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Special Guest:

Margaret Hiebert Beissinger



Margaret Hiebert Beissinger was first introduced to Romanian language, literature, and folklore during her undergraduate years as a Folklore and Mythology major at Harvard College and initially visited Romania (then communist) in the 1970s; she became a student member of the RSAA at that time. She returned to Romania in 1979-80 with an IREX/Fulbright Doctoral Dissertation Research Grant to collect epic songs (*cântece bătrânești*) in Muntenia from *lăutari* (traditional professional Romani musicians) who sang them at weddings. She

wrote her dissertation under the supervision of Albert B. Lord, expanding her research to include South Slavic languages, literatures, and folklore.

She received her Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1984 with a degree in Romanian and South Slavic Folklore and Mythology. After earning her doctorate, Beissinger was an instructor at Harvard University teaching Romanian language for several years and then moved to the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she held appointments in the Slavic Department. Beissinger was an associate professor when she moved from UW to Princeton University where she has been on the faculty of the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures since 2006.

At Princeton Beissinger regularly teaches Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian (and Romanian as an Independent Study when students solicit it) as well as courses on Balkan oral traditions, Balkan culture, Slavic and East European folklore, Romani culture, oral epic, and folktale.

Margaret Hiebert Beissinger—Biography (2)

Her research and writing relate to Romanian and South Slavic oral traditions, oral epic, and Romani traditional culture and music-making, with a focus on southern Romania. She is the author of *The Art of the Lăutar: The Epic Tradition of Romania* (1991) and is coeditor of *Epic Traditions in the Contemporary World: The Poetics of Community* (1999), *Manele in Romania: Cultural Expression and Social Meaning in Balkan Popular Music* (2016), and the forthcoming *Words in Performance: The Milman Parry Collection and its Reception in the World*. Beissinger is presently working on a monograph based on fieldwork, *From Slavery to Celebrity: Culture and Performance among Romani Musicians in Romania*. Her very first article was issued in the early *Yearbook of Romanian Studies: Publication of the RSAA of*

America, and she has since published widely in journals such as *Oral Tradition*, *Slavic Review*, *Slavic and East European Journal*, *Journal of American Folklore*, *Romani Studies*, *Folklorica: Journal of the Slavic and East European Folklore Association*, *Cercetări Etnologice Românești Contemporane: Revista de Etnologie*, *Cahiers roumains d'études littéraires*, and in numerous edited volumes.

Beissinger has traveled to Romania innumerable times and goes at least once a year for research and fieldwork (which has become far easier since the Revolution!). In addition, she has spent time in Moldova, the Former Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria. She has been a member of RSAA since the late 1970s and has also been active for many years in the Society for Romanian Studies, of which she is currently the Vice President.

ROMANI PERFORMANCE AND THE MUSIC OF CELEBRATION: TRADITIONAL WEDDINGS IN PRE- AND POST-1990 SOUTHERN ROMANIA

Margaret H. Beissinger

Professional male Romani musicians (*lăutari*, sg. *lăutar*) have long supplied the ritual and musical backdrop for wedding celebrations in southern Romania, performing at times for days on end as the various nuptial events unfold. (1) The *lăutari*, who perform in small ensembles consisting of two to five or more musicians, are present from beginning to end, ensuring that the music and rituals commemorating the passage from unmarried to married status of the principal actors take place. They also perform social music genres—lyric and narrative song as well as dance—at non-ritual junctures in the wedding. While some marriage rituals and genres have evolved or even disappeared over the years, the festive banquet that takes place after the religious ceremony is still a central, defining event of the wedding. Among the key, indeed indispensable, participants at the traditional banquet are the *lăutari* who perform song

and dance music virtually uninterrupted throughout the evening and often all night long, taking only intermittent short breaks. As the great Romanian ethnomusicologist Constantin Brăiloiu aptly wrote in 1928, “Nuntă fără lăutari știm bine că nu se poate” (Fira 2) (We all know well that a wedding without *lăutari* is simply not possible)!

How the political, social, and cultural transitions that have occurred in southern Romania over the past twenty-some years have informed the music and dance at traditional weddings provides the focus of this essay. (2)

I discuss, in the pages ahead, the repertoire performed by *lăutari* during traditional Romanian weddings, in particular, at the wedding banquet (*masa mare*, lit., great meal). I compare the music performed at wedding banquets during the communist period with the quite different repertoire that has dominated

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in the years following communism. I explore how the predominantly Romanian song and dance repertoire performed at wedding banquets by *lăutari* before the 1990s changed radically after the Revolution of 1989 to include, in addition, Romani in-group song and dance. Indeed, music that is coded as Romani became extraordinarily popular after 1989 and continues to form much of the wedding banquet repertoire at the present time. (3)

Focusing on the evolution of the Romanian wedding banquet repertoire from pre- to post-1990 Romania, I explore the mechanisms of the transformations that have occurred. How and why has the banquet repertoire evolved from the communist to the post-communist periods, and what can we say about the changes that may take place in the future? I argue that several significant factors revolving around the question of political control inform the fundamental shifts in music and dance that took place after the Revolution of 1989. First, the strict control of culture by the state was abandoned in early 1990, resulting in decisions about culture that were no longer exclusively dictated from above. Second, the tight control of Romania's geographic borders caved in, engendering a proliferation of contact with foreign cultures. And third, the control—and suppression—of ethnic minority cultures was lifted, bringing about the celebration, or at least making public, of previously marginalized voices.

Romanian Wedding Banquets

Romanian village weddings traditionally lasted from Friday or Saturday through Monday. In the past, the banquet began in the early evening (on Sunday) after the wedding ceremony in the church and lasted until the early hours of the morning or all night, a tradition that continues to the present day. The banquet typically includes a multi-course meal that is gradually served throughout the evening at tables set up in courtyards of private homes, restaurants, or other public spaces. Although songs dominate the early part of the evening, the meal is later interspersed with much dancing and several customs that articulate the important step that the bride and groom have just taken. As an important act of commensality marking the newly-married status of the couple, the banquet aptly represents incorporation, the third stage of the classic tripartite life-cycle rite of passage (the first two

being separation and transition) in which the wedding couple joins the company of married adults (van Gennep).

The music performed during traditional wedding banquets involves chiefly social as opposed to ritual repertoire. By social repertoire I refer primarily to non-ritual songs and instrumental dance music. This repertoire reflects the more secular as opposed to ritual sphere of the wedding. Songs and dances performed at the banquet are customarily requested by the guests; indeed, it is during the banquet that new and popular social genres are heard. By contrast, ritual repertoire indicates specific songs and dances that are performed during key symbolic moments in the wedding, e.g., the “lament” sung when the bride ritually “bids farewell” to her family or the song heard when the groom is ritually shaved for the “first time”—rites of separation that are accompanied by stable, enduring genres. Ritual repertoire is not requested.

Early descriptions of wedding banquets reveal the predominantly Romanian character of the songs and dances performed: traditional repertoire that was sung and played on acoustic, primarily stringed instruments such as the violin, *cobză* (strummed lute-like instrument), and cimbalom (Cosma 18). Gheorghe Fira's monograph of village weddings from 1928 furnishes details about traditional wedding banquets in southern Romania. During the festive banquet meal, the “*lăutari* would stroll from place to place, performing the songs that the guests requested” (Fira 41). Later, they would play the classic Romanian “*hora mare*” (large circle dance), a round dance in duple meter. (4)

Communist-Period Wedding Banquets

The traditional weddings that took place from the late 1940s through 1989 reflected the ostensibly homogeneous society of communist Romania. One monograph from this time by Al. I. Amzulescu provides explicit details of a village wedding that unfolded over three days (Saturday through Monday) in October 1954 in Argeş County in Muntenia (northwest of Bucharest). Two *lăutari* performed at the banquet: a violinist and a cimbalom player who also sang. They provided social song and dance music—much of it requested during the evening, that consisted primarily of Romanian repertoire. The

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classic Romanian *sârbă*, a duple meter line dance in 6/8 compound time, comprised an overwhelming 46% of the evening's music, while 14% of the banquet repertoire consisted of the *brâu*, a Romanian line dance in duple meter. Several other Romanian traditional dances filled another one-tenth of the music performed. Traditional Romanian songs, the most popular of which was, on that particular night, "Pe drumul Banatului" (On the way to the Banat), formed a little over one-fourth of the repertoire. In fact, the only music at this banquet that was not strictly Romanian was a *lăutar* song, "Inel, inel de aur" (A Ring, a ring of gold) and two couple dances: a *polcă* (polka) and *ceardaș* (*csárdás*), from Poland and Hungary respectively--interestingly enough, both also in their early stages of communist rule in 1954. In other words, traditional Romanian songs and dances occupied 96% of the repertoire performed at this wedding banquet of the mid-1950s; there was very little "other" repertoire.

In my own fieldwork 25 years later with *lăutari* from a village in Teleorman County (southwest of Bucharest), a typical ensemble included the chief *lăutar*—a violinist who was also the vocalist--and his two nephews, one who played the portable (hammer) dulcimer and the other, the accordion. Virtually all of the wedding banquet repertoire that I heard at the time was Romanian: lyric songs and traditional dances. Moreover, from what the musicians told me, epic songs were also still sung on occasion at the nuptial feasts. In later fieldwork from 1987 in a village in Dolj County south of Craiova, the three *lăutari* I worked with were a guitarist/vocalist, his brother on the violin, and their nephew, who played the accordion. At wedding banquets, they reported performing mainly lyric songs and dance music but also a number of narrative songs such as "Cântecul nașului" (The Best man's song). (5)

Cultural control mechanisms undertaken by the state were conspicuous during the communist period in Romania. Up through the end of the 1980s, the state encouraged and promoted traditional Romanian repertoire at the expense of other ethnic genres and styles in order to uphold the notion of an ethnically pure Romanian nation. Ethnic cultures other than the Romanian were generally not recognized. Indeed, non-Romanian genres (that is, Romani and "foreign")

were discouraged or even banned (Rădulescu 1994). In other words, the state regulated which traditional music was performed. (6) This included, for example, state-sponsored folk ensembles that performed stylized Romanian traditional music and choreographed dance in concert halls and on television. Furthermore, starting in the mid-1970s, the state set up committees in every locale in Romania to approve, promote, and especially control artistic activities by its citizens. It also established regular national music festivals "of socialist education and culture" called "Cântarea României" (The Song of Romania) (Tismăneanu 603). There "folk" musicians from all over the country competed in contests. (7) "Cântarea României" was implicitly ethnic-Romanian-dominated since the competitions were set up only for amateur artists, thus automatically disqualifying participation by Romani musicians. After all, most Romani musicians were not, strictly speaking, amateur since they earned their living making music. In this way, the state made sure that only Romanian folklore was perpetuated.

In terms of other devices of official control, Romania, like other communist states, was isolated from the rest of the world, thanks to the impenetrable borders ensuring strict surveillance of who and what went in and out of the country. In addition, the government outlawed the airing of Romani music—in-group repertoire performed by *lăutari*. This entailed a risk of punishment should musicians be found performing "Gypsy" genres: Romani (including "oriental") songs and dances. As a matter of fact, after the Revolution, an accordionist in a village in Oltenia told me that he, along with several other *lăutari*, had been performing a Balkan-Romani ethno-pop song—a then-burgeoning genre in southern Romania (later called *manele*)--at a wedding in the late 1980s when a police cautioned him and his fellow musicians to cease playing. They did, but only momentarily, at which time again the police approached and threatened them that if they did not stop at once, they would really be "in big trouble." The ethno-pop songs that they were performing—"oriental" in character as opposed to traditional Romanian--were considered "foreign." Furthermore, because the musicians were Roma, the genre was regarded as Romani, an ethnic identity that was "officially" non-existent.

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Post-Communist Wedding Banquets

Once the communist government collapsed in late 1989, state controls were dissolved, and Romania's borders opened up. Culture from around the world streamed into the country, and music of all sorts, from Balkan pop to jazz, rock, hip-hop, rap, and so on, was admitted—all of which profoundly influenced the local scene. The most significant change in the wedding banquet repertoire, however, was the wholesale adoption of the intensely popular *manele* (sg. *manea*)—Romania's own Middle-Eastern inflected ethno-pop song-dance genre influenced by traditional and popular Balkan and Romani music, including the Serbian *novokomponovana narodna muzika* (newly-composed folk music) and Bulgarian *svatbarska muzika* (wedding music). (8) Indeed, the Oltenian Romani accordionist ordered by the police before the Revolution to stop playing *manele* informed me that it took only a few days after Nicolae Ceaușescu was executed (on 25 December 1989) for *manele* to be introduced publicly at Romanian weddings. By early 1990, he told me, *manele* were freely played as banquet repertoire.

The *manea* as a genre in Romania is both song and dance; in other words, *manele* sung at social events are meant to be danced to. *Manele* refer traditionally to early songs associated with female Romani solo in-group dancing. During the 1990s, the genre underwent a massive revival, becoming an extremely popular dance form among both women and men as well as non-Roma. As ethno-pop fusion music, *manele* resemble similar forms elsewhere in the Balkans (the *čoček*: Serbian, Croatian, and Macedonian; *kyuchek*: Bulgarian; and *çoçek*: Albanian). *Manele* exude an exotic, "oriental" sound, perpetuated by *çiftetelli* rhythms. (9)

Eastern scales, and instrumentation (chiefly synthesizers, keyboards, accordions, guitars, clarinets, electric violins, and drum sets) and as dance, the genre is characterized by a solo, sensual style that bears some resemblance to belly dancing. Needless to say, it was a style in the 1990s that had hitherto been unknown at Romanian traditional weddings. In terms of content, pedestrian lyrics of sex, power, and materialism pervade the songs, empowering the musicians and audiences alike. The musicians who play *manele* at weddings are Roma—including some of the same *lăutari* who had been playing at weddings in the years preceding the Revolution, particularly the

younger generation. And the vocalists are virtually all young Romani men, some of whom sing exclusively *manele*, consequently dubbed *maneliști* (sg. *manelist*). The genre, despised by many intellectual and professional Romanians, is coded as Romani and is seen by its detractors as "alien"—a perilous Other from within (despite that Roma have been living in Romania for hundreds of years). (10)

The social event at which *manele* were performed most often after the Revolution was the wedding banquet, where they soon grew to be by far the most popular requested genre. Romanians—especially young, working class, and peasant urbanite dwellers—became passionate devotees of *manele*. *Manele* turned out to be so popular after the Revolution that they virtually took over the wedding banquet repertoire, superseding much of the earlier Romanian song and dance fare. The popularity of *manele* in the 1990s was promoted by an unprecedented cassette culture based in Bucharest that dispatched the genre to all corners of Romania, where local musicians imitated the songs and performed them in turn at weddings. Compact discs were subsequently marketed in similar fashion, and by the end of the first decade of the 21st century, an internet culture served as the primary means to perpetuate recorded *manele*. Between 1999 and 2011, I attended nineteen celebratory banquets in cities and villages in south-central Romania; they were mainly at weddings although several took place at baptisms. (11) Overall, *manele* accounted for more than 35% of the music at the banquets that I attended. Viewing the breakdown between urban and rural venues, the average percentage of *manele* in city banquets was 40%, compared with 27% in the villages. (12)

In addition to *manele*, although nowhere near as popular, another dance genre coded as Romani also came to compete with traditional group dances at Romanian weddings during the late 1990s and 2000s, namely the *lăutar* or Gypsy *horă*. This dance had long been in existence especially among Roma at their own in-group festivities. Its performance, like the performance of Romanian traditional music, most often included acoustic instruments such as the virtually indispensable accordion and cimbalom, as well as the violin, double bass, and clarinet. Like the *manea*, it is a solo dance. But while the *manea* as dance is sensual and subtly fluid in terms of upper

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body movements, the *lăutar horă* entails a more energetic engagement of the whole body, with lively movements including stamping feet and snapping fingers. The dynamic personal style of the *lăutar horă* is quite distinct from the more serene collective Romanian *horă*, a circle dance with uncomplicated, regular steps. Perhaps because of this, the *lăutar horă* has had tremendous appeal for some Romanians. Similar to their appropriation of *manele*, once Romanians discovered—after 1989—how exhilarating the *lăutar horă* could be, they adopted it at their own celebratory banquets. As an overall average in the banquets I attended, the *lăutar horă* comprised 17% of the repertoire: in urban settings, this meant 12% and at rural locales, a little over one-fifth. (13)

Not only has Romani-related dance music taken center stage at Romanian wedding banquets since 1989 but songs that are coded as Romani (though sung in Romanian) are also particularly popular. They are typically duple-meter stanzaic songs that often tell—not surprisingly, given the context—of family matters: parents and children, siblings, spouses, working hard for the family, and so on. These include songs such as “Sunt un tată fericit” (I am a happy dad) and “Omul pentru ce muncește?” (What does a person work for?). Statistically speaking, almost 13% of the banquet repertoire overall consisted of Romani songs (17% in urban areas and almost one-tenth in rural zones). (14)

In my fieldwork, *manele* and Romani songs were performed somewhat more often at urban rather than rural banquets, while the *lăutar horă* was slightly more common at village as opposed to city celebrations. City tastes, after 1989, called more frequently for the performance of *manele* as well as Romani songs at life-cycle events, while an acoustic sound—and thus older repertoire—was often more in demand at rural venues, especially for the traditional Romanian genres that are central to village weddings. By extension, because of the sound qualities essential for *manele*, urban musicians in today’s Romania typically play more state-of-the-art electronic instruments (such as synthesizers, keyboards, and electric drum sets) than do their rural counterparts, who overall rely more on traditional instruments. (15)

As for the non-Romani dance music at post-communist banquets, the Romanian traditional *sârbă*

followed in popularity after *manele* and the *lăutar horă*, comprising almost 12% of the repertoire at Romanian weddings. (16)

Not surprisingly, it was somewhat more popular at village banquets, accounting for over 13% of the music, while at urban banquets, the *sârbă* accounted for almost one-tenth. This also represents an extraordinary shift over only four decades, considering that in Amzulescu’s field notes of the 1954 wedding in southern Romania, almost half (46%) of the banquet repertoire was the *sârbă*.

We can speak, then, of the adoption of Romani-related dance (*manele* and the *lăutar horă*) and song genres at post-1989 Romanian wedding banquets. Overall, more than 52% of the dance music performed at banquets that I attended in the post-communist decades was Romani-related. In urban locales, this rose to nearly 57%, while in rural areas, it was almost 48%. (17) When Romani songs and dances—performed at both urban and rural Romanian wedding banquets—are also taken into account, Romani repertoire made up almost 60% of the evening’s repertoire, while Romanian repertoire accounted for over 35%. The “other” category (romances, light popular songs, tangos, waltzes, etc.) formed about 5% (18) This indicates an astounding transformation of the virtually all-Romanian repertoire formerly heard at pre-1990 Romanian banquets. Viewing matters from a slightly different perspective, the urban ensembles in my fieldwork—regardless of whether they performed in cities or villages—excelled more at Romani repertoire than did rural ensembles, whose forté was more often traditional Romanian repertoire. As a matter of fact, urban musicians have always typically performed more “foreign” music, while rural musicians pride themselves on their command of traditional Romanian repertoire. Some village *lăutari* claim that performing at rural weddings is more difficult than at urban ones since musicians are obliged to know the Romani genres *in addition* to all of the traditional Romanian repertoire.

Altogether these findings represent a situation radically different from wedding banquets less than a quarter of a century earlier. By the 1990s, state controls on the genres performed in public and control of what came in and out of the country were clearly no longer present. Music from the north,

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west, east, and especially south of Romania—that is, from elsewhere in the Balkans—was openly entering the country and playing a significant part in shaping creative hybrid musical styles, especially *manele*. Furthermore, the Other from within was no longer denied and restricted in public music-making; indeed, it was fully exploited as ethnic Romanians were finding their own inner Other as a sensual and gratifying experience.

Conclusion

The post-communist “meltdown” in Romania brought about a free and uninhibited channeling of both foreign music from abroad and “foreign” music from within. Following the political, economic, and social changes that were ushered in starting in the early 1990s, a plethora of popular musical styles became possible at traditional weddings (as well as other venues). The control mechanisms that had been in place for performances and recordings during the communist period were dismantled at that time, and music of all kinds was both “let in” from outside and “let out” from within. Before the “doors opened” in early 1990, music at weddings was restricted: musicians were watched and repertoire was almost entirely Romanian songs and dances. After the Revolution, however, music—especially music coded and appreciated as Balkan and Romani—became extremely popular, clearly responding to a widespread desire for experience, during celebration, that transcended the ordinary. Indeed, Romanian music that had been performed for decades at the wedding banquets was pushed aside. *Manele*, the *lăutar hora*, and Romani songs were welcomed into Romanian popular culture right on the heels of a decades-long official communist cultural policy of mono-ethnic and mono-social strategies and programs. A significant part of the allure of these genres, then, was surely also a response to—even perhaps a reaction against—the repressive system that had dictated so much of the cultural and artistic activity of 20th-century Romania. (19)

What musical developments lie ahead for traditional wedding (and baptism) banquets where Romani musicians now perform? In a village wedding that I attended in 2010, traditional music identified by the musicians as “Banat-style” that I had rarely heard

before at southern Romanian weddings comprised a small but significant portion of the repertoire performed at the banquet (6%). Could the appropriation of alternative (but mainstream) traditional Romanian repertoire from other regions outside of Muntenia and Oltenia be in store for banquets in southern Romania? Perhaps more varied music from beyond the borders of the country heralds a greater diversification of global music at banquets. Tangos and “Pingvinul” (The Penguin), a social wedding dance currently popular in the Balkans, are performed increasingly at both urban and rural weddings. “Foreign” songs are also heard now and then, such as the popular Russian “Kalinka” and “I Could Have Danced All Night” (from the Broadway musical *My Fair Lady*). (20) Do these perhaps represent future genre explorations and meanings? Yet another—perhaps more profound—question concerns whether live music at wedding banquets may eventually become a thing of the past, given the less costly option of hiring DJs to choose and play recorded songs and dances at social gatherings. Indeed, judging by what I have heard in Romania from Roma and Romanians alike over the past few years, this may have already begun. And when I was in Romania most recently, a question I heard discussed not infrequently among both musicians and connoisseurs of culture was whether *manele* were on their way out. My fieldwork at the time did not conclusively point to this. Clearly times change as does music, and the eventual demise of *manele* is surely inevitable. But when that happens, other popular dance forms will, of course, simply supplant *manele*: it is a natural and normal process for popular culture and oral traditions.

Asking now, at the end of this essay, not what might change in the future but rather what might remain, we can say that for generations social dance has provided one of the most expressive and meaningful means of celebrating the life cycle, not only in southern Romania but throughout the Balkans as well. Indeed, dancing is central to marriage and birth festivities in Romania, and regardless of what music is played—and how—at the banquets of the future, dancing by wedding and baptism guests is here to stay. Finally, we can also be assured that music at banquets—both song and dance—will certainly not return to earlier 20th-century trends when far more

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homogeneous local repertoires were either conventional or imposed, due earlier in time to a less globalized world and later to a more highly regulated society. Rather, music in many varied forms as a means to celebrate the really important moments in life will continue to be enriched both from the world outside of Romania and from within.

Notes

1. An earlier version of this article was delivered as a paper at the Third Symposium of the International Council for Traditional Music Study Group on Music and Dance in Southeastern Europe in Berovo, Macedonia, April 2012. My findings are the result of many field trips to southern Romania since 1979 that have been funded in part by the International Research and Exchanges Board, Vilas Associates Research Program Award from the University of Wisconsin, and National Council for Eurasian and East European Research.

2. My findings are based on early monographs and my own fieldwork from 1979 to the present in rural and urban locales in southern Romania (in Bucharest and villages in the surrounding counties in Muntenia as well as a village south of Craiova in Oltenia).

3. For a discussion of Romanian post-communist wedding customs, see Beissinger 2005.

4. On Romanian traditional dance see Giurchescu.

5. For a discussion of the narrative song repertoire of *lăutari*, see Beissinger 1991.

6. This was comparable to state directives over culture taking place simultaneously in Bulgaria (Buchanan 1996).

7. This also was concurrently taking place in Bulgaria (Buchanan 2006).

8. On Serbian “NCFM,” see Rasmussen; on Bulgarian wedding music, see Buchanan (1996) and Kurkela (2007).

9. *Çiftetelli* rhythm denotes a syncopated duple rhythm associated with Middle Eastern music; in *manele*, a common form consists of dotted quarter, eighth, quarter, quarter.

10. For a fuller treatment of *manele* in southern Romania, see Beissinger 2007.

11. Baptisms occasion a church ceremony where the christening takes place, followed by a long (sometimes overnight) banquet that resembles those at weddings—minus, of course, the nuptial content. Baptisms from

my fieldwork are subsumed within my larger discussion of weddings.

12. At Romani wedding banquets (most of which took place in urban settings), *manele* comprised over 52% of the repertoire.

13. At Romani weddings, over one-quarter of the repertoire was the *lăutar horă*.

14. At Romani weddings, only 7.5% of the repertoire consisted of Romani songs—less, actually, than at Romanian banquets. But the overall in-group repertoire at Romani weddings is extremely high: almost 86%.

15. Urban musicians can also more readily afford new instruments than rural musicians; and of course they also have more access to them.

16. At Romani weddings, 7.5% of the music was the *sârbă*.

17. At Romani weddings during the same time, almost 78% of the repertoire was in-group dance.

18. Overall at Romani weddings, almost 86% of the repertoire was Romani, nearly one-tenth was Romanian, and not quite 5% was “other.”

19. Note a similar conclusion reached by Vesa Kurkela with regard to pop folk (*chalga*) in Bulgaria (145).

20. I heard these at a village wedding in 2010.

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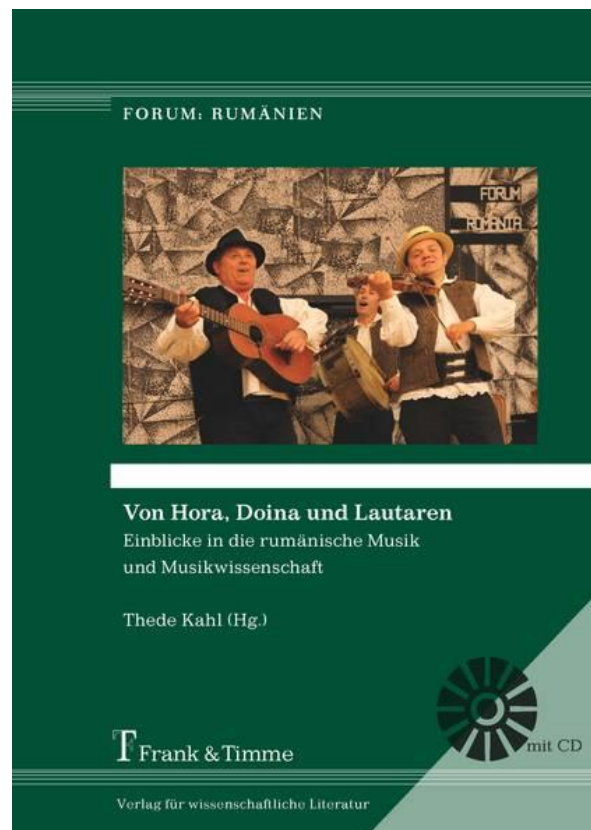
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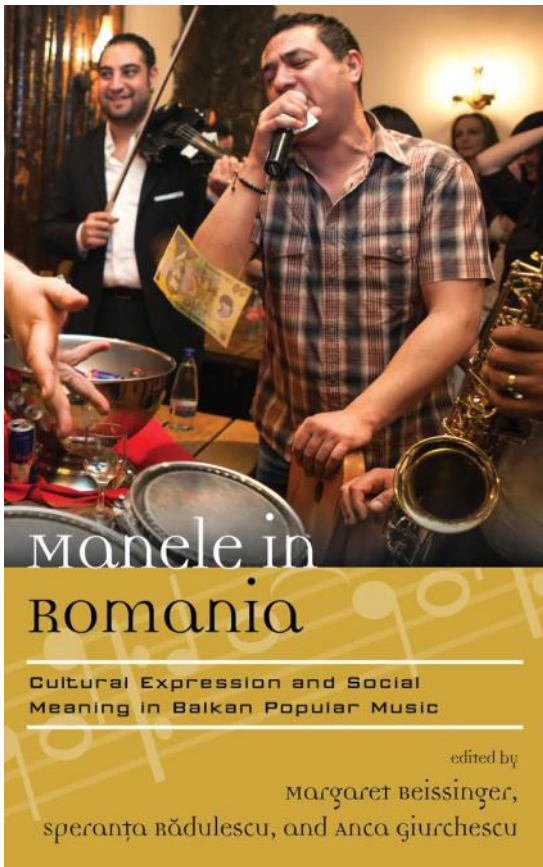


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Manele in Romania: Cultural Expression and Social Meaning in Balkan Popular Music

Edited by Margaret Beissinger, Speranța Rădulescu, and Anca Giurchescu
(Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016).

The volume *Manele in Romania: Cultural Expression and Social Meaning in Balkan Popular Music* is a collection of nine articles exploring and documenting, from social, political, musical, and textual perspectives, the *manea* — an immensely popular cultural phenomenon that has remained "in fashion" among lower- and middle-class inhabitants of Romania for decades yet has proved to be a matter of great controversy among more elite Romanians who view the genre as vulgar and "alien."



In 2011 several of the authors of this volume participated in a course taught at the National University of Music in Bucharest titled "The *manele* in the Romanian public debate: transition, democracy, the Romani minority, and the reconstruction of national identity," financed by the *Erste Stiftung* (Vienna) through its "Patterns" Lecture Project. The course was scrutinized intensely by the media, yet although contested by music professors at the university (because its topic was deemed inappropriate), student attendance and support were considerable. Because of the timely, relevant, but also controversial nature of the course, those involved in the teaching of it decided to transform the results of their research—along with that of three additional foreign colleagues: Anca Giurchescu, Margaret Beissinger, and Victor A. Stoichita—into a collective volume in English. *Erste Stiftung* supported this venture as well, providing a large part of the financial backing necessary for the production of the volume, and the co-editors (Margaret Beissinger, Anca Giurchescu, and Speranța Rădulescu) thank them most warmly for their assistance.

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