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Review

Reviewed Work(s): Collection universelle de musique populaire enregistree/World
Collection of Recorded Folk Music by Constantin Brailoiu, Laurent Aubert, Jean-Jacques
Nattiez and Ernest Ansermet

Review by: Robert Garfias

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Record Reviews

Collection universelle de musique populaire enregistree/World Collection of Recorded Folk Music. Established by Constantin Brailoiu (1951-58). Re-edition of recordings made between 1913 and 1953. Produced by Laurent Aubert and edited by Jean-Jacques Nattiez. Six 33 1/3 rpm discs. 1) Africa; 2) Asia and Eskimos; 3) Europe 1; 4) Europe 2; 5) Europe 3; 6) Europe 4. 1984. Disques VDE-Gallo 30-425/430 (AIMP I-VI). Mono/Stereo. Descriptive pamphlet in French and English, 36 p., with essays by Ernest Ansermet, Jean-Jacques Nattiez, and Laurent Aubert, photos, biblio.

[Available from Archives Internationales de Musique Populaire, Musee d'Ethnographie, 65-67 Boulevard Carl-Vogt, CH-1205 Geneve, Switzerland.]

Even the wealth of information contained in the header to this review cannot tell all. The moving force behind this collection was the Romanian ethnomusicologist, Constantin Brailoiu, who died in 1958. Brailoiu left Romania shortly after World War II to settle in Switzerland where he established the original collection of recordings from which the present set was drawn.¹ The re-editing and re-production of that original set is essentially the effort of Jean-Jacques Nattiez.

Constantin Brailoiu was born in Bucharest in 1893, some years before the city became known as the "Paris of the East." At the time of Brailoiu's youth, Romania was isolated from the cultural and scientific climate of Western Europe and was still anchored in the sphere of the Turkish Ottoman Empire. Brailoiu came forth from this milieu as one of the small elite of Romanians who went on to make scientific and artistic contributions that belied their "exotic, oriental" origins. Yet, like the sculptor Brancusi, the violinist-composers Enescu and Dinicu, and Coanda, the early developer of the principle of the jet engine, Brailoiu is frequently overlooked when it comes to listing the major figures of science and art in this century. As Nattiez emphatically points out in his introductory essay, the importance of the work of Constantin Brailoiu remains largely unknown in the English speaking world, evidently because he wrote the largest body of his works in French. This collection, and the English translation of his collected works (Brailoiu 1984) will surely help remedy this situation.

Educated in France, Switzerland and Austria, Brailoiu returned to Romania to play a vital role in developing what became one of the most important centers for the study of folk music anywhere in Europe. As one of the founders of the Society of Romanian Composers, now the Union of Com-

posers (Unionea Compositorilor), he encouraged the systematic study of folk music. In 1928 he created the Archives of Folklore of the Society of Romanian composers, which later became the Folklore Institute of Bucharest, now known as the Institutul de Cercetari Etnologice si Dialectologice. But Brailoiu did much more than merely establish a collection of recordings. His theoretical predilections insured that the Bucharest Archive, from the outset, followed a clear and thorough system of methodology and documentation.

The excellence of the Bucharest Archive was already recognized before World War II. Brailoiu's methodology served as a model for researchers in Romania and elsewhere, and the Archive itself was an inspiration for other aspiring archives in Europe. Bela Bartok had a friendship and a working relationship with Brailoiu that lasted many years. A long and detailed series of letters between the two attests to their mutual esteem and suggests the influence that each may have had on the other.

After the creation of the Socialist Republic of Romania at the close of World War II, the Archive, even with Brailoiu now living in Switzerland, was still important enough to survive under the new government. Indeed, in the post-war years the Bucharest Archive flourished, with as many as fifty researchers working in the Institute and an almost equal number collecting in the field.

Under the directorships of Harry Brauner, Mihai Pop, Georghe Ciobanu and Tiberiu Alexandru, the Bucharest Archive continued to follow Brailoiu's example. Then in the mid-1970s, as a reflection of a distinct chill in the political climate of Romania, the directors of the Folklore Institute were selected on the basis of their political soundness, which now meant that even a slight knowledge of folklore or of the work of the Institute no longer constituted a requirement for the position of director. In the mid-1970s, a broad program of popular education, *îndrumarea*, required that the researchers travel throughout the country giving lectures on folklore in factories and schools, a noble enterprise which, however, virtually brought a stop to field research. Over the past ten years this glorious research establishment has been further decimated by unfilled vacancies left by retirements, transfers to more hospitable working environments, and a large number of defections to the West. One now can only wonder if the Bucharest Institute will ever be able to recover anything of its past glory.

The re-release of the present collection of recordings is a tribute to Brailoiu. The entire collection was first published between 1951 and 1958 as a set of eight albums of five 78 rpm records each, under the name *Collection universelle de musique populaire enregistree* (The World Collection of Recorded Folk Music). These records appeared with bilingual notes written by Brailoiu, with an introduction by Ernest Ansermet. Much has transpired in the thirty or so years since the collection first appeared. For some of the geographic areas represented in the collection by two to four bands, as

many as forty to fifty LPs have been released in the intervening years. Today, a collection purporting to survey the folk music of the entire world on six discs (with four of them devoted to Europe) could not, of course, be considered representative. The collection in fact represents what Brailoiu was able to obtain at that time from scholars and collectors around the world, for inclusion in the Swiss *Archives internationales de musique populaire*. The primary value of the set is not in presenting new or unknown material. Rather, its value lies in the historical perspective it affords us on the process of documentation in ethnomusicology. Secondly, and more important, the Collection provides us with a glimpse of another aspect of the work of a pioneering figure in the field.

It is difficult for some of us to remember—and for some of the younger scholars among us to imagine—that when these records first appeared there was precious little of the world's music available on record. In the early 1950s, Folkways was just completing the transfer of pre-World War II commercial 78s from different parts of the world to LP. Alan Lomax was just about to begin issuing the Columbia World Library of Folk and Primitive Music, a series which gave many of us our first contact with the richness and variety of the music contained in Danielou's recordings of music of India and Hugh Tracey's recordings made throughout the then British East Africa.

Even granting the paucity of material from which to draw, a distinct bias in the selection of examples is evident. There is little indication that the selection was intended to exemplify a particular theoretical model. Rather, one senses that Brailoiu chose carefully from what was available, but on the basis of a clear preference for folk rather than art music, and within that for vocal music and vocally oriented instrumental music. Indeed, it seems that vocal style serves as the unstated organizing principle by which these recordings were loosely assembled.

In the accompanying notes, Brailoiu frequently comments on varieties and types of vocal production. Throughout the commentary, as well as in the selection of pieces, we hear the voice of the comparatist who, using examples of the folk music of Europe as a basis, draws rich contrast from the musics of the non-Western world. Given the intended audience for these recordings, the particular bias exhibited here is understandable. Nonetheless, this approach does compress the view of the non-European world and overlooks the strong contrasts within the singing styles of Japan, China, India, and the many regions of Africa.

Each disc contains examples from several cultures. The first record of the series is devoted to the music of Africa, including examples of West African recordings of the Hausa, Tuareg, and Fulah (Peul) from the 1948 recordings of Jean Gabus of the Musée de Neuchâtel, Switzerland. In addition, there are recordings from Didier and Rouget's 1946 Congo recordings, and Rouget's Baoule (Côte d'Ivoire) recordings of 1952. There are also four

cuts of Ethiopian music from Kerker recorded by J. Tubiana in 1949 and 1950 and several short examples of music of the Kabyle Berbers of Algeria by Jean Servier in 1952.

The Kabyle examples are intriguing because this music is not thoroughly documented even today. The examples from Ethiopia are interesting in contrast to the numerous more recent recordings. It is, above all, in the recordings from West Africa and the Congo that we sense that the examples are too short, that we are aware of the limitations of the recording technology of the time, and, particularly, that the examples as they are presented lack adequate description of the cultural context. Certainly, it was not Brailoiu's intention to present thorough documentation for such examples. His notes seem to draw from what the original collectors provided, giving only enough to serve as the broadest basis for description.

The Asian disc illustrates the manner in which the collection originally appeared. (In the notes there is also information indicating the organization of the sides in the first 78 rpm release.) Here, two sides of one 78 rpm record were devoted to folk music of Turkey collected in 1938 by Adnan Saygun and Y. Ziya Demirci. One 78 was devoted to Ernst Emsheimer's recordings of Georgian music for which no date is given. Two 78 sides are devoted to North Indian music (Hindus) collected by Alain Danielou in 1951. Two selections included here are marvelous examples of the singing of the Ahirs, one of which already appeared in the Columbia World Library of Folk and Primitive Music.

Next there are two 78 sides from Japan and two 78 sides of Taiwan aboriginal music from the Takasago people, all four submitted by the Society for International Cultural Relations (Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai). The collectors were Genjiro Masu and Takamoto Kurosawa (not Kurpsawa), whose Taiwan examples date from 1948. All the Japanese selections, with the exception of the *Ushikata-bushi* ("cowherd's song"), first appeared in Japan in a collection of some sixty 78 rpm sides produced by the Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai, under whose auspices a smaller set of twenty 78 rpm records was made available in the West. The original Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai collection included just a few more folk songs beyond the ones offered here. One of these was a *Hohai-bushi* from Northern Japan, a marvelous and well-executed example of non-Western yodeling. Assuming that this Japanese recording was available to Brailoiu, its exclusion here is mystifying, given his apparent joy (in the notes to the African recordings) that here lies proof that the technique of yodeling is not exclusively Alpine European in origin.

The examples of the singing of Taiwan (Formosa) Aborigines are especially fascinating because so few recordings of this rare and unusual music have been available in the West, although Japanese musicologists have worked rather extensively in the area. Many of the same examples were submitted by Genjiro Masu for inclusion in the Japan volume of the Columbia World Library series. It should come as no surprise that Brailoiu

was quite amazed at the discovery of unusual and complex polyphonic singing among the people of Taiwan.

The selection of the tea-picking song from Taiwan is not only genuinely Chinese (albeit from Taiwan rather than the mainland), it is also a rare recording of Chinese folk song unimproved by the addition of a theater orchestra. In one of the few exceptions to his preference for folk music over art music, Brailoiu includes one example of Cantonese dramatic singing with the accompaniment of a theater ensemble. Perhaps this one selection of "elite" music came about because there are so few recordings, even today, of Chinese folk music. The Cantonese example lacks the usual direct lyrical quality and sounds so archaic that one is tempted to suggest that this is perhaps not from Canton at all, but from the nearby Amoy region. The disc is finished with two 78 sides of Caribou Eskimo (Inuit) singing, recorded by Jean Gabus in 1938.

Both the Chinese examples came from Japanese commercial recordings of the time, originally pressed by the Japan Columbia Company. During the World War II years Japanese companies collected local 78 rpm records from all over Asia and republished them in Japan in order to familiarize Japanese at home with the various traditions of other Asian cultures. These series of recordings were indeed ambitious. Under the *Dai Towa Ongaku Shusei*, marvelous recordings of music from China, Manchuria, Korea, Sunda, Java, Bali, Burma, Thailand, and even India were included. These recordings include some rarities of great value. Among the performances thus preserved are: the only existing recordings of the *vina* playing of the great Vinadhanamal, grandmother of Balasaraswati and T. Viswanathan; Gandrung music from Madura; some of the most gorgeous Sundanese Kechapi ever recorded; and many examples of Chinese dramatic music. Perhaps Brailoiu was not told of these recordings because his interest was understood to be exclusively with folk music.

Volume Three, the first European record of the series, includes recordings collected by Brailoiu himself. For these, he certainly must have had a broad selection from which to choose. He retains a bias in favor of pure vocal styles, with the *doina* and its variants dominating. One side of one disc is devoted to Romanian music, but only four of the bands present typical Romanian styles; the remainder of the side is devoted to Romanian-speaking Ukrainians and to Romanians living in Greek Macedonia.

The "classic" *doina* which starts the Romanian group is an excellent example of the purer type of this widely diffused form. In the French and English notes Brailoiu makes reference to the later development of the "love doina" (*doina d'amour*) without explaining that he is referring to a specific form, *doina de dragoste*, an intermediary form leading to the Romanian urban popular song. The second Romanian example is a sung dance form unique to Northern Oltenia. The piece chosen by Brailoiu appears to be one by the young Maria Latarețu, who later was later named "Artist of the People," the highest honor that can be bestowed on an artist.

This volume also includes a few examples of Judaeo-Spanish (Sephardic) songs from the now vanished communities of Salonika in Greece. The jacket of this record (like all the others) offers us a few excellent photographs. In this case, however, we find a splendid picture of a smiling Gypsy violinist from the Banat region who looks for all the world like a very young Ion Luca Banașeanu. Unfortunately, we are not given the name of the subject, nor is there any example of purely instrumental music in the collection.

The part singing of Macedonian Romanians provides a startling contrast to the singing of the Romanians proper. Brailoiu expresses a surprising fascination at the fact that these Romanians continue to speak Romanian, yet sing in a style unknown in Romania itself. The absence of multipart singing is something that sets Romania apart from its Balkan neighbors, but this particular group, living in Macedonian Greece, is surrounded by multipart singing and has quite naturally adopted the style.

The remaining three volumes of the collection are devoted largely to Western European folk music, although Volumes IV and VI also contain some Eastern European examples. These include songs from the Serbs from Skopje collected by Brailoiu and Lauger in 1951; from Bosnia collected by K. Huber and W. Stauder in 1937; from Abruzzi and Sicily collected by L. Colacicchi and G. Nataletti in 1949, and by Nataletti in Sardinia in 1950; from Corsica collected by F. Quilici in 1949; Basque recordings by Gerard Colliot in 1952 and from Beira-Baixa, Portugal, recorded by F. Lopes-Graça in 1953.

Volume V concentrates on the songs of France and the British Isles, with French Folk songs of Berry collected in 1913 by Ferdinand Brunot and by Roger Devigne in 1948, and of Brittany collected in 1949 and 1952 by Claudie Marcel-Dubois and M. M. Andrade. There are songs of Walloons and Flemish Belgians recorded by Paul Collaer in 1950, 1951, and 1952. The second side of this disc contains Irish and English music collected by the BBC between 1937 and 1950, and Gaelic songs from the Isle of Barra in the Hebrides by J. L. Campbell in 1938 and 1948.

Volume VI contains Swiss German examples from 1942, German examples from 1930 and 1953, and Austrian songs from the South Tyrol recorded in 1941. The second side of the record begins with Norwegian songs and fiddle music collected over several years by Liv Greni and Rolf Myklebust. The side concludes with a number of short examples from Estonia recorded in 1938 and 1939 by A. Quellmalz and, finally, a few examples of Russian songs from the Pskov region collected by Elsa Mahler in 1939.

In a sense, the last three records of the collection contain some of the most interesting material, since, remarkably, many European folk music traditions have been documented even later than the traditions of the non-Western world. This European material provides an interesting contrast to later recordings from the same regions, demonstrating strong continuity in

some traditions and great changes in others. The Russian recordings in particular present varieties of singing seldom encountered, and still less frequently heard outside of recordings made by the now well-established official state folk ensembles.

In summary, it is difficult to evaluate this collection fairly. Much of the material is rare and of historical interest today as a comparison to the numerous more recent recordings of higher technical quality. Jean-Jacques Nattiez strongly asserts that Brailoiu's work has been undeservedly ignored, and with this contention there can be no argument. The difficulty here is that this collection of recordings—a good cross-section of what was available to the serious scholar in the early 1950s—does not illustrate any of the theoretical models which absorbed Brailoiu and which better represent his legacy. Instead, these recordings represent the work of Brailoiu the comparatist, seeking to describe for European intelligentsia something of the riches that lay beyond their common experience. The easy conversational manner displayed in Brailoiu's accompanying notes suggests that the radio broadcasts of which Nattiez speaks in his essay may have been the model and source for the series. Beyond the value of certain rare examples which appear for the first time here, this collection serves above all to exemplify the commitment of one of the pioneers of our discipline to disseminate more broadly the results of his work, an endeavor to which we have given regrettably little concern in the years since Brailoiu's death.

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Note

1. Some writers continue to use the spellings "Rumania" and "Roumania," as in the notes to this record collection. I will use the modern official English spellings, Romania and Romanian, throughout this review. The Romanians are proud of their Latin linguistic and cultural heritage. There are some who go so far as to say that their own names for the country and for themselves, *România* and *Române*, mean "country of Rome" and Roman.

Reference

Brailoiu, Constantin
 1984 *Problems of Ethnomusicology*. Translated and edited by A. L. Lloyd. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.