration narratives of the various musicians I spoke with (see Appendix III), two motivations for leaving Romania were overwhelmingly articulated. The first was economic. Many I interviewed stressed that by the 1980s, living in Romania became unbearable. Gheorghe stated that because Ceauşescu prioritized paying off the national debt, "everybody sacrificed. It was crazy, it was like a hell. No lights in the streets, infrastructure gone, no maintenance, no food." Andreea's response was remarkably similar: she noted by the 1980s "it was getting worse and worse—no food, no toilet paper. Those are not myths, I feel like

crying every time I talk about it, because I have too much here [in America].” Irina emphasized that the 1980s “were the worst, worst, worst years of communism. The pressure was terrible [and] the job situation in Romania was terrible.” As Ana explained, such economic austerity made the possibility of living in the West all the more appealing: “we saw and we heard about a life that had access to opportunities to all kinds of things which we could not [access],” and by the 1980s “you could not have more than one package of butter per month, you could not have heating, because they cut the heating in the winter, violinists and singers had gloves without fingers, it was such a cold in the concert halls.”

An equally powerful motivation for leaving the country related to the musician’s artistic ambitions, which they perceived as being limited due to the political and economic situation in Romania. Many noted that the political situation prevented them from pursuing a more international career and further developing as artists. Andreea was content with her “very good career” in Romania, but became increasingly frustrated at her inability to perform outside the country: “during my conservatory years . . . there was competitions to select students to go to international, big competitions. So I made those cuts, and I would never get a passport. . .they knew I would defect. So, I never was allowed out [. . .] so I was very frustrated, more and more, because my violin partner had arranged concerts in Paris and Vienna, and all that. And in the last minute I would not get the passport and she needed to replace me. So the last few years, I just couldn’t take that anymore. Romania was small, I was top there, but I wanted to see my value internationally.” Similarly, Ana expressed her frustration that, because she was blocked from Party membership due to having an “unhealthy” family background, she was prevented from having her pieces performed: “I felt this [inability to have pieces performed] more and more on my shoulders. And I thought maybe it would be good if I could leave Romania.” Despite being a

top performer in one of Romania's most prestigious orchestras, Vasile also wanted to expand his career internationally: "It wasn't the financial stimulant, it was the professional stimulant. . . I just felt that I wasn't clicking there [in Bucharest], and I wanted more. Right now, everybody in the world looks up to the American school of brass."

In acting upon these motivations, the musicians I spoke with successfully managed to leave the country by drawing upon both their cultural and their social capital. Gheorghe left in 1979 for Venezuela through an arrangement with an impresarial agency, which he developed a relationship with via his social connections and his musical ability. Drawing upon connections within the Romanian embassy, he was able years later to bring his mother first to Caracas, and then ultimately to Canada, where he resides today. Irina, who left Romania in 1986 after falling in love with an American, was finally allowed to leave thanks to her husband's ability to establish a connection with no less than George Schultz, the U.S. Secretary of State for much of the 1980s, who helped facilitate her emigration. One of the most interesting migration narratives I heard was from Andreea. Unaware that she was Jewish for most of her adult life, it was only after her friends broached the subject that she investigated her family background. After research proved she was Jewish, she took advantage of Romania's relationship with Israel to emigrate. [46] Nonetheless, she managed to bring her piano with her, which would normally be forbidden, because, as she explained to me, she "was somebody, so I told [the minister of culture] 'I need to unite with my people, but this is my career . . . and I'm not leaving without my piano!" In other words, she was able to leverage her cultural prestige as a well-known artist to keep her piano.

[46] The socialist government allowed Jewish Romanians to migrate to Israel in exchange for a fee demanded of the Israeli government. It had a similar program with Germany for ethnic Germans.

Interestingly, the Romanian-American musicians I interviewed who emigrated after 1989 relied on the same accumulation of social and cultural capital to leave the country—not because Romania had a closed border policy, but because it was prohibitively expensive to emigrate. Even musicians with the most prestigious positions could not afford travel expenses, let alone prove they would have a livable income in the West. Thus, while one's proficiency on an instrument often procured student or visiting artist visas, the fledgling economy of postsocialist Romania did not make leaving the country or surviving in the West particularly feasible. Vasile's migration narrative most vividly illustrates such economic difficulties. While given a "free ride" at a United States university music program, he was unable to prove he possessed the living expenses to pursue a degree: "I was saving money like crazy. My suitcases were loaded with cans, just to eat so I take my *per diem* on all these tours [with the Romanian Radio Orchestra]. So big sacrifice there. And I think after a year, and we had a couple of good tours, I could only put aside maybe $700." It was only through the generous patience of university faculty and the financial help of the Soros Foundation that Vasile was finally able to study in the United States.

Perhaps the clearest example of the way cultural capital was leveraged in order to emigrate to the West was a story told to me by Sorin, an opera singer and conductor currently working in the Midwest of the United States. As he related to me, he first arrived in the United States with a choir organized for the sole purpose of getting out of Romania. As he explained, "I had two friends [and] one of them really wants to go to America. And it's really hard to get a visa, and so on. So, he decided that he will build a choir, a chamber choir, and then he will find some festivals or something in America, he would be invited to go there, his choir. And like that he will have a reason to go, and he will stay there." Thus began a long process of organizing a choir, developing repertoire, procuring donors and financiers, and rehearsing simply to be good

enough to compete in an American festival. When they ultimately arrived in America, five of the members immediately disappeared, without even performing at the competition. As Sorin concluded the story, “we left thirty-five and we returned five.” In such a way, it was almost entirely the choir’s collectively acquired cultural capital (in this case being educated in the performance of art song repertoire) that allowed them to immigrate.

Lest the reader get the wrong impression, I do not mean to imply that emigration was somehow easy for these musicians, thanks to their privileged cultural status. Rather, each musician I spoke to made enormous sacrifices to leave the country. Those leaving during the postsocialist era were often giving up stable incomes and social prestige for the slim chances of achieving a similar status in the West. However, it was those that left during the socialist era that faced the most difficulties, including immense psychological stress verging on trauma. During this time, declaring intent to emigrate quickly made one a *persona non-grata* in the country. As soon as Ana expressed interest in emigrating, and Irina filed for a foreign marriage license, the regime abruptly cancelled their commissions and invitations to perform. The government did not allow Irina to go to concerts abroad that had already been scheduled, nor did they allow her to even call and warn the organizers that she would not make it. Moreover, it was common practice for the Romanian government to leverage a person’s relatives if they planned to emigrate. When his father died, Gheorghe was unable to return to Romania to comfort his mother, as he was certain he would be disallowed to return. In lieu he sent his wife, an American, to comfort his mother. Upon attaining a foreign marriage license, Irina expressed to me that “every day I woke up I was scared to death that I would, that they would come and get us, and my parents would be thrown in jail.” Such fear and stress existed to such an extent that Andreea, who returned to Romania for a visit a few decades after she left in the 1980s, admitted she had immense anxiety

that the government would not allow her to return to the United States, despite the fact that she had resided in the country as a legal resident for over 20 years.

Class Distinction and Perspectives of Musical Genres

The perpetuation of class in Romania during the 20th century necessitated the perpetuation of a cultural schema which defined class distinctions much more starkly. As Bourdieu argues, integral to the assertion of class status is the bourgeoisie's construction of "the legitimate consumption of legitimate works," which entails both an embrace of some cultural products and an aversion to others (Bourdieu 2010:32). In other words, maintaining a certain class distinction entails upholding a "hierarchy of legitimacies" through which one can claim one's social prestige (*ibid.*, 81).

In the case of Romanian art musicians, the privileging of some musical genres over others was one of the primary ways to reify a sense of class distinction. A widely acknowledged separation between art music and *muzică populară* in particular was one of the foremost ways in which one could claim to belong to a certain, more "intellectual" or "cultured" class strata. "There was this idea of snobbishness," Dragoş explained to me, "with the educated generation, they did not like *muzică populară*, because it was like too rough, too obsolete." He continued: "In Romania, folk music, especially during Ceauşescu's time, folk music was so all over. On TV, on like. . .you could not move. It was big nationalist propaganda. And it was not cool, it was low class, basically. The same reason for which some people here, they would never listen to country music because they associated with the countryside and backwardness. And that's exactly what it was, I had associated it with backwardness and class especially. And by me not liking it I was making a statement about class. . . whenever I would I hear it [*muzică populară*], it would be a signifier for backwardness so I would run away from it as much as I could."

Conservatory training reified such divisions between art music and *muzică populară*. When I asked art musicians in the United States whether they received training in folk genres in addition to art music training, almost all responded "no," some visibly shocked by the apparent absurdity of the question. Again, Dragoş was the most articulate and perhaps self-reflexive in this assertion: "In the magnet school where I went to, literally the school was divided into two . . . one was the folk side, and you had faculty that were teaching folk instruments. And the classical side, meaning the Western side. I was in the Western side, and we saw ourselves as elite. And we would look down on the people who would play folk music. Now I was forced to go and play in some of these folk bands. And I did it because they were also getting a lot of tours to the West. So, I toured sometimes with folk bands. And that was fun, but I was ashamed. I would not dare to tell anyone that I would play folk music because that was low." Dragoş' feelings of shame when performing folk music at the school were understandable given the connotations the art music faculty ascribed to the style: "Sometimes you would have some classical violin players going there [to the folk music groups] and playing with them, and then some faculty [would say], 'Hey you're not serious, you're going to those jokesters. To those dirty. . .' you know, there was always some sort of dirt, smelly reference."

I proceeded to ask if there was ever a time when folk music might appropriately be consumed or produced by art musicians and composers. Dragoş responded, "The fact that you're a Romanian composer, and maybe you have some Romanian folk themes—and that was okay to have Romanian folk themes, as long as it's still a classical—you know, think about Enescu, or Bartók. You're still putting it in a classical genre. So we did have a lot of composers like that. . . and I don't think anyone at least in my circle saw it [folk music] as privileged. Everyone saw it like, 'That's the shitty music of the lower classes, and what we are doing is the music of the

intellectuals.' You know, you always had this intellectual discourse where really the classes in Romania back then were all about smart you are and how intellectual you are, and how uneducated you are. And folk music was the music of the uneducated."

Note that such a hierarchy of legitimation was not simply one between popular music and art music. The historical contingencies and the cultural policies of Romanian socialism created a much more nuanced view of "culturally appropriate" musical production and consumption. Specifically, while frequently disseminated music in Romania was considered blasé, and therefore worthy of revile, popular genres from across the iron curtain were considered more culturally legitimate. As Dragoş explains: "Now the communists, they did so much folk propaganda. It was just cheesy, you would open up the TV and that's the only thing you would see. Not only did we not get an appreciation for that, we got a repulsion for that. Folk music was like, ugh, really low. And Western music, even Western pop, was elitist and we were aspiring to that."

Such acts of distinction articulated by Dragoş have a history that long surpasses the communist era. Indeed, such means of differentiating musical styles by their apparent legitimacy can be found in the Romanian language itself, where there is a clear hierarchy of terms to describe musicians who perform various styles of music. At the top of the hierarchy are the *muzicieni*, which denotes formal art education and connotes a mastery of art music. Below this category are the *muzicanţi*, professional musicians who lack university certification, and generally perform folk and popular music. As Rădulescu describes:

> In Romania, *muzicanţi* (sg. *muzicant*) is the name given to those who live off the production and sale of oral music. . .As a generic term, it designates any "folk" musician. As a specific term, *muzicant* usually indicates a member of a folkloric

> ensemble or orchestra subsidized by the central or local authorities, one who supposedly uses musical notation and is capable of performing music that is "edited," "corrected," or processed, elevating the prestige of the institutions he (or she) works. (2016b:140)

Muzicanţi are then distinguished from another caste of musicians, *lăutari*, who are primarily Roma men, capable of performing a wide variety of local, regional, national, and international styles, though they generally carry mastery over only a particular regional style that is most profitable to securing them work (*ibid.*, 141-142). Unlike *muzicanţi*, the ability to read arranged or composed music is not emphasized for the *lăutari*. Finally, at the bottom of the hierarchy are the more recently established *manelişti*, or *manea* performers as discussed in the previous chapter. These figures are considered by the cultural elite as barely musicians, rather singer-entertainers whose persona and ability to work a party is of more value than their musical ability or innovation.

It is important to note here that such divisions have little to nothing to do with the perceived musical skill of the musician (with the exception, perhaps, of the *manelişti*). Indeed, it is common to expound upon the "innate" musical virtuosity of the *lăutari*, both among my interlocutors and among published musicologists and ethnomusicologists. Rather, the "hierarchy of legitimization" inherent in this category of musicians speaks to the socio-cultural milieux in which they are confined. It may very well be that a *muzician* has an equal faculty on the violin as a *lăutar*, but by grace of their education and ethnicity, they can claim a higher social position. And there are endemic social structures to keep such a hierarchy in place: one could argue that the widely shared assumption that *lăutari* have an "innate" ability presupposes that no formal

education is needed, thereby preventing them the possibility to achieve higher social status via more formalized musical education and an accumulation of cultural capital.

That such hierarchies of musical legitimation are built into the very language of the country speaks to the long histories in which they have developed. Of course, it also speaks to the impossibility of tracing such hierarchies to issues of class alone, especially class as articulated in the dichotomy between the proletariat and bourgeoise that only developed in Romania well into the 19th century. Rather, such divisions among music and musicians are also informed by geographic and ethnic discrepancies that have existed since Romanian feudalism, with folk music being synonymous with rural communities, while art music's associations lay in urban cosmopolitan areas. A particular style of music's association with the Roma, a social group historically disenfranchised (even reduced to slavery at some points in history) for much of Romanian history, plays into the modalities in which such music is performed and received, regardless of class associations. Finally, the dichotomy between art and folk musics (and all the various strata of musicians that are implicated in these styles) is also influenced by larger geographic contingencies within Romania and the fact that historically the area has been marked by an intense dichotomy between the "West" and the "East"—what Maria Todorova (1997) terms "Balkanism." Such a negotiation between the country's Central European and Eastern heritage may be particularly pertinent to Romanian national consciousness. As Romanian is a Latinate language, Romanians have long held the Romantic image of the country as being a "Latin Island in a Slavic Sea," and indeed, most of my interlocutors sooner assert the country's Central European positionality over its association with the Slavic "Balkans," or reserve the country's Balkan heritage to only negative associations, such as political corruption. This

distinction in itself has likely contributed to the educational borders erected between art music and folk music training, as described above.

Given the long histories of these distinctions, it in many ways comes to no surprise that the socialist government was largely unsuccessful at eliminating preexisting class structures within Romania. The cases of cultural distinction as described above, informed by centuries of hierarchical culture, show that class distinctions were too deeply entrenched to have been eliminated by socialist ideology and economic policy alone. Nor were they easily eradicated by immigration. As we shall see in the next section, music very much remains a means by which to display class distinction among Romanian-American musicians.

The Romanian Musicscape in New York City

A Tale of Two Communities

Bourdieu argues that understanding the practices of artists (including musicians) "entails understanding that they are the result of two histories: the history of the positions they occupy and the history of their dispositions" (1993:61). In the previous section, I illustrated the ways the historical dispositions of a certain class of musicians (that is, their tastes in accordance with artistic and aesthetic hierarchies of legitimacy) outlasted the socialist ideological project tasked in part at eradicating them. In this section, I consider the ways such dispositions have led to acts of position-taking within various groups of Romanian-Americans. Such a process has resulted in the construction of musical boundaries that serve to separate different class dispositions within the community, boundaries which often manifest themselves geographically. To illustrate this point, I will focus on the Romanian community within the New York City region where I conducted a large amount of my fieldwork, specifically the city proper and its surrounding suburbs in Westchester county and northern New Jersey. Within this community, I discerned

three subgroups: immigrants who arrived in America during the socialist period, and those who arrived after, which are further categorized into middle-class and working-class immigrants.

As Figure 5.3 reveals, the period of immigration has a direct bearing on a variety of demographic attributes within New York Romanians. Immigrants who arrived during the socialist period developed ethnic enclaves largely in Queens, particularly in the Sunnyside and Ridgewood neighborhoods. Their ability to leave the country was made possible by a number of different immigration strategies. Some, like Andreea in the above section, were able to leverage their Jewish or German heritage to leave the country first for Israel or Germany, and then to North America. Still others relied upon preexisting political and family connections to emigrate. Others married visiting Americans or Canadians, and after a long process, were able to emigrate as spouses to foreign citizens. Upon arriving they established institutions that largely served the Romanian community, including restaurants, grocery stores, bakeries, and media institutions such as neighborhood journals, newsletters, and TV programs in Romanian. Many within this socialist generation continue to live and own establishments in these areas. Those who arrived after 1989 fall into two groups: professionals and labor immigrants. The professional immigrants, with whom I spent the most of my time during fieldwork, arrived thanks to student or skilled work visas, which were often later converted into permanent residency or citizenship status. Professional migrants may have also arrived due to a residency lottery system, and in some cases through marriage. In New York City, avocational musicians are largely employed in the medical and technical fields as doctors, physical therapists, engineers, or electricians. Others have pursued careers as lawyers,

Figure 5.1: *Demographic Sketch of First Generation Romanian Immigrant Groups, New York City*

Period of Immigration		**Means of Immigration**	**Primary Language**	**Example Vocations**	**Typical Residence**
Socialist Era (1950s-1990)		Defection, Marriage, German or Jewish Heritage	Romanian	Restaurateur, owner of ethnic media (newspaper, etc.), clergy	Queens (urban enclave)
Postsocialist Era (1990-)	Middle-Class	Student and work visas, (converted to permanent residence or citizenship status) lottery, marriage	Bilingual fluency	Doctor, engineer, technician, lawyer, accountant, bookkeeper	Upstate New York, New Jersey (mainstream suburbs)
	Working-class	Illegal immigration (across border migration, expired visa holders)	Romanian	Food service, labor	Queens (urban enclave)

bookkeepers, or accountants. Highly educated, many arrived bilingual or trilingual (as opposed to earlier socialist immigrants, who are more monolingual). Such language fluency is all but necessary for their fields, which operate largely outside of the ethnic enclaves.

Postsocialist labor immigrants often reside in the United States as undocumented immigrants, arriving by crossing the Mexican-American border or by overstaying tourist visas. Often monolingual, they work in food service, manual labor, or the sex trade. This group is comparatively small in New York, given the difficulty of cross-Atlantic immigration and the fact that, as an EU member, Romanians can much more easily work in Italy, England, or Spain.

Regardless of whether immigrants arrive as skilled or unskilled laborers, the ethnic enclaves in Queens continue to serve as an initial entry point for subsequent generations of Romanian immigrants, because they provide a receptive community for Romanian immigrants and a greater possibility for immediate employment and housing. Additionally, being located within the city alleviates the necessity for a vehicle, which is one of the first large investments made particularly by professional-level immigrants. As Antonia joked with me, subsequent Romanian immigrants remain in the Queens neighborhoods only until they can afford a car to leave. For those new immigrants arriving through student or skilled work visas, this time in ethnic enclaves is thus possibly limited to a few years. Afterwards they move to neighborhoods which they feel provide them with a better quality of life and access to better public schools. Post-Cold War working-class immigrants who are far less skilled and less fluent in English, however, have had a harder time leaving the enclaves.

The three demographic categories sketched above should not be considered as only academic abstracts: the community in New York City expressly articulates the boundaries between these various groups. Individuals among the postsocialist middle-class group, for

instance, regularly deride the older communist-era immigrants as being overly insular, paranoid, duplicitous, and obsessed with money. As one avocational musician explained to me, socialist-era immigrants in his opinion were often more interested in the accumulation of social capital ("*pile,"* or "connections") and economic capital than the perpetuation of Romanian culture, or even the development of a sense of solidarity within the community. He further argued that this privileging of money and connections over a sense of communal solidarity was a byproduct of the socialist era, noting that "forced democracy [whether in Romania after 1989 or in the U.S. after immigration] doesn't erase decades of communism."

As expressed by the musician above, the cultural differences between these communities has made difficult, at an institutional level, the promotion of a united Romanian national culture or community. Granted, professional and cultural groups and organizations attempt to engage both communities through the creation of benevolent societies and business associations, though such attempts are difficult on multiple levels. As Constantin, the head of one of the largest Romanian business associations in New York told me, creating a cohesive Romanian community within the tristate area is difficult not only due to geographical dispersal, but also because the very concepts of how institutions and organizations should work widely differ among groups within the greater Romanian-American community, with those in New Jersey conceptualizing organizations in a more "American way" than those in Queens. As he elaborated: "I'm glad that the community in Queens is locked and is self-contained. We don't have a mirror in Jersey. In New Jersey, you have a different community. It's a younger community, it's more dispersed. It's not as united in a geographic area like Queens is [. . .] We blend in very well [in New Jersey] and because we blend in very well we also operate by the rules in these communities. So it allows the community from New Jersey to work the 'American way'—let's put it this way. We come to this

country and work as American-Romanians. [However, in Queens], like in any close-knit community, you bring a lot of things from Romania that are good to keep with you, like cultural and religious and so on, but also sometimes you bring lots of bad things, bad habits, that you don't get rid of because you are so close to each other. Because you are such a close community you can't really look outside and see what's good around you, because even if you are here for ten or fifteen years, it's still new to you because you still live basically in the same Romanian environment. And sometimes you aren't as open to accept new things. But for those in New Jersey, they didn't have a choice: this is where you live now, this is your home, these are your neighbors, this is your new community. If you have to integrate you have no choice but to understand what the rules are, and to understand what makes the community what it is." While the head of the organization did not articulate exactly what he meant by the "bad habits" that persist within the Queens community, after multiple similar conversations with other interlocutors I assume he is alluding to a sense of communist *habitus* that the postsocialist emigrants see as continuing within the older generation of immigrants: a *habitus* which, to newer immigrants, incorporates an overwhelming concern with money, power, and social connections rather than, it is assumed, Romanian arts and culture.

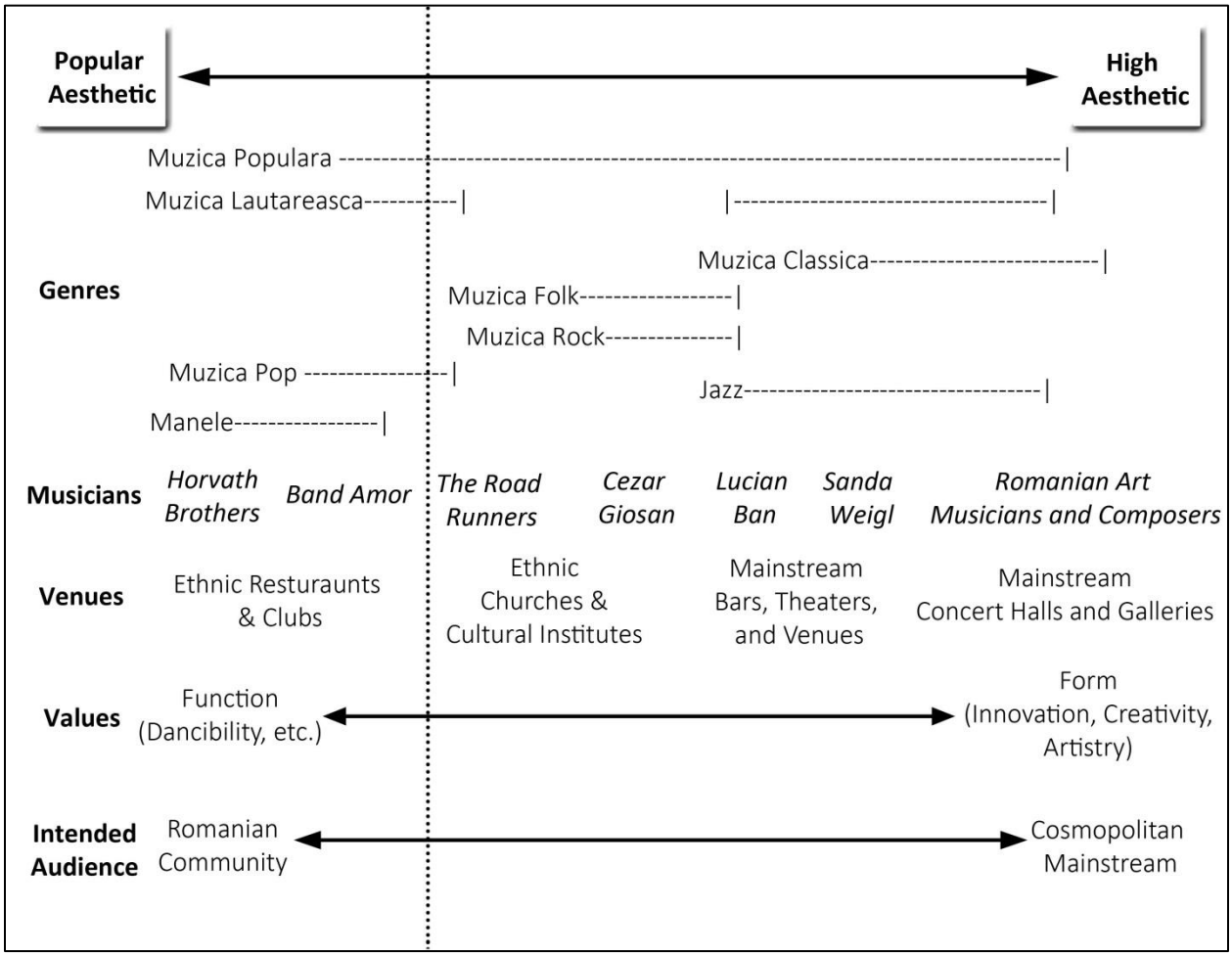
Finally, this desire to unite the Romanian community is hampered by the political environment which practically all first-generation immigrants lived through: one which, thanks to pervasive secret police presence, fostered a culture of paranoia and suspicion. Indeed, interlocutors from all groups have expressed to me in one way or another that the Romanian immigrant community remains atomized because there is a pervasive culture of mutual mistrust. "We grew up in a society where you don't even trust your friends," one interlocutor explained to me, "for this reason, I think, if you compare [Romanians] with other communities, who are more

united and help each other, there is still [a sense of mistrust] even after society changed and we moved abroad."

Music, Space, and Class Distinction

The various internal socio-cultural boundaries erected within the Romanian-American community in New York become all the more concrete when one takes into account musical production and reception. Based upon my fieldwork experience (whose inevitable biases will be considered towards the end of this chapter), I have mapped the ways various socialist- and postsocialist-era genres performed and received within the New York Romanian community are aligned with particular performers and locales (Figure 5.4). While music like *manele* and *muzică lăutărească* are often confined to ethnic restaurants and clubs mostly in Queens, genres such as jazz and art music are performed in venues such as cafes, clubs, galleries, and concert halls, mostly in Manhattan and to a lesser degree in Brooklyn. As will be discussed later, rock and folk music occupies a middle ground, being performed most often in ethnic churches and cultural institutes, with outlying performances in ethnic restaurants on the one hand and mainstream clubs on the other. What is important about this sketch of musical production in New York City is not that it reveals the extent to which particular genres, musicians, and venues are tied together—so much is obvious in most urban musical landscapes—but rather that it spatially reifies claims of class distinction within the community. That is, it reveals the geographic consequences of the class-based divisions that exist among Romanian-Americans in New York. The chart is organized along a gradient between what Bourdieu defines as the "popular aesthetic" and the "high aesthetic." In his work *Distinction,* Bourdieu clearly defines the criteria separating these two aesthetic poles: "everything takes place as if the 'popular aesthetic' were based on the affirmation of continuity between art and life, which implies the subordination of form to

Figure 5.2: *Romanian Musicscape, New York City*



function, or, one might say, on a refusal of the refusal which is the starting point of the high aesthetic" (2010: 24). In other words, the difference between the popular and high aesthetics is found in their relationship to quotidian functions whereas the popular aesthetic makes no clear separation between the form and function of a particular cultural work, the high aesthetic is rendered as such by its disassociation from the quotidian.

This distinction is seen *par excellence* in the above diagram of the Romanian musicscape—that is, the collection of the various and disparate music scenes that have been created by Romanian musicians and audiences. In the category of "popular aesthetic," one finds bands like the Horvath Brothers and Band Amor. In most circumstances, the instrumentation of these groups is similar: a trio consisting of a synthesizer, which provides programmed rhythmic accompaniment, harmonies (either programmed or performed live) and melodies; an electric guitar which provides counterpoint and chords; and a singer. Band Amor has a dedicated singer, while the Horvath Brothers both sing and play instruments, freeing up the third member to play electric bass. As I was told by Lazlo of the Horvath Brothers, the choice of such a minimal arrangement, with the synthesizer automating the role of the drummer, is not due to desire on the part of the band, but out of economic necessity. If the funding was available, he explained to me, he would happily return to violin (his original instrument), hire a percussionist, and get rid of the synthesizer.

In a typical concert, Band Amor and the Horvath Brothers perform two to three sets in a given night. The first is made up of what is called *café concert*" which are mostly jazz and *chanson* standards from the mid-20th century ("Autumn Leaves," "Somewhere beyond the Sea," etc.). This repertoire is played largely as background music as restaurant goers arrive, drink, dine, and converse. After a short break, the band plays a second set which is much more

energetic and louder than the first, this time deriving from *muzică populară*, *muzică lăutărească*, or contemporary pop hits from Romania and Hungary, depending on the audience they are playing for, and at times *manea* repertoire, so as to provoke dancing and general merry-making among the crowd. Depending on the night, this may be followed by a third set, which draws upon similar repertoire as the second. We see in such "popular" performances a complete "continuity between art and life," to borrow the language from Bourdieu. Band Amor and the Horvath Brothers consciously perform repertoire that accompanies the lives of the restaurant goers, staying out of the sonic way of dining conversation by providing light *café concert*, and then facilitating the restaurant goers' desire to dance later in the evening.

Such a musical environment starkly contrasts with an evening of music in the "high aesthetic" category on the right side of the chart. While there often is plenty of food and drink at a Lucian Ban performance, for instance, these "everyday" pleasures are subordinated to the jazz music he provides. That is, audiences generally are not going to a Lucian Ban performance in Manhattan's West Village primarily to eat and drink, nor to dance, but to listen to his music. Knowing these expectations, Ban operates accordingly. In the two sets, he and his group perform, there is no room for quiet music to accompany dining, let alone music to accompany dancing. His group begins and ends both sets with often raucous, avant-garde improvisations, which the audience listens to intently with little need for conversation or dancing. Indeed, much like a symphony orchestra performance, to converse during a Ban performance would be rude; to dance downright bizarre. There is then a profound separation between Ban's performances and those of the Horvath Brothers and Band Amor, in that the music is promoted as being the sole *raison d'etre* for the evening, and requires a completely aesthetic appreciation, rather than one whose appreciation is revealed by its quotidian function to provide background music or

facilitate dancing. In sum, Ban's music requires an "aesthetic distancing": its detachment from an embodied function is precisely the attribute that gives it its high aesthetic status (*ibid.*, 26).

Moreover, this sense of detachment when appreciating Ban's or other music in the "high aesthetic" assumes that the audience members possess a certain accumulation of cultural capital, which exposes them to the "legitimate consumption of legitimate works, the aptitude for taking a specific aesthetic point of view on objects already constituted aesthetically" (*ibid.*, 32). As such, Ban's music demands to a degree an awareness of the history of the musical tradition being performed, in this case free jazz, and its conventions. To the audience member unaware of the histories and conventions of free jazz, a Ban performance may very well come off as sonic chaos. Performances by Band Amor or the Horvath Brothers require less knowledge among the audience of the music being played. While the groups often play renditions of popular contemporary hits in Romania and Hungary, knowledge of such repertoire is not necessary for the music's function. That the *café concert* repertoire is pleasant and unassuming is the main criterion required for its function as background dining music, and that melodies performed later in the night have a strong, danceable beat that connotes in some way Romanian or Hungary is all that is required to fulfill their main function as dance music. For Ban's music, highly dissonant, often meterless, and at times chaotic, there is an assumption that the audience is at least somewhat cognizant of the conventions of free jazz or avant-garde music—or that the audience at least understands the aesthetic "legitimacy" of the music and appreciates the intellectual value of free improvisation.

Perhaps the clearest case in which a degree of cultural capital is required of the audience is not with Lucian Ban, however, but with certain performances by Sanda Weigl. In one of Weigl's concert programs, the singer juxtaposes Romanian traditional music with songs by Hans

Eisler and Kurt Weill and anecdotes of her childhood with her uncle, Bertolt Brecht. Throughout her performance, Weigl makes continued references to Eisler, Weill, and Brecht, often expressed through stories of her personal experiences with them. These stories are largely innocuous and quotidian unless the audience is aware that these are figures of historic importance. While one may well appreciate Weigl's performance simply by her voice and the songs she sings, a fuller appreciation of the cabaret act requires a certain cultural knowledge to fully understand, especially the moments when she is telling stories.

It is within the New York City Romanian musicscape, then, that one finds the starkest of boundaries between class-based groups. Performing Romanian music outside of the ethnic enclaves (i.e. Romanian restaurants) demands a certain accumulation of cultural capital, in that a musician or performer must be able to "sell" their art to a diverse audience largely unaware of Romanian music. For artists like Lucian Ban and Sanda Weigl, this is done by tapping into a cultural awareness that exists particularly among a more global bourgeois intellectual community, who understand the history of jazz, or are aware of Kurt Weil, Hans Eisler, and Bertolt Brecht.[47] As a result of such position-takings, two somewhat exclusive milieux of musicians emerge within the New York City landscape, defined by their accumulation of cultural capital that generally revolves around particular venues and locations. These milieux are delineated on the chart by the vertical dotted line. For instance, Sanda Weigl is fairly comfortable playing in settings ranging from concert halls to cultural institutes, and has collaborated with pianist Lucian Ban. However, Weigl performs only rarely in the Romanian

[47] Strategies Lucian Ban, Sanda Weigl, and other Romanian musicians take in integrating into the mainstream audience in North America will be discussed in much greater detail in chapter 6.

restaurants in Queens, and collaboration with the Horvath Brothers would be essentially unheard of.

As might be imagined, it behooves Romanian performers in both the "high aesthetic" and "popular aesthetic" milieux to remain geographically tied to the venues in which they operate. No doubt these musicians want to widen their audiences, but it does little good for Lucian Ban's artistic career to perform at a Romanian restaurant in Queens when there is the possibility that another gig in a West Village jazz club might introduce him to a jazz impresario who will pave the way for a future international festival. And simply put, the Horvath Brothers and Band Amor lack the social and cultural capital to procure gigs in mainstream Manhattan. It would be a hard sell to convince a promoter that their music would be appropriate for the diverse audience at a Manhattan club—a sell made all the more difficult by these group's tangential command of the English language. For this reason, they remain in the scene they know best, not even considering their potential appeal to the more cosmopolitan world music or Balkan music scene in New York City.

For Romanian audiences as opposed to musicians, however, there is more flexibility. Members of the middle-class postsocialist community, thus regularly go to many types of Romanian concerts. I am just as likely to see them at restaurants in Queens as I am to see them at performances in jazz clubs in Manhattan. Similarly, I have seen many of the older generation of socialist immigrants at all these events, as they are undeniably proud of Romanian culture of all types in New York—not to mention that some members of this group, as writers and publishers of Romanian community newspapers and TV stations, are always in need of copy when it comes to Romanian culture in the city. Most interlocutors I have spoken to have expressed their

appreciation and enthusiasm for all the genres listed in the chart (with, at times, the exception of *manele*).

Nonetheless, such immigrants continue to consume music with a sense of class distinction. What is at stake for them is not necessarily what music they listen to, but *how* they listen to it, i.e. whether they adhere to a legitimate mode of consumption. Such a disposition is perhaps best seen in many of my interlocutor's discussions of how they approach *muzică populară*, which, as the chart shows, is representative to a degree of all venues that provide Romanian music. For members of the postsocialist, middle-class group particularly, I encountered a similar narrative in their approach to music. As the genre was strongly tied to the Ceaușescu regime, it was met with derision by this group of immigrants when they lived in socialist Romania. However, after immigrating they began to take a more nuanced approach towards the genre. While Dragoş, for instance, found *muzică populară* blasé and low class while in Romania (as he described earlier in this chapter), once he arrived in the United States he discovered a new-found appreciation for the genre. As he expressed to me, "Once I got here, after a long time, it [*muzică populară*] was like a sweet memory, a little bit of nostalgia. So that's why I started liking it again. . . [especially] I developed a love for music that was combined. You know, like folk music [*muzică populară*] combined with other things, like with classical or with jazz or with hip hop or like punk." When I asked him if this new-found appreciation for *muzică populară* led to a similar appreciation for the communist-era musicians that sang it, he responded, "No, I'm tired of that, it's been too much."

In another discussion on *muzică populară*, I was told by Cristina that "there was this idea of snobbishness. That the education generation, they did not like *muzică populară*, because it was like too rough, too obsolete. But now, as we are maturing, we find the beauty of it, because

it has the rough soul of the masses [. . .] Some are cheap, even for *muzică populară*, they are not like a piece of art. But some of them, Sofia Vicoveanca, Maria Lătărețu, the classical *muzică populară* singers, they express, you know, the soul, the essence of the Romanian people. They are so beautiful it gives you shivers when you listen to some of them. Not all of them. Some of them are cheap songs, but some of them really reflect the essence of our nature. And now I realized that as an adult looking back." Given that this is the same woman who spoke of her enjoyment writing nationalist poetry during the socialist regime, it seems likely that her account of *muzică populară* as "the soul, the essence of the Romanian people" derives from the nationalist ideology that was promoted during the Ceauşescu regime (as discussed in the second chapter).

In both of these accounts of *muzică populară* among the professional immigrant community, two attributes become clear. First, Dragoş and Cristina admit a degree of classism when considering their reception of the genre during socialism, both noting that because of "snobbishness" they felt the music was "backward" and therefore beneath them. Second, perhaps due to nostalgia, they gained a new-found appreciation for the music in the United States. However, it seems that such a new-found appreciation is also seen through the lens of class distinction. While open to *muzică populară* now, Dragoş still has no patience for the earlier socialist singers, appreciating the genre the most when it is "combined with other things, such as classical or with jazz or with hip hop or like punk." Here *muzică populară* can be legitimately consumed as long as it is combined with other music that has historically been considered intellectual or bourgeois by Romanian intellectuals: classical, jazz, and popular music exported from the West. Cristina has likewise gained an appreciation for *muzică populară* after emigration, but again only to a point. After noting that the music can be appreciated as a

manifestation of the "rough soul of the masses" (a comment denoting class distinction in itself), she twice distinguishes between the "cheap songs" in the genre and the ones that can be conceived as "art," citing famous singers Sofia Vicoveanca and Maria Lătărețu. For Cristina, to legitimately appreciate *muzică populară* is to differentiate between the repertoire associated with the "classical" singers of the genre which "expresses the essence of the Romanian people," and those ephemeral "cheap" *muzică populară* pieces that may be discarded. As Bourdieu maintains, cultural distinction is not only articulated by the appreciation of legitimate works, but also by one's possession of the "even rarer capacity to constitute aesthetically objects that are ordinary or even common (because they are appropriated, aesthetically or otherwise, by the 'common people')," as Dragoş and Cristina have done towards *muzică populară* (*ibid.,* 32).

Class Distinction Up Close: Rehearsing and Gigging with the Roadrunners

Thus far I have mapped at a macro level the divisions and boundaries that operate among Romanians in New York when it comes to modes of musical expression. However, an analysis of the interrelations between class distinction and musical production and reception would be far more complete if we were to examine how the individual musicians listed on the chart negotiate this musicscape. While I have spoken to each of the musicians listed, such an ethnographic analysis relies on a long-term engagement with a particular group in order to understand how issues of class distinction inflect the repertoires and group dynamics. Luckily, I have been able to accomplish this fieldwork with the Roadrunners, a group for which I have been the principal percussionist for two years.

Demographically, the Roadrunners are quintessentially part of the middle-class, postsocialist immigrant group. The founding members all live in suburbs in upstate New York or New Jersey. Members include Ioan, a doctor; Antonia, a physical therapist; Gavril, a bookkeeper

at a large food distributor; Lucian, a telecommunications technician; and Mircea, an information technologist at a major international bank. As the chart reveals, along with singer-guitarist Cezar Giosan (a college professor), our band provides for a niche market, performing mostly *muzică folk* which, as discussed, can be best described as a folk-rock genre similar in style to The Byrds or Crosby Stills and Nash, which was immensely popular in Romania during the 1970s and 1980s.

Attending weekly rehearsals with the group, I began to see the effect class distinction played as soon as we started getting requests for gigs. Thanks to social connections, within a few months Romanian churches started taking an interest in us, which along with cultural institutes have been our major source of gigs. As these opportunities to play became more prominent, it became increasingly apparent to me after witnessing band meetings and negotiations that we would accept most invitations to play, with a caveat: we would not provide "dance music." I remember the first time we discussed such a gig. Almost immediately the notion that we would perform dance-oriented *muzică populară* was dismissed—the discussion was quickly closed when Mircea proclaimed, "the Roadrunners are not" then miming quick bowing on an air violin. This was a clear reference to the *lăutari*, mostly Roma musicians who perform the "popular aesthetic" of *muzică lăutărească* common to weddings and other parties in Romania. In a later rehearsal, Mircea reinforced this claim of distinction, noting that "we are not that [i.e. "dance" group], we are *Pasărea Colibri*!" in reference to the *muzică folk* "supergroup" that formed shortly after the revolution.

Antonia echoed this stance of detachment from *muzică lăutărească* even more strongly. After one gig in particular fell through, she admitted to me she was relieved because she was nervous about sharing the stage with a *manelisti*, who was also slated to perform at the event.

During a band brainstorming session on ways to increase our presence and make gigs more lucrative, Ioan joked that we might add *manele* to our repertoire and pass around a hat for tips. Our singer responded immediately: "I will absolutely not sing *manele*." Her response reveals a clearly expressed sense of distinction between the music we perform—poetic, cultivated, and creative—and *muzică lăutărească* or *manele*, which is associated both with more quotidian circumstances and, of course, Roma musicians.

This is not to say that the group is entirely opposed to these genres: all find *muzică lăutărească* a vital and important part of Romanian culture, and some members have even admitted to me they secretly enjoy listening to *manele.* Indeed, the Roadrunners have in fact played *muzică lăutărească* and even *manele,* but only in the rehearsal room and always followed by bouts of laughter. We are all aware that such genres would never be performed by the band before an audience. What is at stake in our choice of repertoire is how we present ourselves in public; what social claims we make vis-à-vis our musical performances. Such claims operate in the negative as much as in the positive, by what we play (*muzică populară*, *muzică rock*, *muzică folk*, Western rock) and by what we do not play (*muzică lăutărească*, *manele*). *Muzică lăutărească* and *manele* become a foil against which, through their absence in Roadrunners performances, we define ourselves. As Bourdieu writes: "As for the working classes, perhaps their sole function in the system of aesthetic positions is to serve as a foil, a negative reference point, in relation to which all aesthetics define themselves, by successive negations" (*ibid.*, 50).

Undoubtedly, the genres of *manele* and *muzică lăutărească* are popular and profitable styles to perform, and the Roadrunners have lost paying gigs due to our refusal to perform this music. But again, due to the class position of the group, this is of little concern. Unlike bands such as the Horvath Brothers and Band Amor, none of us rely on the group's performances to

supplement our income.[48] Rather, our collective music making acts primarily as a means of cultural and artistic fulfillment. When I asked Ioan why he is interested in performing with the Roadrunners (in fact performing music in general), he responded, "It's my psychotherapy," a chance for him to escape the daily grind of his medical profession and an opportunity to cultivate an identity for himself outside of his established profession. As he has often joked to me, being a doctor is simply a "side job," until he achieves his dream of being a rich rock star. Similarly, at a benefit show at a local retirement home, Antonia expressed to the crowd that we all have day jobs and "music is our therapy," a comment that was followed by a big round of applause. In sum, because our music making is removed from financial necessity, we are able to pursue repertoire that we see as more innovative, creative, and artistic without the real risk of alienating a paying audience.

Finally, it should be noted that my work with the Roadrunners has inevitably led to some biases. I fully admit that my vantage point on the entirety of musical culture within the New York Romanian community cannot help but be tinged by the years spent working with the Roadrunners. It may very well be that if I had worked with Band Amor for an equal amount of time, I would come to understand that they hold equal esteem for what I have called the "bourgeois" emphasis on innovation and creative artistry in musical production. However, such a relativistic admission, while valid, dismisses the fact that it is the "professional" milieu of musicians, whose music mixes tradition with particular types of musical innovation (classical, jazz, etc.), which more accurately represents the hegemonic position. Without doubt the art galleries, cafés, and established performing arts spaces in Manhattan's West and East Village

[48] Note that the Horvath Brothers do not make a living playing music alone, they also work as contractors and restaurant managers. Nonetheless, it is clear in my fieldwork that they rely on income from musical performances to a greater degree than the Roadrunners.

regularly occupied by figures such as Lucian Ban and Sanda Weigl carry more cultural capital than ethnically owned restaurants in Queens neighborhoods. Also without doubt is that the innovative approaches Ban and Weigl have taken towards music have garnered them record contracts, international tours, and distribution in national and international media outlets, i.e. positions within the global music scene which are largely out of reach of the musicians who operate in Queens. Ultimately, what is at stake in this analysis is not the degree to which the various groups privilege a sense of musical artistry or innovation, but rather the extent to which certain communities of musicians, thanks to their ability to accumulate and leverage their cultural, economic, and social capital, are able to maintain or move ahead in national and even international class hierarchies.

In sum, by taking a more complete musicscape into account—one which incorporates multiple musicians, genres, and venues— it becomes increasingly difficult to pinpoint a unified assertion of national or ethnic identity. After multiple years of fieldwork with the Romanian-American musical community, I have discovered that music's function to solidify or unify the Romanian immigrant community under a shared sense of heritage is only operative at the most superficial level. Rather, the production and reception of various socialist and postsocialist genres operates much more strongly to fracture or divide the community specifically along class lines, which were never eradicated during the socialist era and became all the more powerful within the immigrant community, where subsequent waves of immigrants created geographical and cultural barriers. This is most pronounced in the case of musicians in the city, who operated in particular scenes that are defined in part by class distinctions. As this chapter makes clear, much of the class divisions that have developed over the centuries in Romania have thus been maintained within the immigrant community. The following chapter details how such divisions

might even be exasperated by processes of assimilation and acculturation unique to= the Romanian-American immigrant community.

CHAPTER 6: ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL ASSIMILATION INTO THE AMERICAN MAINSTREAM

As the previous chapter argues, the continued performance of socialist-era music among my Romanian American interlocutors acts largely as a means to enunciate class distinctions that have historically existed in Romania; a fact which casts doubt upon the idea that the music functions entirely or even primarily as a way of promoting a unified sense of Romanian identity. The possibility that the performance of such music is primarily tied to shared issues of cultural identity or heritage is further complicated when one considers processes of assimilation unique to immigrant communities, processes which were alluded to in the previous chapter but not fully examined. This chapter thus analyzes how assimilation into the American multicultural mainstream further threatens to erase Romanian culture in North America, and alter the community's sense of ethnic or national identity.

The chapter is organized into three parts. First, by drawing upon recent works in the sociology of immigrant communities, I provide a contemporary definition of assimilation as it operates for musicians and other culture workers. I define cultural assimilation in this light as a path to presence, or a collection of strategies through which immigrant artists seek to make their own heritage practices visible in their hostland environments in ways that are calculated to be materially beneficial to them. With this image of a path acting as a guiding idea, the chapter subsequently examines in detail strategies deployed by Romanian-American professional musicians to economically and culturally integrate into North American culture. Finally, I speak to my own experiences with the Roadrunners in order to illuminate the ways immigrant musicians are forced to negotiate their conceptions of heritage and class position so to achieve success outside of the immigrant community.

Reconsidering Cultural Assimilation

The Contemporary Concept of Assimilation

Concepts denoting processes of cultural change and erasure are always precariously articulated: their usage continuously runs the risk of perpetuating the very logics of violence that they seek to describe. In the ongoing search for the most effective and objective means of conceptualizing cultural change, older notions such as "acculturation" and "cultural evolution" have largely been abandoned, now considered relics of an archaic anthropology that privileges Eurocentric models of historical development. At the same time, terms of more contemporary usage such as transculturation, creolization, hybridity, or syncretism may be too dismissive of the continued demands made upon minoritarian communities by dominant cultures. That is, their seeming neutrality or inclusivity threatens to turn a blind eye to the fact that subjects across the globe continue to be coerced, if not completely forced, to adapt to various economic, religious, or political institutions.

It seemed as if the term "assimilation" was slowly being relegated to the same fate as acculturation or cultural evolution, considered in the present day as "an ethnocentric and patronizing imposition on minority peoples struggling to retain their cultural and ethnic integrity" (Alba and Nee 2003:1). Sociologists of American immigration Richard Alba and Victor Nee, however, have asserted that such "ethnocentric" and "patronizing" associations grossly mischaracterize and oversimplify the way assimilation has been theorized in the past. Citing the rich historical debates and contrasting definitions of assimilation in the field of sociology particularly, the authors defend the term's contemporary relevance, given its continued power to speak both to the impositions made by the hostland upon immigrant communities, and to the ways immigrants can maintain a certain amount of cultural sovereignty within the

mainstream. With such an understanding, they argue assimilation as a concept continues to illuminate "many of the experiences of contemporary immigrants and the new second generation" (2003:9).

Central to Alba and Nee's contemporary approach to assimilation is the assertion that the American cultural mainstream into which immigrants assimilate is not the Eurocentric idea of "civilization," but rather a "composite culture" described as the "mixed, hybrid character of the ensemble of cultural practices and beliefs that have evolved in the United States since the colonial period" (ibid, 10). The mainstream which immigrants are compelled to assimilate into is therefore "not a homogenous monolith but an evolving, syncretic agglomeration, a composite culture that incorporates what were once exclusively ethnic elements" (*ibid.*, 84). Given that the mainstream is such a composite culture, assimilation should not be conceptualized as an irreversible path upon which a minoritarian culture slowly becomes incorporated into a separate dominant culture. Rather, Alba and Nee's definition of assimilation speaks to a nebulous process of shifting boundaries, where the continued incorporation of a variety of unique immigrant cultures helps inform and define the collective dominant composite culture. Such a perspective of immigrant assimilation as a process of "boundary spanning and altering" positions Alba and Nee's arguments within emerging sociological scholarship which similarly conceptualizes diverse societies less as defined multicultural mosaics (as Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan asserted in the highly influential 1963 study *Beyond the Melting Pot)* and more as amoebic landscapes of everchanging social boundaries.[49]

[49] See, for instance, the work of Rogers Brubaker (2004), and Andreas Wimmer (2013). Much like Alba and Nee, both Brubaker and Wimmer continue to see value in the continued usage of the term assimilation, and their works carry a shared skepticism towards the notion of ethnicity as an objective category of social organization, or even the most productive lens through which to examine the social dynamics between and among different communities.

While Alba and Nee's work is guided by traditionally sociological data (economic development, rates of college enrollment, geographic dispersal over time), their approach towards assimilation is equally applicable to investigations into the ways arts and culture operate within an immigrant community. Their description of the American mainstream as a "composite culture" aligns well with ethnomusicological topics of syncretic and hybrid musics, which likewise discount the idea of a national musical "mosaic" in which different cultural practices operate completely independently. But at the same time, the authors' insistence that assimilation processes often do result in the erasure of cultural traits (through intermarriage, loss of language in second generations, etc.) serves as a sobering reminder of the modes of suppression and violence that always accompany the creation of hybrid or immigrant social and cultural forms.[50]

Most importantly, while emphasizing that American dominant culture may indeed be a composite culture of ever-shifting boundaries, Alba and Nee recognize that such a mainstream remains implicated in a "core set of interrelated institutional structures and organizations" which operate to "structure incentives and specify rules of legitimate social action within which individuals and organizations compete for control over resources" (2003:12, 36). While the American mainstream may well be a composite culture, it is state, financial, and cultural institutions that often have the most authority in directing the shape such a composite culture takes, via the weapons of choice for those in the dominant class: funding and legislation. In the domain of music, institutions exact their will to no less a degree than elsewhere. Romanian musicians who desire integration into American mainstream culture are continually adjusting

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Much of these works were inspired by the theories of Fredrik Barth (1998 [1969]), especially concerning constructions of ethnicity.

[50] Of course, instances of cultural erasure occur beyond diasporic communities. And it goes without saying that all minoritarian groups, including immigrant groups, are more pressured to assimilate to a hegemonically enforced idea of society.

their artistic projects in order to conform to the needs of record labels, venues, and grant-bearing agencies.

Paths to Presence

Despite its greater applicability, a sociological approach to assimilation, by nature of its field, privileges a more macro-level scope of analysis by examining longer-term trends such as social incorporation and economic growth across generations of immigrants. As such, assimilation as delineated by Alba and Nee might be complemented by an ethnographic approach that examines such processes at a micro level, revealing the everyday choices and strategies immigrants pursue that, taken together, lead to a gradual assimilation into the mainstream. Such tactics, actions, and processes that align immigrant communities with mainstream composite culture are encapsulated by what I term a path to presence.

By this concept, I refer to a collection of strategies undertaken not just by immigrants, but artists in general. The term speaks to the ways a particular artist or group develops and deploys a variety of practices and dispositions in an effort to gain greater presence within a particular part of society that is deemed beneficial to one's career or status. The term encompasses a wide variety of strategies related to marketing, networking, and investment, though the desired goal need not always be economic. End goals may also include higher social status or greater political representation.

For immigrant communities specifically, a path to presence more directly speaks to the ways subjects present their cultural products or artistic personae to a particular aspect of mainstream culture in ways calculated to be rewarding. As such, the concept acts as a reversal of Mark Slobin's idea of "validation through visibility": rather than being a process in which "a higher profile causes a local or regional population to reconsider its own traditions [due to]

outside prompting," it speaks to the ways in which a minoritarian group strategically asserts its cultural practices in order to become more visible in the mainstream (1992:11). In this case, such cultural traditions are already "reconsidered" before they attain mainstream status: they are crafted and cultivated in a way that allows them the best possible chance for success in the dominant culture. This being said, it is quite possible, common even, for both processes to be operating simultaneously. For instance, the mainstream dominant culture may start to take an interest in a particular cultural practice of a minoritarian community, which then motivates that community to further cater the practice to the needs and assumptions of the dominant culture. Specific examples of such processes in the Romanian-American community will be discussed for the remainder of this chapter. However, a few more qualifications related to a path to presence still bear discussion.

First, the "mainstream" which immigrants attempt to access should be broadly conceived as a constellation of local, national, and international "composite cultures" in constant flux. In the domain of music, such mainstreams may be comprised of local music scenes and venues, educational and cultural institutions, or the international music industry. Strategies for approaching such mainstreams include trying to get a gig at a venue with a reputation for a diverse and receptive audience, applying for cultural grants, or securing a contract with a particular record label. To a degree, there are correlations between the particular aspect of the mainstream an artist attempts to access and that artist's class stature or accumulation of cultural capital. As mentioned in the previous chapter, by participating in international festivals and prestigious art gallery performances, Romanian-American jazz and cabaret artists operate within a higher level of class distinction than those who remain in the Queens restaurant circuit. Finally, it is quite possible, if not inevitable, that an artist's attempts to adapt to various local, national,

and global mainstreams result in the cultivation of a collection of musical personae which artists deploy in the appropriate circumstance. The fact that the Roadrunners vacillate between performing in English for American audiences and Romanian for Romanian audiences speaks directly to this sense of cultivating multiple artistic personae.

Second, a path to presence speaks to a wide variety of strategies ranging from temporary, often quotidian decisions to long-term engagements. Consequentially, they may be pursued for immediate or deferred gains. For instance, decisions regarding which gigs one accepts and declines, how one presents oneself on stage (in "traditional" costuming or in more casual "mainstream" attire, for instance) and the setlist one develops for a particular performance may be motivated by immediate perceived benefits. By catering to an audience's assumed desires by performing particular songs, for example, musicians seek to maximize their tips; by dressing in particular costuming, performers might be variously expressing their cultural pride or cultivating a sense of the exotic which will hopefully garner more audience interest. In addition to such shorter-term decisions, a path to presence also speaks to longer-term investments. Self-funding the recording and production of an album or demo, for example, is a good example of a long-term investment. Indeed, every aspect of such a project, from the songs chosen to be recorded to the album art, involves strategies undertaken by a performer to reach out to a larger or more diverse audience in the future.

Third, the resulting products of a path to presence are overwhelmingly hybrid products. As Alba and Nee point out, the mainstream is a composite culture, made of continuously shifting cultural boundaries. Given such a shifting cultural terrain, attempts to simply gain presence within the "mainstream" or cultivate a "general audience" are impractical, if not downright meaningless. Rather, artists make themselves visible to particular aspects of the mainstream

composite culture they deem salient: for instance, creating a presence within a particular genre or subgenre within the music industry. Indeed, in many cases artists might be required to maintain aspects of their cultural heritage as a means of unique representation within the mainstream culture. The results of such practice, ultimately, serve to reinforce the "composite culture" of the mainstream: by attaching to it, immigrant musicians are, if even in a small way, altering it.

Finally, the strategies available to an immigrant community's path to presence are often confined by institutions within the society in which they live. This is to return to Alba and Nee's assertion that, while immigrant incorporation means entry into the mainstream "composite culture," such an entry is highly reliant on a complex network of financial, legal, and cultural institutional interests. For example, in order to capitalize on one's immigrant background of cultural "otherness," one often must operate within the confines of financial and cultural institutions. As John and Jean Comaroff write:

> Those who seek to brand their otherness, to profit from what makes them different, find themselves having to do so in the universally recognizable terms in which difference is represented, merchandised, rendered negotiable by means of the abstract instruments of the market: money, the commodity, commensuration, the calculus of supply and demand, price, branding. (2009:24)

Of course, to say that immigrant communities must approach their path to presence by always taking into account a variety of institutional barriers does not imply that every community's trajectory into the mainstream is the same. Rather, strategies for alignment are often dependent upon the historical positionalities of a given immigrant community. To grasp the possibilities and potentials of a particular group's path to presence, therefore, one must first understand what sociologists refer to as the "opportunity structures" that might uniquely be available to them—

that is, the limitations and possibilities that the host society presents to them. What follows, then, is an account of the positionality of the Romanians in North America, and how such a position shapes the primary strategies Romanian musicians pursue to enter into the mainstream.

Assimilation in the Romanian-American Community

An Unmarked Community

The agency an immigrant community (or a subset of the community) possesses towards assimilating to the hostland mainstream is determined in part by their relationship, both historic and contemporary, to institutions of power within the hostland. Such a dynamic is perhaps most plainly seen in institutionalized racism in America, which has historically blocked certain communities' access to financial stability, educational achievement, or political representation, among other things. As a marked community, African Americans, in addition to Latin, Asian, and more recently Muslim Americans occupy a more precarious position vis-à-vis American institutions when it comes to achieving a mainstream status that often necessitates access to mortgages and quality education.

For the Romanian community that I worked with, such barriers are far less rigid. As a relatively highly educated, European, majority Christian community, Romanian immigrants are not confronted by many of the hurdles other immigrant communities experience with regards to assimilation or social advancement.[51] Moreover, due to their small numbers, Romanians have little cultural presence in the United States in the way the Irish, Italian, or Russian communities do, for example. There are no Hollywood movies about Romanian immigration, no famous

[51]Note that this is a case specifically for North America, as in Europe Romanian communities are much more marked, vilified, and to a degree persecuted for being labor migrants in an increasingly xenophobic Western Europe—in large part due to Roma immigration from Romania to Western Europe. See, for instance, Momigliano 2017.

restaurateurs, no celebrities that wear their Romanian-ness on their sleeve, no widely-proliferated jokes or caricatures surrounding the Romanian ethnic group. As one interlocutor told me, besides "Nadia, Hagi, and Dracula," Americans know nothing of Romanian culture.[52] Sports and necromancy aside, it seems, Romania is all but forgotten in American popular discourse. Admittedly, I can count more than one occurrence in which a casual description of my research has been met with the response, "I didn't know Romania was a real place!"

As one might imagine, such an invisible presence grants the Romanian immigrant community particular benefits and drawbacks. Their unmarked status in American discourse, no doubt aided by their European heritage, has allowed for a comparatively smooth transition into the American mainstream. Whereas sociologists are concerned with second-generation rates of assimilation, for most of the Romanians I've interviewed, assimilation was essentially finalized within the first generation. As mentioned in the previous chapter, many Romanian immigrants, particularly those arriving with a higher education, were able to leave ethnic enclaves and establish themselves in houses in the suburbs fairly rapidly.

It is perhaps no coincidence, then, that when I asked Romanian immigrant musicians involved in my fieldwork about their difficulties assimilating to the United States, their responses were mostly quotidian. There was no discussion of prejudice, of overcoming stereotypes, of requiring self-organization or political representation to demand or achieve particular rights. Rather, what was brought up were more mundane difficulties, of learning not to take the question "how are you?" literally, or finding ways to relate to American popular culture references. Indeed, such modes of incorporation were in some ways made even easier for musician immigrants, especially those immigrants who arrived in conservatories and colleges and already

[52] A reference to Olympic gymnast Nadia Comaneci and footballer Gheorghe Haji.

had an international reputation. Going from large symphony orchestras to often smaller, more rural colleges, many musicians admitted to me their presence in the areas in which they settled was quickly noticed. Irina mentioned to me that she had local newspaper articles written about her, as much because of her skill as because of her Cold-War emigration story, which one can imagine would be of interest in a small college community. Many also mentioned that their warm embrace in America was due to a general American generosity, and I heard multiple stories of the ways American neighbors helped new immigrants with material needs (including, in one story, a gown for the musician's premier performance in the United States) and opportunities for employment.

That even a general awareness of Romanian history and culture is practically non-existent in the United States has also caused consternation among the community. Ioan admitted his general annoyance that his colleagues remained unable to refer to his nationality correctly, variously calling him Italian, Russian, and Chechnyan. Many I spoke with lamented with some sense of patriotism a general lack of knowledge in the United States of Romania's cultural accomplishments, variously citing the importance of composer George Enescu and sculptor Constantin Brancusi—figures that, admittedly, are rather dated themselves.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle for musicians and Romanian-American culture is the fact that there is little in the way of institutional support for Romanian culture. Due to their small numbers, as well as the fact that very little political organization was needed to fight prejudice or stereotypes, there is no Romanian equivalent to the National Association of Latino Arts and Culture, for example. Nor are there a myriad of grants available to showcase the history of Romanian culture in the United States. In New York, the largest Romanian cultural organization is tied to a network of state-funded cultural centers spanning the globe, whose priority,

justifiably, is to promote Romanian culture internationally rather than support immigrant artists. Indeed, I have heard first-hand from many local Romanian musicians about the difficulties playing under the support of this organization, as it requires a variety of international bureaucratic approvals. At the same time, I have also been witness to frequent complaints that the organization, despite its purpose, caters more to Romanian audiences than reaching out to a general American audience, thereby doing little towards its mission to promote greater awareness of Romanian culture among mainstream Americans.

In brief, one might situate the Romanian immigrant community in America as one which, due to its relatively small size, has comparably confronted fewer institutional barriers, but also one which has not garnered much institutional support. The result, as Constantin expressed to me, is that "Romanians in America don't know how to sell themselves." That is, a general mainstream unawareness of Romanian culture hampers their path to presence: they are unable to find many options in which they can present their own proclaimed Romanian heritage to a mainstream American culture in a immediately graspable way. Indeed, as we shall see, the reference points through which a Romanian musician can present Romanian culture to an American mainstream audience are few, and those that do exist are often pursued at the risk of limiting one's sense of class or cultural distinction.

Points of Reference: Gypsyness

Outside of a reference to Dracula, it is perhaps the figure of the "Gypsy" that westerners often associate with Romania.[53] Such an association was proven often while pursuing fieldwork.

[53] In this section, I try to reserve the word "Gypsy" for instances where I am directly referring to the literary and Romantic image of the Gypsy. When referring more concretely to the ethno-national group and their culture, I used the more correct term "Roma."

Anca, for instance, related to me that when Americans are made aware that she is a violinist from Romania, they often ask if she is a Gypsy or was trained by Gypsies. While rehearsing a new piece with the Roadrunners, Mircea once mentioned the song sounded very "Gypsy," to which Antonia responded, "but we are Romanian, we are Gypsy!" in a sardonic reference to the association. As a researcher of Romanian music, I have also confronted the stereotype. Both inside and outside academia, I have had to continually clarify my work to people who, upon learning I research music from Romania, instantly begin speaking to me about *Latcho Drom* and Emir Kusturica films.[54] The assumption is all too commonly made that Romanian music—or even Romanian music worth studying—is synonymous with Roma music.

Given that the figure of the Gypsy has had a continued presence in Western literature, cinema, and popular consciousness in general, it has become one of the prominent reference points Romanian musicians might utilize to achieve a higher visibility in the West. But at the same time, it is one precariously pursued. As mentioned in the previous chapter, *lăutari*, like Roma in general, have a very low social standing in Romanian society, and few Romanian professional musicians are willing to associate themselves directly with the community. This results in particular negotiations in which artists draw upon the figure of the Gypsy as a way to gain visibility, but also find ways to dissociate from it at the same time.

One example of such a negotiation between embracing and holding a distance from the Gypsy image can be found in Ioan Harea's 2001 album *Classic Gypsy*. Harea is a conservatory-trained violinist who emigrated from Romania in the 1980s. He currently lives in Ottawa, where he maintains a teaching studio and runs an event company. The album *Classic Gypsy* features

[54] A French documentary on a Roma community and a director from former Yugoslavia who frequently plays upon Romani themes, respectively.

Harea's interpretations of a variety of csardas, tangos, bossa novas, and show tunes—precisely the sort of *café concert* repertoire described in the last chapter as common in Queens Romanian restaurants—performed over symphonic accompaniment.

As Harea explained to me, the inspiration for the album drew from his longstanding appreciation for the *lăutari*, who he emphasized "played that kind of music [*café concert*] at a very high level" at restaurants. Despite his expressed desire to learn that repertoire as a young adult in Romania, he was unable to due to its class associations and his stature as a classically trained *muzician*. "I loved it," he told me, "but I didn't play it in Romania, obviously, ever." Once he left the country, however, he was given the opportunity to perform the music when a fellow symphony musician and Romanian emigrant approached him with the idea of supplementing their income by playing at restaurants. Accepting the offer, Harea gradually became accustomed to the repertoire, and at improvising and performing pieces upon request—exactly the skills required to be a successful *lăutar*. As he expressed to me, "at restaurants you have to know everything, and you can't say no." The success of his experiences playing at these restaurants led to the production of the album *Classic Gypsy*, which in turn led to opportunities to perform in various pops orchestra concerts throughout the world.

While perhaps being inspired by his arguably "Gypsy-like" experience as a restaurant musician, Harea understood that the material for *Classic Gypsy* is barely representative of the *muzică lăutărească* he so appreciated when he lived in Romania. "In *Classic Gypsy*, of course, there is not Gypsy music, except maybe the *csardas* and 'Two Guitars,'" he told me. This led to an inevitable follow-up question on my part: "Then why name it *Classic Gypsy*?" "Because it's a catch," Harea emphasized, "it was the biggest catch." As a musical entrepreneur, the album was self-funded by Harea, and he needed to achieve maximum audience exposure to ensure a return

on his investment. Gaining such an audience was made easier by tying a Romanian violinist to "Gypsy" music, as tenuous as such an association may be. As such, Harea has aligned his identity as a Romanian musician to the Gypsy figure in order to finance his precarious livelihood as an independent musician. But on a personal level, he still distinguishes himself from the Roma *lăutar* by emphasizing he is a classical musician first and foremost. "What I do is not Gypsy," he told me towards the end of the interview, "my playing is classical but it gives the flavor of Gypsy music, because I love it."

Classic Gypsy is unique in Harea's oeuvre, as the rest of his recordings contain more standard art music repertoire. For other musicians in the Romanian-American community, however, concepts of Gypsyness are much more ingrained in their careers. For singer Sanda Weigl, for example, the Gypsy imaginary is at the crux of her musical persona. According to her website, Weigl began her career as a "child star," "singing Gypsy songs learned from street singers [in Bucharest] and from recordings of the legendary Maria Tănase." At thirteen she moved to East Berlin, where she was exposed to cabaret music. Later she joined a rock band, and served time in prison and hard labor for dissident activity. Following this, she moved to West Germany, where she continued to perform music and work in theater. Today, Weigl resides in New York City, regularly performing a mixture of traditional Romanian music and cabaret music locally and abroad. As a National Public Radio article proclaimed, she tours as "the Downtown Gypsy Queen of New York" (NPR.org 2008).

Throughout her career, Weigl has never denied her association with Gypsies and "Gypsy music." In her 2010 *Gypsy Killer,* an album of her renditions of what she describes as "traditional" Romanian music, she writes in the liner notes:

> When I was a little girl in my native town of Bucharest, the Gypsies showed me how to sing and how to live. And later in East Berlin when the state put me in jail (a badge of honor for many artists), Gypsy music kept me alive. When the jail door opened, I packed my bags and hit the road and followed the Trail of the Gypsies. It took me right to New York City (Weigl 2010).

A similar narrative is reiterated in most published accounts of Weigl's work. In her album *Gypsy in a Tree*, the liner notes begin by stating, "As a child growing up in Bucharest, Romania, Weigl was mesmerized by the music of the Gypsy street singers, who could be found on every street corner" (Friedrich 2010). An article in the *Village Voice* similarly introduces Weigl as such:

> Tiny, warm and sporting short gray hair, [Weigl] was born in post-World War II, Communist Romania, the daughter of a German professor and Romanian publisher. As a kid, she fell in love with the Romanian folk songs she heard playing on the radio and with the Gypsy music playing just outside. The family lived next door to a police station in Bucharest, Gypsies taken in often for having stolen things or started fights. Their Gypsy family and friends would follow as they got arrested, camping just outside the station, starting fires, playing music and dancing deep into the night. (Malinsky 2015)

While seemingly not as ready to admit as Harea that the Gypsy signifier acts as a "catch" for the public, Weigl's published materials make this all but apparent. In addition to the singer's repertoire and her oft-repeated account of how she discovered "Gypsy" music in Bucharest (which, it should be noted, she describes as a "town"), much of the imagery surrounding the singer connotes a danger and romance long associated with Roma communities (see van de Port 1998). The cover of her album *Gypsy Killer* features a blurry image of what one assumes is a

Roma couple, walking on a straight road stretching into the horizon. Her album *Gypsy in a Tree* opens to reveal a black and white photograph of Roma children playing with toy guns, one of which is pointed directly at the camera. In the background, we see a Roma woman doing laundry, and further behind that a small group of tents. The booklet included with the CD has additional images of Roma in traditional costuming and riding in horse-drawn carts.

While clearly drawing upon Gypsy imagery, Weigl nonetheless still presents herself at a distance from Roma communities. From the beginning of her career, she is described as an inspired observer, the child of a bourgeois family ("the daughter of a German professor and Romanian publisher") who by happenstance lived next to a police station. There on the periphery of danger she first heard songs sung by families of Roma imprisoned "for having stolen things or started fights" (Malinsky 2015). She is, after all, not Roma, but an enthusiast who collects Roma songs. The liner notes to her album *Gypsy in a Tree* (named after the fact that many Roma musicians in the 20th century performed in trees, so as to "be invisible to the guests," as the liner notes describe) states that "Sanda quickly picked up these [Roma] melodies and soon became a child star on Romanian national television" (Friedrich 2010). In her live performances, which the *Village Voice* describes as evoking "a Mid-Century Gypsy Cabaret," Weigl regularly introduces her various songs as "Gypsy drinking songs" or "Gypsy curses" (Malinsky 2015). Like Harea, then, Weigl deploys the Gypsy signifier for maximum effect, drawing upon the exotic, dangerous, and romantic notions the term evokes, while being careful not to present herself as a Roma. Weigl and Harea ultimately profit by becoming emissaries of an imagined Roma culture to a bourgeois American audience—like the socialist cultural engineers before her, who set *lăutari* cultural traditions into art and jazz music so as to reach an audience of a particular class.

Points of Reference: Multiculturalism

While Harea insists the "Gypsy" signifier in *Classic Gypsy* serves to "catch" an audience, the promotional material for the album seems to present an entirely different strategy. Harea's website describes the album as follows:

> The barriers of our world are coming down. Cultures that once knew nothing of one another's existence now live side by side. Food, drink, clothing, language and music are all being transformed, influenced by the international community living on our doorstep. Pitas, croissants, shawarma, espresso, burritos, stir-fry and curry have all become part of our regular diet, symbolic of the greater number of cultures within our borders and the opening of our minds. Our bodies move to the rhythms of salsa, reggae, merengue and tango. Our hearts beat to the rhythms of the world.
>
> We crave the exotic. We have the ability to communicate instantaneously with new worlds and travel to faraway lands. It is human nature to want it both ways: we want our security, yet at the same time, we want adventure.
>
> [. . .]
>
> In "Classic Gypsy," violinist Ioan Harea will guide you into a world of fantasy—a world of dancing skirts swirling around a campfire, a world of dark eyes staring intensely, drawing you into dreams of a nomadic life, free of responsibilities, full of passion and adventure. In the words of the immortal Gypsy in Verdi's opera Il Trovatore, "the sky is our roof and our country, the world."
>
> Ioan Harea and "Classic Gypsy" release the Gypsy in your soul!

Like Weigl, Harea's association with the figure of the Gypsy invokes both danger and freedom. With *Classic Gypsy*, you are free to "release the Gypsy in your soul" and surround yourself with a "world of fantasy" complete with girls dancing around a campfire and "dark eyes staring intensely." But in the initial two paragraphs of the album description, *Classic Gypsy* is not framed at all by images of the Gypsy's "nomadic life, free of responsibilities, full of passion and adventure." Rather, the album is marketed in terms of its position within a multicultural modernity. It presents the image of a contemporary cosmopolitanism that delights the senses, a cultural adventure for the taking, opening borders and opening minds. The album is positioned in the multiculturalist ideology of the "new exotica," as Stuart Hall describes it, wherein "to be at the leading edge of modern capitalism is to eat fifteen different cuisines in any one week" (1997:31) As Harea's website reminds us, "we want our security, yet at the same time, we want adventure," something *Classic Gypsy* promises to provide.

In terms of a path to presence, then, Harea is undertaking a sort of dual strategy. At a direct level, he is aligning his cultural work with the romantic figure of the Gypsy and all it entails to the Western imagination. But he is also positioning the Gypsy figure within the greater context of an exciting multicultural world where new experiences are to be had by the plenty. In the latter case, Harea is aligning his work less to a direct representation of Romanian culture, and more to a greater ideology which has to a degree become hegemonic: multiculturalism and the exciting embrace of new cultural forms.

For a community with little cultural presence, associating themselves with the general ideology of multiculturalism is arguably a productive endeavor. If the consumerist implications of multiculturalism consist of embracing ever new forms of cultural experience, the Romanians have something to offer. Their relative obscurity can be their most important attribute: they can

provide a new cultural experience, so long as they offer a dual embrace of Romanian culture with multicultural ideology. Such is the approach taken by composer Maya Badian. An accomplished composer in Romania, Badian arrived in Canada in the mid-1980s, where she attained her doctoral degree at the Université de Montréal. Now in Ottawa, she continues to be a prolific composer, with over 100 published compositions, two books on theory and compositional practice, and multiple speaking engagements, guest lectures, and masterclasses.

Badian proudly proclaims that her immigration to Canada instigated her transition from being a "multinational" composer born of "Jewish, Romanian, Austrian, Hungarian, Polish people" to a multicultural composer who embraces the diversity of her adopted homeland (Popovici 2010:2). In my interview with her, she attributed the genesis of this transition to a particular event which occurred shortly after her immigration: "I went to a shopping center in Montréal in the metro," she recalled to me, "to hear simultaneously all these languages: Polish, Romanian, Chinese, French, all the languages of the universe in one shopping center! To visualize all those, and all the colors. . .for me was amazing. I thought 'Wow, this is fantastic!' We didn't have this in Romania. So, when I went for doctoral studies, my director of the thesis told me, 'What you have to compose is a large work for orchestra.' And I told him what I want to see in my music is what I see and feel and live: Canadian multiculturalism." The resulting composition was *Cantata Canada for Mixed Chorus and Orchestra*. In her book, *Glimpses into my Compositional Style and Techniques,* Badian reflects on this piece:

> As a composer, I felt the urge to symbolize that Canadian multiculturalism [I experienced] in music, and to express the visual panorama into the aural sound. I absolutely wanted to dedicate a series of major works to the unique Canadian multiculturalism and, through the years, so I composed! Coming from the

> traditions of the Eastern European folk music heritages, I turned to written sources including transcriptions of Canadian folk oral music into Western musical notation.
>
> [. . .]
>
> As for the songs, I did not intend to choose the most representative pattern of each ethnic group in the strict sense of the term. My goal was to include diverse melodies of musical oral tradition, each of which contains some essence of an ethnic group living now and here. This produces the wonderful multicultural "canvas," a multicultural "garden." It builds on the concept of one culture listening to and trying to sing a song of another culture that was known as a "rubbaboo" in Canada as early as 1862.
>
> [. . .]
>
> All of these melodies, songs, dances, and other spiritual values meaningfully enrich Canadian multiculturalism, day by day, building its unique national heritage. (2014:28-29)

Continuing to be inspired by Canadian multiculturalism, Badian later composed *MultiMusic Canada, A Legacy for the New Millennium,* published in 2000. Envisioned as a "symphonic fresco," the orchestral piece is divided into six modules, each representing a moment in the history of Canadian multiculturalism. The piece begins with "Genesis," which evokes the geography of Canada, the indigenous populations, and the interactions between the early Anglophone and Francophone settlers in the founding of the Canadian confederation in 1967. This is followed by more detailed musical portraits of each of the ethnic groups introduced in "Genesis": "Indigenos," "Francophones," and "Anglophones," with each module

incorporating traditional folk melodies of these groups. The fifth module, entitled "Canada Today," "explores Canada's rich and unique spectrum of multiculturalism, combining musical contours of all Canadians into an enlightening approach towards the New Millennium." The piece ends with "New Millennium Celebrations," a module built around a motive taken from the Canadian National Anthem (Popovici 2010:50).

Badian's enthusiasm for multiculturalism is perhaps most directly seen in the opening few measures of *MultiMusic Canada,* which features the superimposition of 24 "imaginary folk tunes" each composed by Badian, but based upon the musical characteristics (range, mode) of a particular culture's folk tradition. "Throughout this procedure," writes Badian, "involving the equal distribution of folkloric songs to 24 strings, each one considered a soloist, the required sonorous consequences present a certain transparency. . .And, each public performance of [the piece] would generate new interpretative solutions that might suggest the richness of this multicultural country that includes so many ethnic groups" (Badian 1993:29). With the simultaneous performance of various world music traditions, the introduction to *MultiMusic Canada* acts in many ways as a symphonic approximation of Badian's revelatory moment in the Montreal shopping center, where she first experienced Canadian multiculturalism.

After multiple interviews and exchanges with Badian, I have no doubt that the composer's *MultiMusic Canada*, and her enthusiasm for multiculturalism in Canada in general, are sincerely expressed and enthusiastically realized. But at the same time, aligning herself with a sense of Canadian multiculturalism grants her certain opportunities that may have been more difficult to realize if she had pursued other avenues of inspiration. *MultiMusic Canada* saw its world premiere in Kishinev by the Moldova National Symphony, and was financed by the Canada Council for the Arts, an institution that undoubtedly recognized her role as a musical

ambassador of multicultural Canadian culture (Popovici 2010:57). Moreover, her emphasis on Canadian multiculturalism, coupled with the Canadian landscape in general (another major work of Badian's, *Canadian Wilderness and Stillness,* is inspired by seven 20th Century Canadian landscape painters collectively known as the "Group of Seven"), has also solidified her position as an ambassador for Canadian culture. Since 1994 she has given an ongoing lecture series on Canadian composers and Canadian music in Canada, Germany, Hungary, Romania, and Moldova. She has additionally represented Canada in a variety of international composition contests and became the associate composer of the Canadian Music Center. She has received awards both in Romania for the international promotion of Romanian music, and in Canada as a promoter of Canadian music. Her prolific output aside, Badian serves as an exemplary case of an artist who has attained great visibility in her host country by aligning herself with an aspect of the host culture—in this case, multiculturalism.

Points of Reference: Celebrating Heritage and Seeking Roots

This outward celebration of the diversity of multiculturalism has also resulted in a turn inward, an increasing interest in pinpointing one's own unique heritage and roots. As Jacobson (2008) observed, one of the results of the civil rights era and the development of ethnic studies as a field was a renewed interest, especially among European Americans, in one's ethnic roots. The development and increasing affordability of DNA testing and internet technologies have only served to further this trend of ethnic root-seeking, so much so that a veritable commercial industry has developed around it, made up of a variety of mail-in genetic tests, genealogy courses, and online ancestry databases to help one unravel the mysteries of one's heritage and ethnic identity (see Comaroff and Comaroff 2009).

It is this sense of celebrating one's heritage and searching for one's roots that acts as another means by which Romanian-Americans might establish greater visibility. Here an exemplary case is jazz pianist Lucian Ban, whose work simultaneously evokes a celebration of American jazz and of European art music. As he has admitted, Ban's position between these two styles is underscored by a desire to relocate or become re-inspired by his Romanian heritage.

Like Badian, Ban has been incredibly prolific since his migration from the Transylvanian city of Cluj to New York in 1999. He has established himself in the New York jazz community, releasing over 11 albums and operating in a variety of duos, trios, and ensembles. In addition, he has composed scores for films and theater and performed as a sideman for additional groups. Ban has established himself particularly as a "third stream" jazz musician and composer, citing first and foremost in his press kit a review that asserts, "Ban plays with a fluency and sensibility that recalls Vladimir Horowitz as much as McCoy Tyner" (Holmes 2003).[55] For better or worse, Ban sees his third-stream positionality as a result of his Romanian background: being raised during communism, a period when jazz "was like a strange animal" and "not really a career under the regime of Ceauşescu," he was trained mostly as a classical pianist and composer, though "he fought against it," in order to pursue jazz (Dupuis-Panther n.d.).

Ban's recordings largely reflect this positionality. Some albums and projects are unabashed celebrations of the American roots of jazz, such as the Tuba Project quartet, which recalls New Orleans second-line music. Ban often invokes references, both musically and in his interviews, to jazz figures of the past such as Sun Ra and Abdullah Ibrahim. Other albums more tightly embrace his Romanian background, such as his collaboration with Sam Newsome in the

[55] Defined by Gunther Schuller, "third stream" music speaks to a synthesis of art music and jazz, with emphasis on improvisation.

creation of the "Romanian-American Jazz Suite," which arranges a variety of Romanian folk songs and carols for a jazz ensemble. Perhaps most exemplary of Ban's position is the album *Enescu Re-Imagined*, which features works by well-known Romanian composer George Enescu arranged for a jazz octet. It is with this album that Ban's unique positionality as an immigrant performer and a classically trained Romanian pianist with a passion for American jazz is most revealed.

In the discourse surrounding Ban's latest two albums, *Transylvanian Concert* and *Songs from Afar*, the celebratory embrace of Ban's Romanian/American, Jazz/Classical position is downplayed to promote what appears to be a more introspective, almost genealogical search for musical inspiration. *Transylvanian Concert*, which features Ban and violist Matt Maneri, was recorded live in 2011 in the Cultural Palace in the Transylvanian city of Târgu Mureș. The press material for the album makes special note of the personal significance the city has for Ban:

> The "Transylvanian Concert" itself was, as Lucian Ban notes, rather "unexpected and unique". Ban and Maneri were on tour in Europe in the summer of 2011 with a project called Tarkovsky Redux, offering musical responses to the films of the iconic Russian director. At the tour's end, a local promoter proposed a duo concert in the Culture Palace of Targu Mures, not far from the village where Ban had grown up. "I remember coming into Targu Mures as a kid, with my grandmother, and seeing this big building in the centre of the city, never thinking that I'd get to play there. It's a rather stunning place, built in the Viennese Secessionist style with a grand opera-like hall." On the concluding "Two Hymns" (dedicated to the memory of Maria Voda, Ban's grandmother) the attentive

listener can hear rain thrumming on the hall's roof, in subtle accompaniment. "It only rained during that tune." (ECM Records ND)

This association between Ban's music, his national heritage, and his personal genealogy is articulated even more directly in his subsequent album, *Songs from Afar*. Released with his Elevation Quartet, according to the label's website the album showcases the pianist's "recent reinvestigation of his musical influences and cultural heritage," and "represents two traditions, two musical worlds, and many musical elements coming together to fashion a unique identity that truly spans continents and styles." On the album, Ban's compositions are interwoven with arrangements of traditional Transylvanian funeral and wedding songs sung by Gavril Tarmure, a concert promoter in Romania who, to Ban's discovery one night, had "a passion for singing ancient beautiful Transylvanian folk songs" (Dupuis-Panther ND). The album concludes with the piece "Teaca, A Song from Afar," a solo performance inspired by the village in which Ban grew up. Such a concluding moment solidifies the notion that *Songs from Afar* may be Ban's most personal album, a look back to his roots as an influence for future musical creation. As he writes of the album, "*Songs from Afar* is very personal for me because the album is intimately tied to my Romanian cultural heritage and to the jazz influences that help me find out more about where I come from – and where I'm going. It's not only the ancient Transylvanian folk songs that we approach in this recording, it's also how the other pieces and improvisations reflect the constant search for musical meaning." While spoken with sincerity, such a statement is nonetheless positioned within a greater discourse of roots-seeking and the embrace of one's heritage.

The Perils of Fitting in: Experiences with the Roadrunners

Exposure and Legitimacy

By providing the above three manifestations in which a path to presence is manifested among Romanian-American musicians, I am not implying that the artists described are opportunistic or disingenuously "branding" themselves according to aspects of North American culture which will heighten their visibility. On the contrary, my personal experience with Weigl, Harea, Ban, and Badian reveals that each approaches his or her work with sincere enthusiasm. What I mean to assert is that there are very few vocational or aspiring vocational musicians who are able to pursue their cultural work in a vacuum, removed from public discourses that may lead to greater visibility. As I have discovered not only through fieldwork but also through decades of experience as a semi-vocational musician myself, almost all professional artists or aspiring professional artists are required to market themselves in accordance with certain cultural or social assumptions. Those that do not have such a need carry an immense privilege. In this sense, an immigrant musician's a path to presence, their project of aligning themselves or their work with a culturally salient signifier, reference point, or ideology is all but required to survive in what is often a precarious career.

Such a point is clearly not lost on anyone who has attempted to profit from their musical projects. Indeed, with little to no instigation on my behalf, the majority of my conversations with Romanian-American art musicians led sooner or later to discussions of gaining a greater artistic presence or new audiences. Sorin spoke at length about his work towards organizing opera performances in unconventional spaces (garages and warehouses for example) as a means to gain a new audience. Similarly, Gina was excited to share with me news of a new chamber group she was a part of that performed in public and private spaces not traditionally associated with

classical music. Much in the vein of Maya Badian's approach, Irina expressed to me her desire to create future programming that features the work of lesser-known American composers. Vasile discussed with me his recent enrollment in an online class at the Berklee College of Music on digital recording, which he pursued so that he could start a personal recording studio and record his own material. He also expressed fascination with Ableton Live, a digital musical program that is built to produce electronic music live or complement live acoustic performance with digital media. Together, these various discussions gave me the sense that it was these issues—these new projects to seek new audiences—that my interlocutors seemed most enthusiastic about discussing, and not my questions about the education system in socialist Romania or their considerations on Romanian culture in North America. Again, for a community of artistic "adventurers" and "explorers," as some termed themselves, a community of people who often left promising careers in Romania because they might find more artistic fulfillment in the West, it makes sense that discussions on future projects and new audiences are pursued with such enthusiasm.

The argument I hope to make clear in this final section is that despite the creativity or ingenuity, a path to presence always entails some sort of erasure. By investigating new appealing sounds, different cultural associations, or new opportunities to perform, musicians are always compromising some other elements. There is no such thing as a purely additive musical hybrid, wherein a particular historical musical style can completely maintain its prior elements and significations even while incorporating new material. On the contrary, the process of cultural alignment and the creation of hybrid musics always entail negotiations related to cultural erasure. To make these points more concrete, I will end this chapter by discussing my experiences

pursuing such negotiations with the Roadrunners, the ways in which our approach to a path to presence has complicated the group's relationship with traditional Romanian music.

To Dance or Not to Dance

My first rehearsals with the Roadrunners occurred in mid-January 2015, following the Christmas party in December when I first met Antonia and Mircea and offered my services as a percussionist. Early rehearsals took place between myself, Antonia, and Mircea, in Antonia's basement in New Jersey. It was at this point that I first discovered, contrary to my previous assumptions, that Mircea and Antonia were much more interested in performing renditions of the *muzică folk* and *muzică rock* they grew up listening to, than the more traditional *muzică populară* I expected after seeing them perform *colinde* at the Christmas concert. These early meetings were more akin to jam sessions than rigid rehearsals, where songs would be called out and performed, often for over ten minutes, with little discussion of form or arrangement. Serendipitously, it was a perfect format to introduce me to the *muzică folk* repertoire, and with little shame I would regularly ask about the histories of every song after we performed it.

By February I met Ioan, who would become the band's bass player. Mircea and Ioan met earlier that year. Their children went to the same school, and Ioan, upon hearing Mircea speaking Romanian when picking his children up, approached him. With Ioan on bass, rehearsals were becoming more refined, our repertoire solidified, and our arrangements more structured. Our ultimate goal to perform in public was expedited by the arrival of Ovidiu Scridon, a singer-songwriter from Romania and acquaintance of Mircea's, who requested we act as his backing band. Accepting, we followed Scridon on a mini-tour to various Romanian cultural institutes and churches in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.

Emboldened by our experiences performing with Scridon, we began to actively look for places to perform, particularly churches and other cultural institutions serving Romanian communities. It was here that the Roadrunners first encountered demands for musical negotiation, as potential promoters and organizers we got in touch with asked that we perform a style of music contrary to the repertoire we felt most inclined to play. Specifically, many organizations we solicited expressed interest in a performance of "dance music," or the *muzică populară* and even *muzică lăutărească* often associated with traditional *hora* and *sirba* dances. Initially, we refused to make such a negotiation. Seeing ourselves more in line with the lineage of singer-songwriters and rock musicians from the 1960s on, we had reservations acting as what would essentially be a *taraf*, or an ensemble of mostly Roma *lăutari* hired to play music for people to dance to. Again, as our guitarist stated, "The Roadrunners are not *that*, we are [Romanian folk-rock supergroup] *Pasărea Colibri*!"

Yet, even in our refusal to perform music for dancing and our commitment to the more "poetic" (i.e. class-appropriate) styles of *muzică folk* and *muzică rock*, there was a continual demand for dance music by our audiences. After all, we were often performing at Romanian culture festivals and church anniversaries where people expected to dance. After one rather disappointing church performance, where we were forced to play hours after our scheduled time, Mircea's wife articulated this issue directly, telling him that (and I paraphrase) "people going to this event aren't expecting the music you are playing. They mainly want to eat and dance." This disconnect between our imagined positionality—the providers of a culturally important, historically vital, and inherently "artistic" repertoire of *muzică folk* and *muzică rock*—and the demands of the audience reached its height during another church performance. After a DJ opened the set, we performed on stage, getting through approximately two songs before an older

man came to the front of the stage and demanded we play dance music. He caused such a scene that the festival organizer politely asked us to stop playing so the DJ could start another set. Hours later, when we were able to complete the set, the same man came to the stage, demanded more dance music, and began pulling plugs from the wall in an effort to quiet us, unaware the plugs he was pulling were connected to the DJ's equipment.

Given the cultural stigma associated with those *lăutari* musicians that provide dance music, our performance of *muzică populară* was always an intense and difficult negotiation. On the one hand, like any band, we craved interest from the audience, and one of the preeminent ways to demonstrate such interest is through voluntary dancing. Mircea's wish, it seemed clear enough, was that people would dance to our renditions of *muzică folk* and *muzică rock* songs, and during our more energetic songs he would often incite the audience to "dance if you feel like it," or "dance along." In a word, we refrained from providing music that might have facilitated traditional Romanian dancing (such was the job of the *lăutari*), but we craved *some* kind of dancing from the audience—what such a style of dancing might have consisted of was never really articulated. Regardless, our attempts to facilitate dancing produced mixed results.

It was not lost on the audience that our ability to provide dance music was compromised by our class background and status, which limited the extent to which we could perform *muzică populară*. This was expressed by a regular fan of ours, who spoke to me after a performance we had at a restaurant at Brooklyn. He mentioned to me that the set was good, but there were too many slow songs. "You need to provide energetic songs that people can dance to, without, you know. . ." and he trailed off. While not articulated, the conclusion of his sentence was acknowledged by both of us: we need to provide dance music, but not to the point where we are seen as *lăutari*. Ultimately, our negotiation was to sacrifice some songs in our rock and folk

repertoire and work into our set a 10 to 15-minute medley of *muzică populară* songs, so that people were able to dance. Our choice of repertoire came from Maramureș, a largely rural region of northern Romania which my bandmates insisted was the epicenter of "traditional" Romanian culture, a region that still performed the "oldest" peasant songs. If we were going to play dance music, it seems, we were going to do so without carrying a signature of the *lăutari*, but with a signature of the "ancient" peasant traditions of Romanian villages. While such a negotiation seemed satisfying, in that it allowed us to maintain our sense of identity as a band while giving our audience what they wanted, so to speak, the process was the first of many in which our repertoire was changed as a result of our desire to align our music with an audience. As we attempted to venture out beyond the Romanian community into the greater population in New York City, our path to presence required additional sacrifice and negotiation, as will be shown.

Negotiating Language

Very quickly into the establishment of the group, discussions on the proper ways of presenting ourselves and our music to the Romanian community were supplemented by conversations on how to move past the Romanian community and gain a presence in "mainstream" New York. In addition to discussing the possibilities of performing in spaces outside of Romanian churches and cultural institutes such as clubs, bars, and even outdoor festivals, we also discussed ways the we might promote ourselves in the more "mainstream" New York music scene. As we soon discovered, achieving such a goal required even more negotiation, as any possible musical alignment with music outside the Romanian community required strategic thinking.

As such, conversations on ways of "entering" the mainstream first entailed brainstorming ways to collectively describe ourselves and our music to potential non-Romanian promoters and

venues. In these discussions, the very signifier “Romanian” became an intense area of debate. Given the relative unawareness people have of Romanian culture in the United States, some bandmembers felt describing the Roadrunners as a “Romanian folk” band or a “traditional Romanian” band would only conjure blank stares and disinterest among a mainstream community. Others (like myself) felt it was precisely the relative obscurity of Romanian culture that would draw in audiences; that the seeming obscurity of Romanian culture in the United States was precisely what gave us something to offer, so to speak. Some in the band recommended we drop the Romanian descriptor altogether and rather align ourselves with the “world music” scene by describing ourselves as a world music band. This would, however, be somewhat of a misnomer, given the fact that, while the band has performed Irish and Hungarian tunes, it had done so only rarely. Ultimately, whether out of consensus or exhaustion, we decided simply on the descriptor “Romanian music,” hoping to draw upon a possible sense of exoticism offered by Romania, while at the same time downplaying any particular genre style.

Perhaps not surprisingly, our relatively undecided approach to more “mainstream” performances translated into a sense of anxiety and apprehension when we actually procured gigs outside of Romanian-aligned venues. Indeed, the first possibility we had to perform for a non-Romanian audience, a neighborhood block party, was met with a large amount of ambivalence. Our singer Antonia was especially nervous about the idea of performing because she feared the language barrier would alienate the Roadrunners from the audience, who would pursue other activities. This fear was exacerbated by the fact that, as a locally produced outdoor venue, the amplification system might not be satisfactory, further alienating the band from the audience. While we ended up not performing at the event, Antonia did attend, where she was cajoled into singing a song in English on the stage, to a receptive audience.

Perhaps emboldened by her experience at the block party, by May 2015 we were seeking in earnest to perform for a wider public, and procured two gigs: one at a theater in upstate New York, and another at a local retirement home. While both concerts went well, there was still a sense of apprehension, less over our repertoire and more with regards to the language of the songs. At the rehearsal before the show at the retirement home, there was a push to find and rehearse more "American" songs, and before the theater show Antonia again expressed a fear that the audience, upon hearing an alien language, would suddenly become uninterested and leave the event. This apprehension carried into the gigs themselves: before both of our performances, Antonia essentially apologized for singing in Romanian and for the fact that many in the audience would not understand the lyrics. During the retirement home performance, she rather meekly added a rejoinder: "but you don't have to understand the lyrics to enjoy the music."

Frustrated by this apprehension towards performing in the Romanian language, I was no longer able to maintain any stance of ethnographic objectivity and intervened, writing an email to Antonia arguing that as a band we should "be proud of the cultural opportunity we are providing for our non-Romanian audience, and not apologetic!" further citing the example that mariachi bands throughout America do not preface their performances with an apology for singing in Spanish. In writing this comment, I considered the extent to which Antonia's and my own vantage points on the Roadrunners were based on our backgrounds. She is an immigrant who, upon arriving in Queens, had to quickly learn English and assimilate to the American economy related to her field (physical therapy), whereas I was born in the United States and exposed to multicultural ideology since childhood. In this sense, her apprehension at singing in Romanian before American audiences and my embrace of it seems logical.

While Antonia expressed the most apprehension towards singing in Romanian to American audiences, it was not her apprehension alone. At various times others expressed hesitation towards the use of the Romanian language before American audiences. When planning a set list for a potentially non-Romanian audience, for instance, the group was sure to include all of the songs sung in English, even if that meant spending considerable time re-rehearsing an American rock, country, or pop cover that had been untouched for months. At one rehearsal without the vocalists present, the possibility emerged to have a separate, instrumental version of the band. Our thinking was that such an iteration for the Roadrunners would open up more opportunities, given that the audience wouldn't be turned away by Romanian lyrics. To a degree, each of these instances speaks to the uneasy awareness the Romanian community has of its own relative invisibility in the American landscape and its own insecurity towards its position in the American multicultural landscape. As Gheorghe stressed to me, one of the biggest problems with the community was the fact that "we don't know how to promote ourselves." Ultimately, we settled on singing unapologetically in Romanian for American audiences, while also adding one or two American songs, and having Mircea introduce each Romanian song, giving a brief summary of the piece's background and lyrical message, in English.

Finding Our Sound

Apprehension towards the presentation of Romanian lyrics was but one of the issues the Roadrunners confronted while trying to secure performances for more "mainstream" audiences. A much larger issue was the fact that we had a difficult time establishing a "catch," as Harea termed it, which would attract audiences to our music. That is to say, for a long time during the band's existence we lacked a definable path to presence, a way to make ourselves visible to the New York mainstream audience.

Of course, one of the clearest ways of attaining more exposure would have been to draw upon the "Gypsy" signifier or invoke a general atmosphere of "Gypsyness" in our performances, similar to Harea or Weigl. But again, because of the class status of the members of the band, such a reference point was resolutely out of the question; we had no interest in presenting ourselves in any way related to *lăutar* or "Gypsy" music. In a certain light, this presented a difficulty for us, as identification with the Gypsy image would have been one of the most fortuitous ways we could enter into a mainstream American culture. With the rise of the "Gypsy punk" and Balkan beats scenes (see Szeman 2009, Silverman 2012), in addition to the success of internationally touring bands of Roma musicians such *Fanfare Ciocârlia* and *Taraf de Haidouks*, the romantic image of the Gypsy as a carefree, carnivalesque figure has inundated a certain segment of Western audiences. This may be especially the case in New York City, where many festivals focus on Balkan brass bands, high energy Klezmer music ensembles, and Balkan-inspired jazz and funk groups. While acknowledging the popularity of these bands, the Roadrunners showed extreme hesitance in identifying with them. I recall an outdoor music event I attended with Mircea, during which a Balkan/Klezmer inspired funk band performed. While watching the lead singer swagger around and scream into the microphone as if intoxicated or insane, I turned to Mircea, half joking that we should pursue a similar aesthetic to get more audience attention. He turned to me and stated simply, "No, we don't perform circus music."

Unwilling to align ourselves with the image of the Gypsy or a "Gypsy aesthetic" in general, the Roadrunners continued to search for a way to market ourselves to a greater New York audience. This opportunity arrived in the winter of 2015, when Mircea offered to host Romanian black metal band Negura Bunget for the mid-Atlantic portion of a US tour. Having the financial resources to not only house the band, but also procure a drumset to be used for the tour

(which they compensated him for), he spent substantial time getting to know the group. Through his time with the members of Negura Bunget he became intrigued by the band's use of traditional rural instruments. Like many black metal groups in Europe especially, Negura Bunget is deeply influenced by the darkly Romantic images of ancient paganism. In the Romanian case, this refers to the Dacians, the tribe that settled the region before the Roman invasion in the first century and that have gained a near-mythic status in Romanian nationalist sentiment (see Boia 2001).

Shortly after Negura Bunget returned to Romania, the Roadrunners were procuring shows for Christmas festivals at various Romanian churches. The holidays all but demanded a partial change in our repertoire, as we determined we needed to devote at least half of a set to *colinde,* or traditional carols. Moreover, our personal (bourgeois) sense of artistry demanded we make our *colinde* arrangements somehow unique, which opened up the opportunity to develop the Roadrunner's sound in line with Mircea's recent enthusiasm for what he now described as "folk metal." Still performing on mainly acoustic instruments, for our *colinde* arrangements we began procuring flutes and alp horns from Romania, and my percussion set up switched from a cajón to two tom toms from Negura Bunget's tour drumset, and an amplified *toaca*, a struck plank of wood commonly used in Romanian monasteries to summon monks to prayer. Our Christmas gigs thus became steeped in a sense of Romanian autochthony: they began with a recording of chanting monks, followed by free improvisation on traditional flutes and assorted percussion, and then finally the *colinde* proper. Instead of playing repetitive grooves on the cajón, I was now playing loud, cinematic march rhythms and accents on two floor toms. The *toaca* was amplified by contact microphone, which was then filtered through layers of reverb, to give an even more distant and evocative sound.

It bears admission here that in my role as a musician in the band, I was emphatically in support of this change in the sound. As a percussionist who has played more than his fair share of the cajón for singer songwriters and such, I was pleased with the idea that I had the possibility to explore more of the "esoteric" potential of my choice of instrument. Indeed, if I am to claim that the band's motivations to develop a unique and innovative sound are inherently bourgeois, I admittedly include myself within that characterization. Mircea's insistence to make the band sound more "folky" and "ancient" intrigued me, as it granted me the opportunity to explore new sounds and, admittedly, purchase new interesting instruments, microphones, and effects pedals.

By the beginning of 2016, we largely found "our sound," and therefore a potential means to achieve presence in the mainstream community. Unwilling to align ourselves with the exoticism surrounding the Gypsy signifier, we adopted instead an equally romantic signifier of Romanian autochthony. With layers of reverb, chanting, and thunderous drumming, we hoped to offer a new sound for those, especially in the metal scene, who are interested in dark images of myth and paganism. Additionally, our means of mainstream alignment also operated in a similar way to Lucian Ban's in the sense that at the heart of the project's new musical development lay a search for ancestry or heritage, one going back all the way to the mythical Dacians before the 1st century. Yet still, during winter this new material was again only performed for Romanians (who seemed largely receptive towards our new sound), mostly at churches. Having found a strategy to align ourselves with a non-Romanian community, the year 2016, it seemed to us, would be the year we approached "mainstream" New York— but new problems arose.

The Difficult Path Towards the Mainstream

Having established a kind of sonic signature for our repertoire (which continued to be mostly covers), 2016 marked a year of investments. For promotional purposes, we deemed it

necessary to make a recording, which could then be distributed online to potential venues, or physically sold at concerts. Additionally, our developing sound, we reasoned, required new instruments and equipment. I already alluded to my procurement of various delay and reverb pedals, which I felt added a sense of sonic mystery or esotericism. In addition, Mircea purchased another guitar, and Ioan a few more basses.

As the year went on, however, it seemed our attempts to perform outside of the Romanian community were continually deferred. The songs we were recording seemed perpetually incomplete, preventing us from sending "professional recordings" to more mainstream venues. Our band manager's deep connections to the Romanian community, an asset when we first began working with him, proved to be a drawback in our attempts to perform outside of churches and community centers. He simply did not have the intimate knowledge of the general New York music scene that he had for the Romanian immigrant community. While we continued pushing for an entry into the mainstream via recordings and further cultivating a "sound" that we imagined would be alluring to the audience, our monthly performances remained in patently Romanian venues.

Our attempts were further complicated because we took on two new members: Lucian, a violinist, and Gavril, a second vocalist. While both added enormously to the group, it required months of rearranging our repertoire to incorporate two more musicians. The growth of the band from four to six also necessitated, the band felt, an updated live setup. Given that the majority of venues we played at were small churches and community centers that generally lacked an in-house amplification system, our piecemeal solutions to balanced amplification became nearly impossible when we incorporated two more members. Further, the band reasoned the non-professional amplification was unable to represent the real "sound" of the band, which might

cost us future performances. For this reason, the band spend additional money to procure an amplification system.

Soon such large investments took their toll on the Roadrunner's perspective on performances. Truthfully, for most members of the band, the fact that the investments in capital towards the group weren't being reimbursed through gigs was not a major concern. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the group members' relatively stable, upper-middle class status allowed them to procure gear with little difficulty.[56] Rather, frustration lay with the efforts we took towards preparing for the gigs. With our new sound developed new needs for equipment, to the point that we were required to set up not only our own equipment, but also the amplification system. Issues that didn't frustrate us when we were a small acoustic group with only two amps and a single microphone, such as interruptions for speeches, delayed start times, and early end times, became intolerable when we required over an hour to simply set up and tear down. It reached the point where, unless for charity, we refused to play church gigs.

There was to a degree an issue of payment as well—not so much because we needed additional capital to fund the recordings and new equipment, but because the recordings and new equipment made us feel like we were worth more. Now well-rehearsed and with a professional sound, members of the Roadrunners began to feel increasingly like we were being taken advantage of. No longer did we relish any opportunity to perform. Rather, we felt we were providing a service that we should be appropriately compensated for.

This issue in turn led to even more difficulties in attaining mainstream status. While Romanian churches and festivals often left us waiting to play, perhaps only allowing us to play

[56] Compare this to Beissinger's account of the development of a *lăutari taraf* in rural Romania, where procuring "modern" instruments was a fairly difficult task to accomplish, requiring months, if not years, of saving (2016).

one set when we expected two, we were compensated. Such compensation was largely out of the question for more mainstream establishments that we had access to: bars and theaters that didn't demand professional videos, albums, or an audience quota in order to play. In such cases, we were required to sacrifice our sense of due compensation for the opportunity to play for a new audience, small as it may be. In a word, to gain a more mainstream following, we needed to trade economic capital for (multi)cultural capital. At the time of this writing, such is a negotiation we continue to grapple with.

To those who have performed in bands or ensembles, many of the difficulties, negotiations, and collective actions made by the Roadrunners perhaps seem hardly novel. Indeed, having played previously in multiple bands, I was admittedly startled to discover that, upon joining the Roadrunners, so much of rehearsal conversation seemed to revolve around conversations I've had countless times before, on rather quotidian topics ranging from song arrangements to recording plans, equipment purchases, and gig scheduling. In retrospect, I should have known better: despite our constant gigging in Romanian establishments, the Roadrunners had always positioned themselves first and foremost as a rock or folk band before being a uniquely Romanian band. Oftentimes the very language band members used betrayed a bias towards the Western conception of the rock band over terms related to Romanian culture. For example, the morning after a rehearsal where we were working on an original piece in a 7/8 meter, Mircea wrote an email to all of us expressing his excitement about the song, which he described as "Metal meets Turkey" and later "Tool meets Kusturitza [sic]" In both descriptors, the Western qualifier is first established (metal being a genre most think began in Great Britain, Tool being an American metal band) before their geographical qualifiers. Moreover, Mircea's second description entirely lacks any descriptor of "traditional" Romanian 7/8 dance music (on

which the song is based), but rather describes it as related to Emir Kusturica, a Bosnian filmmaker whose films are often scored by Goran Bregović, who is known for mixing traditional Roma music with rock styles.

However, while many aspects of the Roadrunners' trajectory as a band may align with the narratives of countless other (non-immigrant) bands, the details of the negotiations the Roadrunners undertook speak intimately to the band's immigrant origins. In particular, our desire to separate ourselves (to a degree) from the musical milieu of the Romanian community and toward a more mainstream landscape, and the extent to which we tried to leverage the band's immigrant, Eastern European status as a means of attaching ourselves to the mainstream's fascination with multiculturalism and undiscovered cultural products speak to a path to presence unique to an immigrant community.

Moreover, the negotiations that the band has undergone in pursuit of its path to presence has led to clear cultural erasure. While the *muzică rock* and *muzică folk* covers we perform are far from being conceivably "traditional" Romanian music, our interest in reaching an audience has led to a particular loss First and foremost, the band's bourgeois need to be unique and creative meant at the onset we would not be performing this music in strict accordance with historical convention. As enthusiastic as we may be in embracing our "folk metal" sound, this development in particular has greatly altered the musical qualities of the original songs. Additionally, the audience's continued demand for "dance music" has prevented us from pursuing what might otherwise have been a strict adherence to *muzică rock* and *muzică folk* repertoire. Finally, the connection between "Gypsyness" and Eastern Europe that remains so pervasive in the American consciousness seems to continually threaten the band's own sense of distinction which, for the better or worse, might result in the loss of a particular sense of identity

within the group. Indeed, negotiations over the extent to which we might embrace the Gypsy signifier continue to this day: at the time of this writing the Roadrunners are beginning to share videos of Roma *muzică lăutărească* groups such as Fanfare Ciocărlia and Taraf de Haïdouks as inspiration. Despite such flirtations, I doubt the group will seriously embrace the music, or attempt to do traditional renditions of *muzică lăutărească* in the vein of, for instance, klezmer revivalists. For the educated, middle-class members in the band, *muzică lăutărească* is simply too deeply embedded in a Romanian cultural history that has reserved the style to Roma musicians. Such music may serve at best as an inspiration for the Roadrunners, perhaps even an "ingredient" for our hybrid musical style.

In conclusion, given the relatively "unmarked" status of the Romanian community in North America, Romanian immigrants' path to presence manifests itself in limited options. While Romanians' European background certainly grants them certain advantages in a society (especially in the United States) where race remains a salient socio-economic factor, the comparative scarcity of institutions promoting Romanian culture necessitates that musicians in the community align themselves with a limited number of cultural references. Perhaps the strongest of such points of alignment, Gypsyness, is precariously pursued, as the association with Roma *lăutari* threatens to erase mainstream Romanians' sense of class privilege. Those unwilling to pursue the Gypsy association have attempted to align themselves directly to celebratory multicultural ideology, offering themselves and their music as yet another alluring aspect of Western multicultural spirituality. Along the same vein, musicians might attach themselves to the relatively recent interest in the West in seeking one's origins or roots, their music providing a narrative of their own journeys into their past genealogy. Regardless, in each of these manifestations of a path to presence, new musical hybrids are created and the

mainstream society is perhaps altered, but at the same time, elements are lost as Western and Romanian musical, social, and cultural conceptions are negotiated.

CONCLUSION

Music is never simply a distraction. At its most sublime and its most mundane, in its spontaneity or its manicured perfection, as starkly conservative or shockingly transgressive, it can never merely be an escape into mindless entertainment. A social process at its core, it is always intimately entangled with the social order. As Adorno writes, the "escape" the culture industry offers is precisely its message: one is at no other time so implicated in ideology than when, through mediated "entertainment," one thinks one has escaped it (2005:201-203).

The early cultural engineers of the socialist government in Romania certainly appreciated this fact, making one of the first priorities of the new state the nationalization of the broadcast media, the recording industry, and the Composer's Union. Through such oversight of the collective music industry of Romania, an escape into music was never an escape from politics. Romanians still consumed music, but it was a music guided by the ideals of a perfect socialist society, a dream whose s very possibility legitimated the Romanian socialist state. By the Ceaușescu era, however, simply disseminating music that supported socialist ideology was not sufficient—the populace needed to *perform* it. Thus there developed, at great expenditure, the enormous Cântarea României festival, wherein the masses were coerced into performing roles as ideal socialist citizens, reifying the "new life" necessary to achieve a socialist utopia under Ceaușescu. Coupled with countless political rallies that venerated the leader's cult of personality, this event was developed precisely to ensure that, even in the moments of joyful escape, when Romanian citizens were allowed to leave their everyday life for song and dance, the message remained: we are a socialist country under the beneficence of the "great leader."

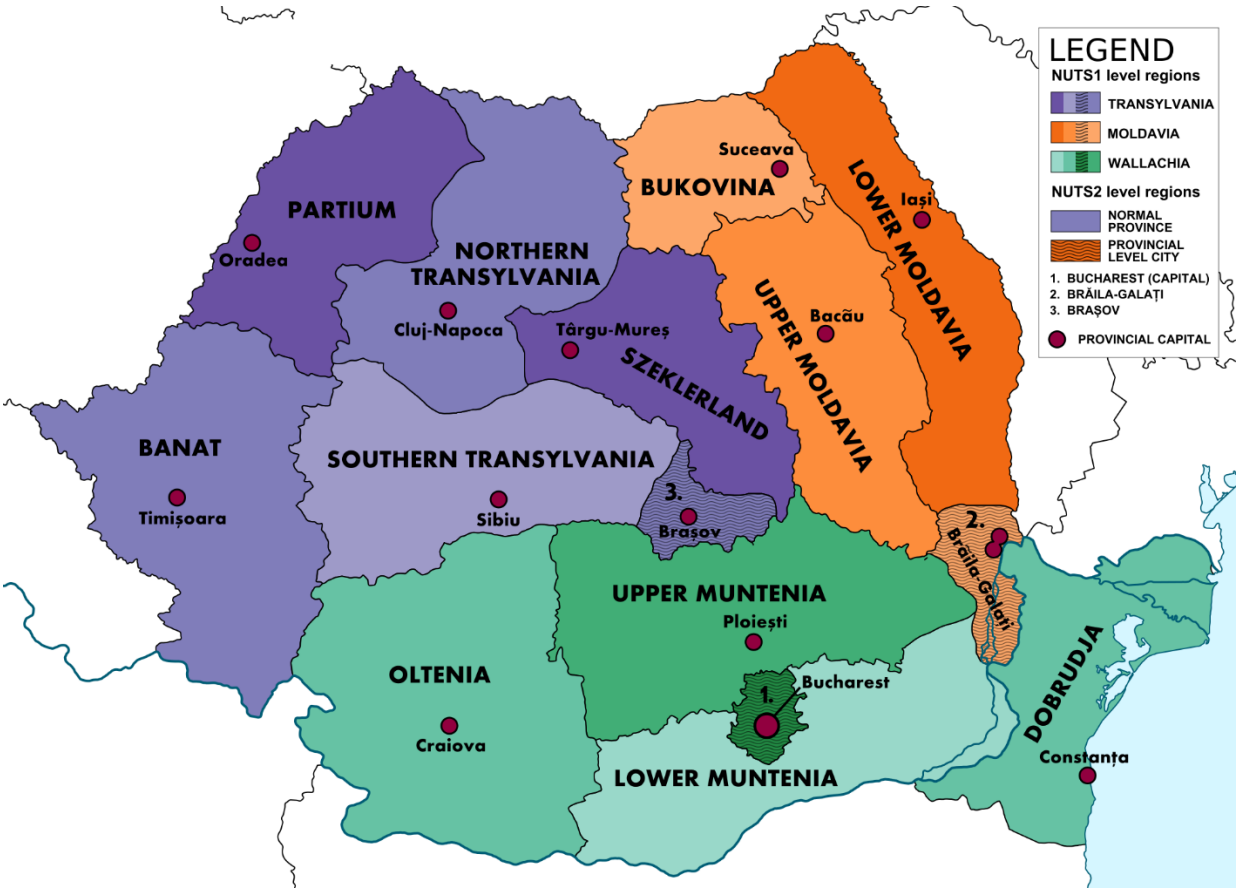
Yet, while music consumption and production are always implicated in the social order, while they are always a part of the hegemonic process, they are so precariously. Performance as

a phenomenon is inherently unstable and uncertain. Even if it is framed under the most absolute ideological insistences, the potential is always present for new unexpected significations and subject positions to emerge. While the socialist government was able to gain ownership of musical institutions, defining and enforcing an all-encompassing socialist aesthetic ideal to which artists had to adhere proved impossible. Negotiating Romanian nationhood without Christianity, or the increasingly regal quality of a purportedly egalitarian state were contradictions too great to bear, too deeply felt to mask with patriotic displays of socialist nationalism. Thus, the ideas and aesthetics emerging from the artistic sphere during the era were always slippery, capable of multiple significations, and read in a multitude of ways. As the ideological demands placed upon artists tightened, so too did subversive practices of reception which acknowledged double-speak and constantly searched for the "hidden" (read: subversive) message behind the state-approved lyrics. In this sense Ceauşescu's cult of personality became a crutch for the leader, as artists such as Adrian Păunescu were able to pursue projects outside of stringent socialist ideology so long as they adhered to the superficial vernaculars of Ceauşescu veneration. Through performances like Cântarea României and Cenaclul Flacăra, the contradictions inherent in Romanian socialist ideology came to the fore. The vast difference between the utopian promises of a paternalistic state and the state of things on the ground became only more pronounced, more articulated when citizens were asked to perform. These contradictions could not hold, and the regime fell. Musical performance contributed to this fall insomuch as it offered performers an opportunity to consider, articulate, and embody the contradictions that emerged between socialist ideology and material reality in Ceauşescu's Romania.

The malleability of socialist era music was not, it should be mentioned, limited to the Romanian situation. Indeed, practices of duplicity, separations between public and private spheres, and the polysemous nature of cultural production were all a common element to "actually existing socialism" in Eastern Europe. As discussed by Tochka (2016) in the case of Albania, Daughtry (2003) and Olson (2004) in the case of Russia, Rice in the case of Bulgaria (1994), and Szemere (2001) in the case of Hungary, ambiguousness, ambivalence, and nuance was an endemic part of both socialist cultural policy and cultural production.

The result of this era of musical production, born of a culture of duplicitousness, double-speak, and hidden messages, was a generation's worth of polysemous music, invoking flexible and floating signifiers that people could relate to a myriad of situations. It is this semantic flexibility that allowed the music to retain class implications, despite the fact that a core component of socialist ideology was the demand for the eradication of class. It is additionally how the music's socialist origins could surpass their socialist connotations, becoming for Romanian-Americans more representative of multicultural infatuation, "Gypsy" romance, or interest in notions of cultural heritage. It is how, when working with the Roadrunners, who came of age during the Ceaușescu era, we were able to continue to perform music molded and cultivated by the socialist government without any concern that we might be expressing a socialist message or nostalgic longing for the socialist era. Despite the attempts to instill a strict hegemonic ideology upon all forms of expression that persisted throughout the socialist era in Romania, the music escaped its circumstances and carries new functions in the postsocialist immigrant community.

APPENDIX I: MAP OF CONTEMPORARY ROMANIA



APPENDIX II: LIST OF INTERLOCATORS AND INTERVIEWS

A note on pseudonyms: *As a general rule, I have employed pseudonyms in any case where my interlocutors speak of their biographies or personal opinions. When discussion focuses solely on a musician's career or art, I have retained their real name. This only occurs in the case of Maya Badian, Ioan Harea, and Ovidiu Scridon. At times identifying data (location, etc.) has also been slightly altered.*

List of Interlocutors (Interview Dates in Parenthesis)

Ana, Vocational Composer, Toronto (05/29/15)
Anca, Vocational Violinist, Cleveland (05/01/15)
Andreea, Vocational Pianist, Pittsburgh (01/02/15, 01/17/15)
Aurel, Spouse of Vocational Composer, Toronto (05/29/15)
Cristina, Avocational Singer, Pittsburgh (01/3/15, 01/31/15)
Gheorghe, Vocational Violinist, Toronto (05/29/15)
Grigore, Avocational Singer-Songwriter, Pittsburgh (01/03/15, 01/31/15)
Irina, Vocational Pianist, Northern New Jersey, (11/03/15)
Sorin, Vocational Singer and Conductor, Chicago (11/04/15)
Vasile, Vocational Trombonist, Cincinnati (02/06/15)

The following interlocutors are those whom I maintained regular contact during my fieldwork in the tri-state area, from late 2014 to 2017.

Alin, Northern New Jersey, Community Member
Antonia, Northern New Jersey, Avocational Singer (The Roadrunners)
Constantin, Northern New Jersey, Community Member
Daniela, New York City, Community Member
Dragoș, Long Island, Semi-Vocational Musician
Gavril, New York City, Avocational Singer (The Roadrunners)
Ioan, Upstate New York, Avocational Multi-instrumentalist (The Roadrunners)
Lucian, New York City, Semi-vocational Violinist (The Roadrunners)
Mircea, Upstate New York, Avocational Guitarist (The Roadrunners)
Sofia, New York City, Community Member

APPENDIX III: ROMANIANS IN AMERICA—A BRIEF HISTORY

Despite the relative unawareness of the Romanian presence in the United States, the immigrant group has a long history in the country. The earliest Romanians on record that resided in the United States were G. Pomutz and Nicolae Dunca, an officer and soldier, respectively, in the American Civil War. Serving in the Regiment of Iowa, Pomutz was later promoted by President Andrew Jackson as a Consul General; migrating from the eastern city of Iași to New York, Dunca was killed in battle in Virginia in 1862 (Galizi 1929:19-20).

The first diplomatic ties were established between America and Romania in 1870, after which Romanian immigrants began appearing in the U.S. Annual Report of Immigration and Naturalization. Immigration increased steadily after this, reaching its peak at the turn of the 20th century (Wertsman 1975:3-10). This wave of immigration was largely due to economic and political factors dependent upon the particular sending region in what is today Romania. For those in the regions of Moldavia in the north and Wallachia in the east, the primary push factors related to recent agricultural policies and general economic malaise, resulting in the large-scale immigration of farmers and other agricultural workers. For those in Transylvania in the west, the motivations for Romanians were more political, due to the ethnic persecution at the hands of the ruling Hungarians (Galizi 1929:52-57). Regardless, in both regions the majority of immigrants to the U.S. were men between the ages of 14 and 44 who generally came from rural settings (*ibid.*, 34-35).

At this time, over half (54.45%) of the immigrants in this era settled in the mid-Atlantic states, with New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania serving as major destinations. A majority (74.7%) moved to large urban centers including New York City, Chicago, Newark, Minneapolis, St. Louis, Newark, Los Angeles, and San Francisco (*ibid.*, 66-67). Most arrived during this era as

agriculturalists, but once they settled in cities, received employment outside agricultural fields(*ibid.*,62)

By the early 1900s, the first registered Romanian benevolent societies were established, the earliest being the "*Vulturul*" society in Homestead, PA and the "*Carpatina*" Society in Cleveland, both of which were founded in 1902. These societies developed out of the community's need for economic protection, serving as small-scale insurance organizations for the Romanian community by providing compensation to injured or ill workers and their families. Unofficially, the institutions also operated as social and cultural outlets for the community through monthly meetings (*ibid.*, 91). After the development of *"Carpatina"* and *"Vulturul,"* many more similar institutions proliferated throughout the country, soon expanding into organizations solely dedicated to the educational, spiritual, and cultural needs of the community. By 1903, the first Romanian newspaper appeared in Cleveland, which was followed by an increase in Romanian publications in cities throughout the mid-Atlantic and Midwestern states (Wertzman 1975:4).

Immigration fell sharply at the dawn of the 1930s as a result of the world depression, though Romanian-American institutions continued to expand (*ibid.*, 20). After a slight resurgence in the 1940s, large-scale immigration all but halted in the 1950s and 1960s, as the communist government closed the borders. As I discovered through my fieldwork, however, the closed borders did not end the flow of Romanian emigrants entirely. Rather, there remained a handful of strategies undertaken by Romanians desiring to emigrate. Perhaps the most apparent of these strategies related to Romania's special emigration policies for citizens of Jewish ethnicity. In the late 1940s and early 50s, Israel initiated repatriation programs that allowed people of Jewish ancestry to return to their homeland. In return for a fee paid by Israel,

Romanian citizens of proven Jewish descent were allowed to emigrate from the country. For some musicians I spoke too, immigration to Israel acted as the first step in a series of moves that allowed them to eventually arrive in the United States.

While Romania's relationship with Israel provided a comparatively uncomplicated means of leaving the country, in the aftermath of the Holocaust such policies only affected a small (but not insignificant) group of people. For those without Jewish heritage, emigration was much more difficult. Those with families already abroad had the opportunity to put in an immigration request to join them, though there were no guarantees. Indeed, the government during the Ceauşescu regime made it immensely hard on a bureaucratic level to emigrate for this reason. For one Romanian musician I spoke to, it took intervention from a figure no less than U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz to achieve the right to leave the country to join her husband in America. The options for immigration among those without family abroad were even more perilous, involving illegally crossing multiple guarded borders in various socialist states. Nonetheless, many attempted to dissent and migrate to the West, with common routes being west through Hungary to Austria, or south through Yugoslavia to Greece. Successfully leaving the country in this way, as one interlocutor informed me, involved being lucky enough to not get shot by border guards.

Another pathway to emigration during the socialist era involved taking advantage of Romania's diplomatic priorities in the 1960s and 1970s. At this point in the socialist government's desire to establish closer connection not only with communist countries in East Asia, but also those in Western Europe and the United States, resulted in a variety of cultural exchange programs and cultural ambassadorships. Many were short tours by Romanian music ensembles, where defection was difficult because the touring musicians were closely watched by

secret police agents who accompanied the groups (see Pieslak 2007a, 2007b). In other cases, cultural ambassadors or touring musicians were able to defect from the country, either "disappearing" while on tour or, for those who were not burdened by the presence of secret police, simply not returning to the country. One such musician I spoke to emigrated in such a way: taking advantage of a cultural exchange activity, he was able to join a symphony orchestra in South America, and from there managed move to the United States.

After the Romanian Revolution 1989 and the dissolution of socialism in the country, emigration to the United States was again available, but not particularly accessible to the majority of Romanians. In general, the poor economic conditions endemic to the transition era both perpetuated a desire (in 1993, 15% of the population in Romania intended to migrate either permanently or temporarily) and an inability to emigrate. Most emigrants left for countries in Western Europe, as the United States was prohibitively expensive. Those that arrived in the United States in the postsocialist era, therefore, were generally highly skilled, arriving through work visas and university scholarships.[57]

[57] With Romania's entry into the Schengen Space in 2002, emigration to Western Europe increased dramatically, peaking at 28 persons per 100 residents (Andreescu and Alexandru 2007: 7-9).

APPENDIX IV: INTERVIEW EXCERPTS WITH MUSICIANS

On Education and Pursuing Music as a Vocation:

Socialist Emigrants
Irina, Pianist, emigrated 1986: "Both her [my mother] and my father came from families who in the past—and by the past I mean before the war—communists actually declared them an unhealthy social background, or something like that, and they were stigmatized because their families had some wealth. My father's family had actually some royal blood. So the difference in my two parents was that my grandfather on my mother's side refused to cooperate with the communists. The thing was simple, you either give it to us, which is everything they owned before, and you'll have a future and your children will have a future, or we will take it from you [chuckles], you won't have a future, and your children won't have a future. So my two grandparents on the two sides made the exact opposite decision. My grandfather was a landowner, and he refused to give his land away. Of course they took it away from him, but because of that my mom wasn't able to attend college. Basically she was blacklisted, which was very normal. And she was such a passionate intellectual, she loved to read, she loved music, she a*dor*ed classical music. So her passion for opera for instance, she never lost it. She went to the opera, she listened to classical music on the radio. And she promised herself that we will not have to suffer that, you know, that we won't have an improper education. So she wanted to introduce me to music just to be, you know, a complete person. When I was five. But, secretly I think there is this thing about, when I was born her first thing that she said was, 'how is she going to play piano with these tiny fingers?' So somewhere in her there was something that wanted her to, for me to be able to play piano. And the lucky thing was I loved it, you know, I had a couple piano lessons, and I was hooked." "My grandmother lost her husband in the war, and she was the only survivor in the family. My father was her younger child. [After Romania became communist] she actually had signed everything off to the state. So my father was actually able to go to college. . .But they [my parents] filled our house with books and music, and considered education the most important thing they could give us. . .That was part of it [my education], that I read so much. The first thing I remember is trips to the library, and those were and still are the happiest times of my life in some ways, going to a library a pick up a good book. So I haven't lost a love for those things—on the contrary." ***Ana, Composer, emigrated 1988:*** "I came from a very, very, well-to-do family, and we had a beautiful house, and everything very very luxurious. And my mother played a little bit of the piano. But the piano was there, and always I felt like I wanted to listen [to it], but I could not even touch it when I was little-little. But I liked it, I wanted to grow and to be able to touch the keys. . .Then, when I was almost five years old, my mother told me 'listen, in two weeks will be your birthday, and I would like to know what gift you would like to have from us. . .And I told them immediately, 'I want a piano teacher'. . .And then my mother made some research and found a piano teacher. . .Then my mother told me, "We are immediately after World War II, and these are

very, very difficult times and piano lessons twice a week. . . we thought maybe you need a doll or a dress or something. A piano teacher is an expensive birthday present because it goes on and on. So let's make a deal: if you love it, then you will play with her all the time that you need a piano teacher. But if you feel after one week or three months or one year that it's not for you or you do not have the patience to sit and to practice, then we can stop all the way.'"

"My father bought for me subscriptions to go to concerts, all kinds of concerts, from children's [concerts], from lectures about instruments."

"I did not go to a school of music because my parents told me they accept me to become a composer, this is what I told them, I said what I wanted, [but] they told me, 'yes but with the condition that you go to a high school of general culture so that you would know history, geography, everything. . .' So I did music privately, with the best teachers that were in Romania. First, my mother hired a fantastic professor for music theory, because my mother was a professor at the Institute of Theater and Cinema, a professor of stage movement, and actually she was the founder of this stage movement department [so] she asked somebody who was in music what should she get for me. . .So, music theory, then music harmony, then counterpoint, all of this privately."

"When it was time for admission [to a general Romanian high school], they gave a law, you can say a directive: 'ok, we want to have more children from working-class workers to go to higher education.' And what decided [it], they said: 'ok, we'll have in this high school ten places. There will be nine places for the children of working-classed workers, and only one place for the other.' But meanwhile, exactly in that period of time, they fired my father from his job, because they decided my father was the son of a painter, because my great grandfather and his grandfather were painters, and this was not good for the Communist Party. So my father, out! So when you apply [to a school], you have to say what are your parents, and I wrote that my father was no good. Because why? Because of the political situation. And my mother was a professor. . .it's not good for my [school application]. . .So the highest marks were 10, and I had 9.8, and they pushed me out. I did not want to go to a trade school, [because it was] not good, not good quality. Meanwhile, I was lucky. The best friend of my mother called exactly when I did not know how to get out of this situation, and she told my mother that she read in the newspaper that the general culture school whose language was in Hungarian. . .This [school had] four more places for anyone who knows, who speaks Hungarian and comes from a Hungarian family. So, my mother told me, 'see, you did not want learn Hungarian, you wanted German, now look where we are'. . .We solved this problem. How? Because the exam of admission in Hungarian expired after two weeks. I told my mother, 'look, I know how to say 'good day,' you know a few words I know. And you know Hungarian perfectly, and you speak with the director. Right now go to the director and ask if I can do the Hungarian test. And then we see what he says, because he just announced and the places are still [open]. . .' And I talked to him [the director of the school] in the Hungarian language, '*Jó napot kívánok,'* that means 'good day,' and he answered. Then he told my mother, 'she speaks Hungarian!'. . .So I told him [the director], 'listen, do you speak Romanian?' And he said, 'yes, I speak.' [I said] 'Look, I want like crazy to be in this school, my mother speaks perfectly Hungarian, and she can help me, and I'd like to ask you a favor:

give me three months. . . and I promise you I'll work, I'll work, I'll work, but I'll stay here. If I am not ok I'll go out. But I want to come here.'"

Andreea, Pianist, Emigrated 1984:
"[My father's] passion was music, forever. So he practiced piano. And then when he retired from the army, he went to the conservatory and he became a piano teacher. Therefore I am a pianist. There is not much to explain. Either a pianist or an artist [like my mother], and I had zero talent in arts. So anyway, [I had] a wonderful childhood, protected by my parents, and not in luxury or anything like that, because nobody could own anything in Romania. And you had money but nothing to buy."

Postsocialist Emigrants

Anca, Violinist, Emigrated 1991
"[when I was a kid during communism] I went every week to a concert, a concert once a week."

Vasile, Trombonist, Emigrated 1994
"The way I chose the trombone is connected with the educational system in Romania, which is completely different than it is here in the states. . .now when I grew up my sister actually played the violin, and she really loved doing it and she went to the music school. She was older than me, a couple years older, five years older, and you know it's a really big sacrifice for a parent to take their kid that early on to lessons. . .So she went to this [school], and then she gave up, I think in the 8th grade because the competition was so ridiculous. . . Now I loved music. My parents, you know, they sing in a choir at the church that they go to. So I grew up around music and I always loved it, but when I asked them, 'you know I want to go to that school,' they were like, 'no, no, no, no, no. . . we're going to send to a math and physics school". . .And that was ok, that's what I had to do, but music was in the background always. . . But in Romania at the time, there was these institutions for kids that were completely free, where kids would go and learn a craft. . .crafts for auto, electronic repair. . .they were called *casa pionerului* ['pioneer houses']. . .they were well-funded and kids would go there and learn just in their off-time, and that was a great idea. That was something kids would choose, you know, not parents. So they could do something that they loved. So anyway I decided without my parent's approval I would go there, and I played in a band. And usually kids would go with their parents and say, 'you know what, I want to play that instrument,' but I went there by myself. And they said, 'where are your parents?' 'well, you know, they are somewhere around the building, but I am here.' 'Well, what instrument do you want to play?' I said: 'well, I don't know.' 'So, your parents are not here? Then you're going to play this instrument.' So they gave me a euphonium. . .Anyway, you know I loved it, and later on when I improved and I was able to play, and the band had certain programs for small tours, I wasn't able to hide it from my parents anymore, so they found out. But the teacher from there said, 'you have to let him stay in, because he loves it.' Anyway, so that's how I started."

Dragoş, Clarinetist, Emigrated 2001
"My parents, from what I'm hearing based on other people, apparently they did have the largest combined income in the town. That was a small town with a huge chemical plant. So

they had a lot of engineers. And my dad at the time was working in this part of the factory that was very dangerous. And his pay for the bonus for working in such a dangerous place was way higher than his salary. So they were making ok money, so we would go away in the weekends a lot. Literally all over. I feel like this is not representative of everyone else in the town."

"You know, I went to specialized education. In the town where I was born there was a normal school, but within the normal school there would be one class which would be in the German language. That was during the communists. And you had to declare that you have someone of German ancestry, and therefore you're an ethnic German, although nobody in our family was. But then you would get this specialized curriculum where everything was taught in German. So I think we started around 30 people, and then people kept leaving and kept leaving. Even during the communists, they used to go to Western Germany because during the communist government Ceauşescu had a deal where he would get cash for every person who was allowed to leave. So a lot of people left. I remember we started 30 or so, and then by the time we were in 5th grade there was like 9, then we went further down to 7 and then further down to 5, and then they were thinking about cutting it altogether, because they had to find specialized faculty that can teach geography in German, that can teach these [classes]. So we got a little better education than everyone else. We got something extra. . .and I feel like in the entire class, maybe there were like 5 or 6 true ethnic Germans. Everyone else was Romanian families, but you know like doctors and like, literally the town's elite. It was a small town, like 10,000 people. And I feel like that was the only option for a better education that was available, the German."

"I was looking for any reason to escape the house. I found a good reason in the fact that I wanted to do music and I wanted to go to the music school. And the music school was [away from home] so I could escape that way. . . I started the music school fairly late. . .so I had to catch up a lot. And when I auditioned, it was right after I finished sixth grade, and I was playing the recorder, and I auditioned off the recorder. And they were like, 'well, you have to choose an instrument." I hadn't even seen real instruments before! And they chose for me. . .so I worked hard, and my grandparents are both accountants. . .so they always had enough money and were paying for me to go to all these music lessons and all this extra help. And yeah I worked my way up and after a year I started winning my first prizes."

Sorin, Conductor, Emigrated 2005:
"I mean, when I started music it was because of my father. So, I guess I validated him. He is a musician too, he is a voice teacher."

On Emigration and the Desire to Emigrate:

Socialist Emigrants
Gheorghe, Violinist, emigrated 1979: "I don't know [what happened in the 1980s], I wasn't there. Well, my family was there. What happened was worse and worse, but in the same categories [as before]. Ceaușescu decided to pay the debt. . .everybody sacrificed. It was crazy, it was like in a hell. No lights in the streets, infrastructure gone, no maintenance, no food. Very, very depressing. My parents were fine because I was living and working in Venezuela, so I provided for them." "I went with a contract between myself and the Romanian government [to perform overseas]. . .everything was done through a impresarial agency, a state impreserial agency for everybody, in Bucharest. And you cannot do it by yourself. So the group that came from Venezuela, they had to be in touch with this impreserial agency [so] they can monitor everybody. . .So then you apply to that agency, and I applied prior because I didn't know who [what foreign agencies] were coming. I knew that people came usually from communist Germany. There were lots of orchestras there and they needed players, and they came to Romania. Several times several people from Romania went there for a month to work. . .So I applied and they said, 'when people come, we will tell you.'" "After I got the job [abroad], 35% of my salary per month went to the Romanian embassy in Caracas." "It was [getting] worse and worse, and my salary was less than half [due to a recession in Venezuela]. . .but to get the job in the system here [Canada] you have to be a resident. Let's say I want a job—but this wasn't the case because there were no jobs at the time—but if I wanted a job they would say, 'OK, now you have to be a resident and the job will be yours. So I applied while staying in Caracas, and within one year and a half, I got it. I didn't move there, but I had it. As a resident I had a chance eventually to get a job. So then we came here, we moved as a resident. Two months after my wedding my father got cancer, so he died sixth months after that. So she [my mother] was alone. But I couldn't go back. I noticed somebody was talking about me in order to escape. I guy from Caracas, a Romanian, went visiting [Romania] and they didn't let him come back for some reason. So he started to tell things about people, I don't know. . .good people in a bad position, you know? It was 83, 84 maybe. So I learned about that. You discover [these things] very easy from other people. So I said to my wife, 'you go, go just to be sure.' So she went and spoke with my mother because we couldn't talk by phone, they [the secret police] would listen. So she spoke with my mother and said, 'if you want to come and live with us, that is the reason I came: to ask.' She [my mother] said, 'yeah, I would like to.' So in the process to get the papers—because you could go to live in another country, if you have family in the other country. It's a process, but legally you can do that. . .so then in that process with papers and stuff, which was eight, tenth month, I've learned that she couldn't go because my situation was unclear. And finally I found somebody in Caracas who knew somebody in Romania. . .and I told them the situation and he said, 'oh, I'll give you a name in Romania, and he knows everything. He's retired, but tell him that I sent you.' And I give that name to my mother, by my wife again, I sent her back. Because I

couldn't do it otherwise. And she went to that person and that person said 'let me see his situation.' And he found out, he knew. And he said 'come next week,' and she went back the next week, and he said, 'your son is not in a clear situation, not bad, but not clear. . . tell you son to go to the embassy in Caracas, and ask for the status of Romanian resident in a foreign country, that's a status you could have.' . . .So I did that, and in five months she is there, she was in Caracas. [But] she didn't have residency here [in Canada], and I didn't want to leave her there. So, we knew some people with the Canadian embassy of Caracas. Friends, who we played with in situations and stuff. And they said, 'no problem, I will give her a minister's permit.' So that means she could come with residency but can apply right away, and she stays legally until the residency comes. That was the situation, in one year or less. "

Andreea, Pianist, Emigrated 1984:
"I had a very good career Romania for ten years. I played concerts, soloed with the orchestra, chamber groups, and a very very good social life. Except when I was having contracts to play outside of Romania. Or actually, even during my conservatory years I was selected again, there was competition to select students to go to international, big competitions. So I made those cuts, and I would never get a passport because I was an only child and they knew I would defect. So I never was allowed out. The only trip I did [outside Romania], I was an official accompanist to the "Springtime in Prague" competition. And that's it. So I was very frustrated, more and more, because my violin partner had arranged concerts in Paris and Vienna, and all that. And in the last minute I would not get the passport and she needed to replace me. So the last few years, I just couldn't take that anymore. Because Romania was small [and] I was top there, but I wanted to see my value internationally."

"So I was getting fed up with that, more and more. And I didn't know I'm Jewish, I had no idea because Romania was communist, you don't go to churches or anything. They don't really arrest you, but people don't do it. My friends during my career kept asking me, 'well, are you Jewish, are you Jewish?' My maiden name is Fischer, so I kept saying, 'no I'm German.' Because my mother's father was in a camp in Romania. . . My mother's parents were very wealthy. They were thrown out of their house, and my mother was thrown out of school and had to wear the yellow star of David. But it's not Auschwitz. It's not like Poland, not like Russia. So they survived. But therefore they did not tell me I'm Jewish. My father also came from a Jewish family, but was an orphan, because his mom died very shortly after birth and his father died [as] a doctor in the First World War, on the front."

"[It was getting] worse and worse— no food, no toilet paper. Those are not myths, I feel like crying every time I talk about, because I have too much here [in America]. So anyhow, my father died early. He was 60, of cancer. I was 20, and I still didn't know I'm Jewish. Until I was fed up and my friends kept bugging me. I don't know why, maybe because the talent, maybe because the look? I have no idea. But my best friends kept bugging me, 'oh you're Jewish, you're Jewish.' So finally asked my mother—'mother, am I Jewish?' Finally she admitted it, and she pulled out all the pictures and everything [of] her youth. So I begged her to help me go to Israel, because you have to prove that your mother is Jewish in order to be accepted in Israel. So, we went to the Israeli embassy in Romania. And my mother had the papers, the birth certificate that said 'Judaic.' [So] of course they did the research and

everything [and discovered] she's completely kosher Jewish. So we put in the documents right then to immigrate to Israel. So we were kicked out of the job. Well, my mother was retired, and they were happy to lose her because she had a very good pension, being an artist in life, the director of a design institute and blah blah blah. But for me, again back to the government screaming and yelling, 'we educated you, we gave you everything, and now you leave us?' The people who left earlier than 10 years after graduation, they would not let them go without paying. There was a new rule because people were emigrating. I was lucky I had ten years, I graduated and immediately had a good job at a conservatory. So after a lot of beating up and stuff I kept telling them [the government] 'I need to unite with my people.' I didn't know anything about Judaism, I didn't know one work, not even '*shalom'*! So it was crazy when I look back, at age 34, with a big career behind me, you know I was a name in Romania. I just left everything, take my mother, my piano and my cat, and leave and go to Israel. I did everything maximum I could do in Romania. I wanted more. Just imagine: you're an artist and you want to see your value internationally. What does Liza Minelli say, if you can make it in New York you can make it anywhere? I always dreamt about America, I loved the language, I always thought it was round a beautiful. But no hope, so Israel was good to get out. And Israel bought us, we learned they paid Ceauşescu good money for each of us. And again, because I was somebody in Romania I was able to take my baby grand piano which was in the book forbidden. The last day we were leaving, and at this time, my piano was still at customs and packed, with no approval to go. Because the book says no, only an upright and only not older than 50 years. So I had to go up to the minister of culture, and he gave me a signature. So at four o'clock I was at customs, and the guy there [said], 'you must know somebody big up there.' He was very furious that he had to let the piano go. Again, I was somebody, so I told [the minister of culture], 'I need to unite with my people, but this is my career, and can't leave, I'm not leaving without my piano!' Plus, a bottle of whiskey and carton of cigarettes always helped."

"In the immigration center there was a young couple, much younger than me, mathematicians. And they came through Israel with a clear desire to come to America. So we became good friends. And they stayed less than a year, I think, and they left. And they kept calling me and sending me letters: 'come to America, it's a great country, you must come to America.' Of course, it was my dream, and I said, 'how, how?' 'Well, apply for a doctorate.' A doctorate in piano, I've never heard of that! In Romania the maximum was what I just did, a masters and an artist's diploma together. So I reached the top, I couldn't do more than what I did. So they said, 'doctorate in piano,' so fine! I went to Tel Avi to the American embassy, and I asked, 'is there such a thing as a doctorate in piano in America?' And they said, 'sure, here is a list of Universities which offer them'. . .So I chose eight or so. I knew about Julliard, and this is my only regret, that I did not apply to Julliard or Curtis. I just didn't know and I was not that secure on myself. . .so anyway, with a boombox on a nice big Steinway piano I made a cassette with a good program and sent it to all these universities with an application. And, I was accepted to go. Then it was a matter money. Of course being an immigrant there I had nothing. The all [the universities] gave me assistantships and scholarships. But the US would not give me a visa unless, on the university paper it says 70,000 a year are the expenses, and it's assured somehow you have 30,000 dollars. Either the university gives you all the money, or you have 10,000 in the bank, or this or that. Well, I had zero in the bank, so I was looking

for a university which gives me the full amount. One school gave me more than half, another gave me three quarters and this and that. And I kept going back to them and telling them, I need the full coverage. Who gave me the full coverage? The University of Iowa."

Irina, Pianist, emigrated 1986:
"These [the 1980s] were the worst, worst, worst years of communism. The pressure terrible, they were behaving worse than ever. . .but the job situation in Romania was terrible, and that's why when I applied there were only two places in the conservatory for piano. They knew that in four or five years there would be only two places, two jobs opening, actually ten for the entire country."

"What they [the government] did was they made it so you could only apply one day of the month in Bucharest [for a foreign marriage license]. There was this window open only for three hours in afternoon. And that's how you could apply. But by then we really did have our stuff, we were praying that all of our papers were ok, because we were running out of time [. . .] And then [my husband] was in America for three months and spent the time basically going around to politicians and putting in every kind of human rights. . .putting pressure, trying amount pressure on the politicians from here. He actually got me on the list that George Schultz [U.S. Secretary of state, 1982-1989] took to Ceauşescu. A short list of people that they wanted out of Romania. And the minute George Schultz left Romania next January I found out [I could emigrate]. [My huband] came back and he actually stayed in Romania for six months. It was really complicated because technically he wasn't allowed to stay with us. So he had to stay with a German, officially he was staying with a German exchange professor, a Fulbright scholar down the street. And we were followed everywhere, and they tried to cancel every concert—they did actually cancel all of my concerts, took all the radio recordings off the [air] [. . .] We lived in fear, you know. [My husband] actually stayed with us. He would go to the Fulbright guy's place once in a while, especially at night and then sneak back. And every night, everyday I woke up I was scared to death that I would, that they would come and get us, and my parents would be thrown in jail. And we didn't know whether we were granted permission. . .the Romanians made this process so difficult and so lengthy that a lot of people just lost interest. . .and there was many times when they didn't get the permission, many times they had to reapply. I don't think our situation would have been as, I don't know, solved, if it didn't get the pressure from the Americans."

Ana, Composer, emigrated 1988:
"Why did I go back and explain to you the situation with my social origin? Because [it meant] I dare not try to become a member of the Communist Party. And this was a very weak point [for my career]. I worked for the radio. Ceauşescu asked for radio to give jobs only to communist members. . .What he did was he made it into a top secret organization, and I could not work in a secret [organization]. Because maybe someone would go in and speak [broadcast] on life against the government or something like this. This was dangerous."

"We didn't decide [to emigrate] in '87 or '85, we decided a long time ago. . .we had already our uncle in Canada. And we had other relatives in different countries. And for us it was really a situation because many people just left Romania because just Ceauşescu, a dictator, and

communism, and that you could not trust even your best friends. . . So for us it was a huge question whether we should do it or not because our parents, my sister's and mine, were very well-to-do, very well paid. But in my case, because I was not a party member, I was much less scheduled to be performed. . .and I felt this more and more on my shoulders. And I thought maybe it would be good if I could leave Romania."

"We were under Ceaușescu, and we did not know how the history would change. . .but we saw and we heard about a life that had access and opportunities to all kinds of things which we could not [in Romania]. A life started to become difficult in Romania like five, six years before our leaving. . .for instance you could not have more than one package of butter per month. . .you could not have heating, because they cut the heating in the winter. . .violinist and singers had gloves without fingers (so they could play), it was such a cold in the concert halls, and all kinds of things."

"Canada had an immigration policy which favoritized skilled people who immigrated. They give you points for. . .what profession you have, how many years of work experience. And yeah, you can only immigrate by accumulating points."

"In four or five months, we got the immigration visa from Canada. But we waited two years to get the Romanian exit visa. . .And at that time, to let you go, to get the passport, you have to forfeit all your property. If you had a condo or a house, you would have to sell the house—but only to the government. And the government can say, 'ok, we will buy your house with 10k or 20k,' but your mortgage was 50k. It means you have to pay 30k to sell the house, because only the government, they said you cannot sell to a third party. They wanted to make it difficult for people."

Postsocialist Emigrants

Anca, Violinist, Emigrated 1991

"[Emigration wasn't difficult] because the violin teacher [at a U.S. University] was Romanian. . . he had gone to the music school where I was going to in Cluj as a kid. And so he wanted to bring people over from that school. He had scholarship money and all that. I send him a tape, I guess, and he gave me a scholarship [. . .] His former classmates were teaching at the music school [in Romania]. So one of them was my chamber music coach who was a close high school friend of his from way back when. This was right after the revolution in 91."

Vasile, Trombonist, Emigrated 1994

"The risk of getting out before 89. . .the risk of being killed was close to 90%. You know, just like what North Koreans are doing now. They get to that river—I forgot the name of it—to get out, and there are like guards shooting. And if you are lucky that they miss, then you make your way out. So it was not an option. . .leaving was not an option not because you don't want to, but because it was impossible. And the only way of getting out was if you had some family outside. We had nobody, so. . .I did not have the chance of going outside of Romania before 89."

"After that [the revolution] I played with the Romania National Radio for a couple of years, but still I wanted a little bit more professionally. . .at the time all of the artistic institutions were sponsored by the government. So basically you have kind of a government job. And so I always wanted more, to practice more, to go places. And I remember, you know, before 89, Romania was completely closed down. Access to information. . .I mean I think got like two hours a day or something like that, and it was, you know, political news with 'the leader.' But somehow I got an LP with the Chicago Symphony. And that sounded to me, just the American brass sound was just so nice. . .so I always looked up to that, and I tried to emulate them, to copy that [sound]. I was just so intrigued. And I remember I went to the American library in Bucharest which is connected with the embassy, and just looked up some schools. I didn't know anything. . .I just came up with some addresses. I had somebody help with the letters because I didn't speak English. This was probably like 91. I wish I remembered what schools I wrote to, but I told myself that the first school that was going to answer me was the school I was going to. Just out of loyalty. . .so it happened that Carnegie Mellon got back to me [and] they offered me a free ride so long as I could prove I had money for living expenses. And of course I didn't. And at the time I already, you know, I was touring already with the orchestra in Romania, and trying to save all my *per diem* for something like this, for this opportunity. So I was saving money like crazy. My suitcases were loaded with cans, just to eat so I take my *per diem* on all these tours. So big sacrifice there. And I think after a year, and we had a couple of good tours, I could only put aside maybe $700. Like saving really really hard. And they were asking me for, they said 'well you know, we know life if tough, but only prove that you have money for the first year, and then we will help you out after that. We'll find an inside campus job for you, and you will work, and we will help you out.' So I told them, 'thank you very much, but I just can't. I only have this.' And it was a trombone teacher there, actually the guy who is in my prayers to this day because he changed my life and helped me a lot. Gentle and an incredible talent, his name was Byron McCulloh. He passed away a couple of years ago, but a wonderful, wonderful human being. And he persuaded the school to just wait for me. And he looked in some places to help me out, and I did the same in Romania. So basically in 91 they waited for me until 94, to try to find a way to get there. And the lifesaver was a foundation that was just founded in Romania, the George Soros Foundation. And they had this panel of people, and you applied. Eventually you will or you will not get a grant, and I was lucky enough that I was the one getting the grant that year."

"When I left my job in Romania, I didn't have one person that said, 'well, this is a good thing to do.' I left basically everything behind. I left the best job you could have—the Romanian National Radio Orchestra was and still is at the top. I had a beautiful apartment. All the friends, and all the connections. I [knew about] everything that was going down Bucharest, which you know in that city there's art, lights, there's an opera house. . . it's amazing. You know, I was doing a lot of stuff, so I didn't get a lot of encouragement from anybody, you know [why would] a bigwig go from everything to nothing?"

"It wasn't the financial stimulant [that motivated my emigration], it was the professional stimulant. . .I just felt that I wasn't clicking there [in Bucharest], and I wanted more. Right now, everybody in the world looks up to the American school of brass."

Dragoş, Clarinetist, Emigrated 2001
"I did my undergrad [at] one of the two schools in America that if you get in you have a free ride that includes room and board. It was very tough to get in, because people from all over the world applied. When I got there it was a truly international class."

"I flew here, my grandparents paid for an airline ticket. I auditioned for a bunch of places, but this school gave me a full ride. "

Sorin, Conductor, Emigrated 2005:
"I had these two friends [. . .] one of them really wants to go to America, yeah? And it's really hard to get a visa, and so on. So he decided that he will build a choir, a chamber choir, and then he will find some festivals or something in America, he would be invited to go there, his choir. And like that he will have a reason to go, and he will stay there. And so it's crazy but that's what actually had happened. And he built this choir. . .and really started working on it very seriously until it sounded very good. And he made this connection with a festival in. . .a very, very, very, very small town. But, hey, it's America [. . .] So he, my friend who made the chorus was like, 'hey we were invited to America. We'll get some sponsors, some donors to pay for the tickets, or at least half of the tickets.' So almost everybody wanted to go to America, obviously. So instead of whatever was the ticket, eight hundred dollars in that time, we were supposed to pay just 400. So okay, now we needed the visas. So went to the embassy, and they actually asked us to sing, to see if we are a choir [. . .] we sang Tchaikovsky, *Serenade* or something like that. It was something actually very easy, but it sounded very complex, you know? [. . .] And its funny because we left thirty five people from Romania to America, and five people when we arrived in New York disappeared [. . .] In that time, in 1999, 1998 or 2000, I don't exactly remember when it was, it still was a big problem, not for Europe, but for America, yes, it was still a big problem. You couldn't get a visa so easy. So that was his plan, and we returned five after this festival. We left thirty five and we returned five. Now, in time, in one, two, another fifteen, twenty came back. Because they came, they tried to do something, and it just didn't work for them, America, so they came back.'

"A voice teacher [and friend of a colleague in the San Francisco Conservatory] heard a CD with me singing, and was like, 'Oh, I'm teaching for this summer program for students, if you can come that would be through a scholarship, blah, blah blah.' So she invited me to San Francisco. [After the summer] she asked me if I don't want to make an audition for San Francisco conservatory. I had no idea, I was like, 'yeah, ok.'. . . I put together a program, it was like three arias and four art songs or something like that. So I just went, I sang, and they gave me a pretty big scholarship."

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