

Witnesses of a Special “Interethnic” Relationship: The Bartók Letters of the Brăiloiu Estate

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ABSTRACT – The scholarly relationship between Béla Bartók and Constantin Brăiloiu is a beautiful and highly instructive episode in the history of ethnomusicology beyond borders. Brăiloiu was Bartók’s most important associate concerning Romanian folk music research, a devoted supporter of his work and propagator of his most important achievements. Bartók, in turn, cited the system of documentation applied by the research group of his younger colleague as an exemplary method in his “precepts of music folklore”. The correspondence between these two authorities of folk music research offers deep insight into their collaboration. Ferenc László, the most assiduous editor of these letters, devoted a large and systematic article to discussing the main lessons of these documents available by the 1980s. A rather recently discovered collection of 36 Bartók letters survived in the Paris Brăiloiu estate, however, received considerably less attention in the literature. These letters, written mostly between 1933 and 1939, shed light on the late workshop of Bartók the folklorist: there occur issues related to Bartók’s late revision of his Romanian folk music collection, questions related to phonograph and gramophone recordings, or discrepancies between the views of both on transcribing and analyzing folk music, among others. In my article I would like to draw attention to some particularly interesting points of this material.

Keywords: Bartók, Brăiloiu, Romanian folk music, correspondence, Bulgarian rhythm.

In 1924 Bartók was invited to become a member of the Societatea Compozitorilor Români [Society of Romanian Composers] – hence: SCR – founded in 1920 in Bucharest. This was a remarkable episode in the composer’s longstanding – but at times seriously troubled – relations with the Romanian musical life. A newspaper article signed by Constantin Brăiloiu, founder member and secretary of the SCR, called attention to the upcoming events organized by the Society in the honor of their illustrious guest: “[Bartók] having been regarded as one among them for a long time, the Society of Romanian Composers will honor him with an evening concert dedicated exclusively to his music”¹. This concert, held on 20 October 1924, was the renowned occasion when Bartók played together with the great Romanian composer and violinist George Enescu, performing his 2nd Sonata for Violin and Piano (BB 85)². The event actually opened the very first concert season organized by the SCR, and it was the first concert dedicated to a single member of the Society (followed a month later by that of Enescu, president of the SCR). Other events surrounding the Bartók celebrations included a piano recital with mixed program given by Bartók on 19 October; moreover, he was called to be a member of the jury of the newly founded Enescu competition for composers, and a festive dinner was also given in his honor³. Bartók’s reaction to the “very friendly reception” from the part of the Bucharest musicians was highly characteristic. In a letter addressed to Constantin Brăiloiu, his host during his stay in Bucharest, Bartók remarked: “These testimonies of your friendship affected me the more agreeably as during my folkloristic activities I never thought of earning any kind of thanks for it, and I accomplished that work solely out of love for the matter. I am truly glad that with it I could offer joy to plenty of people”⁴.

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¹ “Societatea compozitorilor români socotindu-l [pe Bartók] de mult ca pe unul dintre ai săi, îl va sărbători printr-o serată muzicală închinată numai lucrărilor sale.” Brăiloiu, “Artistice culturale: Béla Bartók”. More recent edition: Constantin Brăiloiu, *Opere*, vol. III, ed. Emilia Comişel, Editura Muzicală, Bucureşti, 1974, pp. 252–254. Translations in this article, unless otherwise noted, are mine.

² The compositions presented at the all-Bartók concert of 20 October were: String Quartet no. 1, op. 7 BB 52 (performed by the Queen Mary Quartet), Romanian Christmas Songs for piano, BB 67 (performed by Muza Germani-Ciomac), Sonata for Violin and Piano no. 2, BB 85 (performed by Enescu and Bartók), selection of piano pieces (performed by Bartók).

³ The program of the 19 October recital consisted of: Debussy: *Pour le piano*; Beethoven: Sonata in E flat major, op. 31/3; Scarlatti: Three sonatas; Bartók: Romanian Folk Dances, BB 68, *Four Dirges* no. 1, op. 9a BB 58, Sonatina, BB 69; Chopin: Ballade in G minor, op. 23; Bartók: *Allegro barbaro*, BB 63, *Evening in Transylvania* and *Bear Dance* from Ten easy pieces, BB 51, *Three Burlesques* no. 2, op. 8c, BB 55, Romanian Dance no. 1, op. 8a BB 56. For a detailed account on Bartók’s relations with the SCR, see László, “Bartók Béla, a Societatea Compozitorilor Români tagja”. The same in Romanian: László “Bartók Béla, membru al Societăţii Compozitorilor Români”.

⁴ “Jetzt, da die schönen Tage in Bukarest vorüber sind, danke ich Ihnen und allen übrigen Musikern herzlichst für den so sehr freundschaftlichen Empfang, den man mir in Bukarest bereitet hat. Diese Freundschaftsbezeugungen berührten mich umso angenehmer, da ich ja während meiner folkloristischen Tätigkeit niemals daran dachte, je irgendwelchen Dank zu ernten, und da ich jene Arbeit einzig und

The letter dated 5 November 1924 marks the very beginning of a close collaboration and friendship between Bartók and Brăiloiu, which was to evolve in the following decades. The relationship between these two authorities of folk music research is a highly instructive example of solidarity beyond borders. Brăiloiu's crucial role as a staunch supporter of Bartók in Romania, in a politically extremely difficult period, is well known. Founder of the Folklore Archive of the SCR (1928) and leading figure of Romanian folk music research in Bucharest, later founder of Les Archives Internationales de Musique Populaire in Geneva (1943), Brăiloiu was from the mid-1920s Bartók's most important associate propagating his achievements in research into Romanian folk music. Let us mention alone his decade-long efforts to realize the English-Romanian edition of Bartók's *Colinde* monograph planned by the Oxford University Press (1926–1935), or his Romanian translations of Bartók's shorter articles on Romanian folk music published in Bartók's defense in the midst of harsh polemics raised in Romanian circles (1936). Furthermore, through Brăiloiu's mediation Bartók got acquainted with the latest discoveries in Romanian folk music research, some of which had a significant influence on Bartók's own thinking. On the other hand, Bartók praised the results of his younger Romanian colleague conspicuously through his scholarly works and in personal contacts. To mention only the most famous example in this regard, as an extraordinary exception, Bartók in his "precepts of music folklore" (*Why and how do we collect folk music*, 1936) – headed by an epigraph from a Brăiloiu article – puts in the limelight the collecting method applied by Brăiloiu's research group, citing extensive portions from Brăiloiu's own writings.

The rich correspondence between Bartók and Brăiloiu offers a unique insight into their intensive collaboration of one and a half decades. We know of altogether 76 letters, all available in publications. (See a list of all the letters known to us today in the Appendix including the main collections where they were published; I also indicate in square brackets all the items that are clearly documented as having once existed but missing for the time being.) As parts of the correspondence gradually surfaced, Bartók scholars realized the significance of this special relationship ever more clearly. Through the publication of 16 Bartók letters preserved in the collection of the Romanian Academy⁵, Brăiloiu's name became associated foremost with the unfortunate publication history of the *Colinde* volume. These letters spanning from 1926 to 1933 – published first by János Demény (1955, 1971, 1976) and András Benkő (1974) in original and/or Hungarian, and Ferenc László (1976–1977) in Romanian translation, respectively⁶ – are dealing among others with the submitting and content of the early manuscript of the *Colinde* monograph (6 May 1926), the idea of a possible German edition of the work (19 December 1930), the beginnings of the collaboration between the Oxford University Press and the SCR (from 4 March 1931 on), and questions of typography and printing. Furthermore, from here we learn that Bartók asked Brăiloiu to proofread the original Romanian libretto of the *Cantata profana* (2 July 1930), and the revision of the transcriptions of his complete Romanian folk music collection is also mentioned (10 April 1933).

The bulk of the other part of the correspondence, 23 Brăiloiu letters preserved in the Budapest Bartók estate⁷, originates from a different timespan (1924–1928 and 1934–1938), and without direct connection to the previous material; thus, both parts of the correspondence were only one-sided at this point. The Brăiloiu letters – published in part by Denijs Dille (1968), then integrally by Ferenc László (1976, 2003), republished also in Brăiloiu *Opere VII* (2008)⁸ – brought several new topics into focus. The main lessons of the material known at that point were summarized in an extended article by Ferenc László⁹. He gives a detailed account on how Bartók and Brăiloiu informed one another about their own work regularly, how they exchanged folkloristic documents, or how they carried on lively debates regarding folkloristic matters, not always in agreement with one another. Moreover, László reports in detail on the so-called Petranu attack and Brăiloiu's manifold support of Bartók in it, calling attention to Brăiloiu's Budapest talk of 1937 and Bartók's role in it, and mentioning the role of both as mediator regarding their extended connections with folklorists of the other nation¹⁰. An important article by Adrienne Gombocz (1986), presenting new documents related to the "fiasco" of the *Colinde* volume, brought to light a new Brăiloiu letter (28 May 1928)¹¹, and another new Bartók letter was also issued by Ferenc László (1990, 1993),

allein der Sache zu lieb vollbrachte. Es freut mich wirklich, dass ich damit einer Menge Leute Freude bereiten konnte." Bartók's letter to Brăiloiu, 5 November 24, published in László, "36 Bartók-Briefe aus dem Nachlaß von Constantin Brăiloiu", 396.

⁵ The original manuscripts of the 16 Bartók letters to Brăiloiu are preserved, together with the early manuscript of Bartók's *Colinde* monograph, in the manuscript collection of the National Library of Romania, Ms 22135. I am grateful to Cristina Marinescu for offering me information on this material.

⁶ See Demény, *Bartók Béla levelei III. Magyar, román, szlovák dokumentumok*; Demény, *Bartók Béla levelei. Új dokumentumok*; Demény, *Bartók Béla levelei*; Benkő, "Bartók Béla levelei Constantin Brăiloiuhoz"; László, *Bartók, Béla. Scrisori I*, and László, *Béla Bartók, Scrisori II*.

⁷ The original manuscripts of the 23 Brăiloiu letters are preserved in the Budapest Bartók Archives and Gábor Vásárhelyi's collection.

⁸ See Dille, *Documenta Bartókiana 3*; László, Francisc. "Scrisorile lui Constantin Brăiloiu către Béla Bartók"; László, "Constantin Brăiloiu's Briefe an Béla Bartók" and Comişel, *Constantin Brăiloiu, Opere VII, Corespondență, partea I (1907-1939)*. I am grateful to Alina Stan for giving me detailed information on the latter edition.

⁹ László, "Az együttműködés dokumentumai Constantin Brăiloiu Bartók Bélához intézett leveleiből". The same in Romanian: László, "Documentele colaborării. Scrisorile lui Constantin Brăiloiu către Bartók Béla".

¹⁰ On Bartók's relations with Romanian musicians and intellectuals, see Moisescu, "Bartók și Academia Română. Documente inedite". On Brăiloiu's relations with Hungarian folklorists, see Comişel and László, *Constantin Brăiloiu, partizan al etnomuzicologiei fără frontiere*.

¹¹ See Gomboczné Konkoly, "Bartók Kolinda-könyvének megíúsult angliai kiadása". For an English version of the article, but not containing the Brăiloiu letter, see Gillies and Gombocz, "The 'Colinda' Fiasco: Bartók and Oxford University Press".

showing the two scholars' "dialogue" in connection with Brăiloiu's *Colinde* volume (presumably 1938)¹². The most significant growth of material however was the discovery of 36 Bartók letters – out of which 35 are addressed to Brăiloiu – that survive in the Paris Brăiloiu estate¹³. It was once again Ferenc László who undertook the publication of this important material (1999). These letters, written between 1932 and 1939 – besides the very first item from 1924 mentioned at the beginning –, finally made it possible to get a comprehensive view of their direct exchange of ideas, notably from the later period of their correspondence. On the other hand, they show a lesser known image of Bartók generally considered to be reticent: this substantial material consisting of letters of surprising length is a vivid document of a confidential relationship, and is full of essential information that sheds light on the late workshop of Bartók the folklorist. Due to the relative belatedness of their emergence, these 35 Bartók letters received much less attention in the literature compared to their counterparts published earlier. In my article, I will try to highlight some of the most important topics that occur in these Bartók letters, either complementing our earlier knowledge on the subject, or introducing significant novelties. Yet, I am not aiming at an exhaustive discussion of the complete material or either of the topics in question; moreover, my intention is to reflect on these topics essentially from Bartók's point of view.

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In a picture postcard sent on 26 March 1932 from Cairo Bartók thanked Brăiloiu for sending him two "booklets", one of which (that on collecting) he read along the way and found "excellent". He even showed it to a couple of people there¹⁴. Bartók's remark applies to Brăiloiu's large study on collecting folk music, the *Esquisse d'une méthode de folklore musicale* (1931) that gives a detailed account of the collecting and archiving method adopted by his research group, the Folklore Archive of the SCR organized around 1925 and institutionalized in 1928¹⁵. One year later, in his letter of 21 May 1933 Bartók greeted another work by Brăiloiu, the *Note sur la plainte funèbre du village de Drăguș* (1932)¹⁶, with unusual words of praise: "Such a profound and yet good and exhaustive study and presentation of a specific folk music material I have never seen before. One could find something similar only by German musicologists [...] But even these German works remain far behind compared to your work"¹⁷. Perhaps it is not farfetched to assume that these two works gave a decisive impetus for Bartók to formulate his own methodology of folk music collecting, the earlier mentioned *Why and how do we collect folk music* (1936), that features the system of documentation used by Brăiloiu "meticulous to the extreme" as an exemplary method, giving extensive quotations from exactly these two studies by Brăiloiu¹⁸. On the other hand, a latent dialogue between them can be outlined through their writings. In his *Esquisse* Brăiloiu conceived his statements – especially those related to the definition and evaluation of folk music – in such a manner as to reflect clearly the divergences of their approach from that of Bartók. In his study on the funeral lament of Drăguș, moreover, he marked with "(B)" all the technical terms that he adopted from Bartók, in order to help develop an international ethnomusicological terminology. Bartók's answer to these is more disguised, although a parallel reading of their writings can reveal the points in his younger colleague's methodology with which he could not agree. Let us mention only two important differences. For Bartók the object of folk music research was the peasant music "in a narrower sense", in other words, "the totality of the peasant tunes exemplifying one or several more or less homogeneous styles"¹⁹. Brăiloiu's group, working in close association with the sociological school of Dimitrie Gusti, determined the scope of their research much broader, in order to include the exploration of the "social reality" to which "the musical phenomenon is inextricably attached". Thus, for them folk music meant

¹² See László, "Bartók Béla és Constantin Brăiloiu tudományos együttműködésének újabb dokumentuma" and László, "Un nou document al colaborării dintre Béla Bartók și Constantin Brăiloiu".

¹³ The original manuscripts of the 36 Bartók letters are preserved in the Bibliothèque National Paris, Nouvelles Lettres Autographes, XII/213-267.

¹⁴ "Vielen Dank für die Zusendung der 2 Hefte! Das eine (über das Sammeln) habe ich hierher mitgenommen und unterwegs gelesen. Ich finde es ausgezeichnet, habe es auch hier einigen Leuten gezeigt." Bartók to Brăiloiu, 26 March 1932, published in László, "36 Bartók-Briefe aus dem Nachlaß von Constantin Brăiloiu", 397. Bartók participated at the Congress of Arab music in Cairo between 15 and 28 March 1932, getting in closer contact with Erich von Hornbostel, Robert Lachmann, Paul Hindemith, and Egon Wellesz, among others.

¹⁵ Brăiloiu, "Schită a unei metode de folklore muzical". The same in French: Brăiloiu, "Esquisse d'une méthode de folklore musicale". Collected edition: Comişel, *Constantin Brăiloiu, Opere IV*, 115-194. The offprint of the French article is to be found in the Bartók estate, Gábor Vásárhelyi's collection, with the author's dedication dated "27.2.32". According to Ferenc László the other booklet mentioned in Bartók's letter was Brăiloiu's *Colinde și cântece de stea* (1931), also to be found in the Bartók estate with the author's dedication dated "20.1.32", see László, "36 Bartók-Briefe aus dem Nachlaß von Constantin Brăiloiu", 396-397.

¹⁶ Brăiloiu, "Despre bocetul de la Drăguș (jud. Făgăraș) / Note sur la plainte funèbre du village de Drăguș (District de Făgăraș, Roumanie)". Collected edition: Comişel, *Opere V*, 115-194.

¹⁷ "Eine so gründliche, und dabei gute und vollkommene Untersuchung und Darstellung eines Musikfolklorematerials habe ich noch nie gesehen. Dergleichen findet man höchstens bei deutsche[n] Musikologen [...] Doch selbst diese deutschen Arbeiten bleiben weit zurück im Vergleich zu Ihrer Arbeit." Bartók to Brăiloiu, 21 May 1933, published in László, "36 Bartók-Briefe aus dem Nachlaß von Constantin Brăiloiu", 398.

¹⁸ Bartók, *Miért és hogy gyűjtünk népzene? A zenei folklore törvénykönyve*. In Romanian translation: Bartók, "De ce și cum să culegem muzică populară". In English translation: Bartók, "Why and How Do We Collect Folk Music?".

¹⁹ Bartók, *Hungarian Folk Music*, 3.

"the totality of the melodies existing at a particular moment within a rural society, whatever their origin and style would be"²⁰. Brăiloiu and his colleagues published their collections in regional monographs, where analysis of music was not a goal any more, but a method. For Bartók instead, the "descriptive music folklore" was only the first step that inevitably must be followed by comparative and eventually "pragmatic music folklore"²¹.

They continued, however, a more direct dialogue through their correspondence. In his letter of 21 May 1933, after expressing his admiration for Brăiloiu's article on the Drăguș lament, Bartók raised some fundamental questions related to collecting and transcribing folk music. First, he asked Brăiloiu's opinion on the so-called extensive vs. intensive collecting of folk material, and shared his own views on the subject, that is, that he would consider a compromise to be the best: "1. Collecting thousands of melodies, as thoroughly as a relatively fast speed of working would make it possible; 2. then selecting small individual areas, for ex. a couple of villages, and investigating them to the minutest details, exactly as you have done with Drăguș. I also wanted to undertake something similar; unfortunately, it was no longer granted me to realize the plan"²².

Actually, Bartók's own Romanian folk music collection reflects this basic conception. As he came upon completely unknown material to him all along his collecting trips, it was essential for him to explore the largest territory possible within a relatively short time. After five years of intensive collecting, however, he was planning a village monograph. In February 1914, he went for the fifth time back to Bihor county, the Romanian region most assiduously investigated by him, with exactly such an idea, recording 154 melodies in Dumbrăvița de Codru and surroundings²³. His field notations made at this occasion are especially detailed, with careful notation of melodic variants, description of instruments, or registering the ritual actions connected to ceremonial songs²⁴. The scholarly elaboration and publication of the material was, however, hindered – similarly to several other of his folkloristic plans – by the outbreak of the world war.

Bartók's other remark brought up in connection with the Drăguș article is a theoretical question that points to a basic divergence within the analytical views of the two folklorists – or perhaps we might say: of the two ethnomusicological schools. Getting acquainted with Bartók's *Das ungarische Volkslied* in 1925, Brăiloiu expressed his reservations concerning the possibility of adopting for his team the system of classification used by his Hungarian colleague²⁵. Brăiloiu's research group developed at the start of their collecting trips a special system of transcribing folk melodies that differed significantly from the one used in Hungarian folk music research, according to which all melodies are transposed to one and the same g^1 final note. The members of the Folklore Archive transposed the melodies on different scale degrees of the c^1 – c^3 "theoretical scale" according to the "tonic" of the first melodic line. It was presumably Brăiloiu's Drăguș article in which Bartók encountered this system for the first time²⁶. In his letter of 21 May 1933 Bartók argued at length on why he considered his own transcription system "more practical". First, he mentioned a "formality" that speaks more about his own scientific approach rather than expressing a proper criticism: his system is only at a distance of "one accidental" compared to theirs; at the same time it facilitates comparative analysis, as the majority of the European folk melodies can be notated much comfortably transposed to g^1 than transposed to c^2 . The second point of his argument, however, concerned a truly problematic aspect of folk music analysis: according to Bartók it is "dangerous" to operate with "terms of tonality" by folk melodies, since "1. the determination of tonality is significantly more subordinated to subjective feeling than, for example, the determination of the final tone of a melodic line or a melody; 2. there are many cases when the tonal relations are unclear, unstable, difficult to determine. [...] I think, the best system for arranging melodies is the possibly purest mechanical system that eliminates every subjective perception possible."²⁷

Brăiloiu's answer to this letter is unfortunately unknown. Nevertheless, in his next letter of 6 December 1933 Bartók added further comments trying to convince Brăiloiu of his own views:

²⁰ Brăiloiu, "Outline of a Method of Musical Folklore". The citations were taken over from the English edition of Brăiloiu's article, with minor alterations in accordance with the Romanian version of the text.

²¹ Bartók, "Why and How Do We Collect Folk Music", 11-12.

²² "Es stellt sich die Frage: soll ein jeder Sammler nur einige hundert Melodien aufzeichnen, wissenschaftlich bearbeiten und herausgeben, auf diese Art wie Sie es hier tun; oder aber einige zehntausend, aber in einer – sagen wir – oberflächlicheren Art. Die Beste Lösung ist – glaube ich – in einem Kompromiss: 1. Zehntausende von Melodien sammeln, so gründlich, wie eben das schnellere Tempo der Arbeit es erlaubt; 2. dann aber einzelne kleine Gebiete z. B. einige Dörfer auszuwählen, und diese bis in die winzigsten Teile zu erforschen, wie Sie es mit Drăguș tun. Auch ich wollte derartiges unternehmen; leider war es mir nicht mehr vergönnt, den Plan zu verwirklichen." Bartók to Brăiloiu, 31 May 1933, published in László, "36 Bartók-Briefe aus dem Nachlaß von Constantin Brăiloiu", 398-399.

²³ See Ioan Bușîția's unpublished letter of 25 January 1914 (Gábor Vásárhelyi's collection, BH: III/247; photocopy in the Budapest Bartók Archives), according to which Bartók's associate from Beiuș was responsible for choosing the appropriate village for a monograph.

²⁴ The material of this collection can be found in Bartók's field collecting book no. "V", pp. 84-95 (Gábor Vásárhelyi's collection, BH: I/104; photocopy in the Budapest Bartók Archives).

²⁵ See Brăiloiu's letter to Bartók on 12 July 1925.


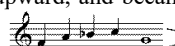

²⁶ This transposition system, further developed in many respects, is used up till now in Romanian ethnomusicology.

²⁷ "1. die Bestimmung der Tonalität ist vielmehr einem subjektiven Gefühl unterworfen, als z. B. die Bestimmung des Schlussstons einer Zeile oder einer Melodie; 2. es gibt viele Fälle, wo die Tonalitätsverhältnisse unklar, schwankend, schwer bestimmbar sind. [...] Ich glaube, das beste System für Anordnung von Melodien ist das womöglich reinste mechanische System, welches womöglich jede subjektive Auffassung ausschaltet." Bartók to Brăiloiu, 6 December 1933, published in László, "36 Bartók-Briefe aus dem Nachlaß von Constantin Brăiloiu", 407-408.

Now, your opinion is that the functional meaning of the scale degrees should also be taken into consideration when determining the pitch; my opinion, on the other hand, is that all melodies should be brought to a common final note purely mechanically. [...]

I will show you two examples, both in the same relationship as your two, that is, No. 1 with that half cadence at the end, No. 2 in the usual Bihor scale.




In my opinion, the connection between the two melodies is much clearer, as I would publish them, than as in the functional notation. The connection is – what I have suspected for a long time – that the scale degrees of Banat

 have changed in Bihor (and partly in Hunedoara etc.) in such a manner, that "a" "b" "c" moved one degree upward, and became "b" "c" "d". Now, however, this process is much more obvious, more tangible in this notation , than in this notation  ! At least according to my perception²⁸.

Bartók continued his argumentation with further examples, referring to the uncertainty of tonal function in many South Slavic melodies, or giving even a counter-example, melodic variants with a plagal cadence. The manuscript transcriptions of folk melodies collected by Bartók bear witness to his hesitations regarding the intonation of certain pitches, or in establishing the tonal structure of the melodies. Although he regularly discussed characteristic scale types in all of his folk music volumes, he never used the scales as criteria for classification. Still, preparing his late Romanian monograph, the three-volume *Rumanian Folk Music*, he felt it necessary to justify his decision – certainly not by accident: "nevertheless, scale type could not very well be used as a general basis for grouping because of the inconstancy and instability of the [...] degrees"²⁹. On the other hand, the latter excerpt of Bartók's letter draws attention to another peculiarity of his approach to folk music. Comparing and revealing morphological connections between melodies – in this case, those of neighboring territories – was of primary importance for him. As a matter of fact, all of his folk music volumes are masterly examples of such synthetic analyses of the material. Brăiloiu was very much aware of how remarkable Bartók's realizations were – although recognizing and advising him also of the "dangers" of extensive comparative research. The main reason for which he could not be persuaded by Bartók was, however, the fact that the objectives of the Folklore Archive were different from that of Bartók. As we know from recollections of their colleagues, meetings in person offered them excellent occasions to carry on lively debates particularly over transcribing methods of folk melodies. Harry Brauner, a former student of Brăiloiu observed: "Those fruitful exchange of views that Bartók and Brăiloiu had continued in the Folklore Archive of the Society of Romanian Composers in 1934 deepened an exceptional friendship, of which the whole ethnomusicological world has seen the benefit"³⁰.

Their need for "fruitful discussions" is a recurring subject also in their correspondence. It was first of all Bartók, who wished to share with his Bucharest colleague his countless findings and questions that emerged during the revision and classification of his complete Romanian collection immediately. In the aforementioned letter of 6 December 1933, Bartók wrote at length about the revision of his earlier transcriptions, on the types of corrections he was making. Moreover, we learn that listening to a single phonograph cylinder takes around one to one and a half hours, or that he had just finished revising the material of his *Colinde* volume, from which he would now make a clear copy on tissue paper. He mentioned also some of his most intriguing discoveries. As he wrote, he found several examples of so-called Bulgarian rhythm, that he notated at that time "a too lapidary fashion" in even 2/4 time, with the remark "in Gypsy rhythm". Now it seemed to him that this type of rhythm is present from Mureș–Turda through Turda–Arieș up to Arad at certain dance types. Than he added: "I have the idea that this is not a Bulgarian specialty (it is only best preserved by them), but may once have been widespread throughout the Balkans. There are certain signs, for ex., that the Székelys also knew such things"³¹. He sent the transcription of

²⁸ "Ihre Meinung ist nun, dass bei der Bestimmung der Tonhöhe auch die funktionelle Bedeutung der Stufen mit in Betracht kommen sollen; meine Meinung dagegen, dass man rein mechanisch alle Melodien auf einen gemeinsamen Schlussston bringen soll. [...] Ich will Ihnen zwei Beispiele zeigen, beide in ähnlichem Verhältniss, wie Ihre zwei, d.h. No. 1 mit jener bekannten Halbkadenz zum Schluss, No. 2 in der gewohnten Bihorer Tonreihe. // Meiner Ansicht nach ist nun der Zusammenhang beider Melodien ungleich klarer ersichtlich, wie ich sie veröffentlichen würde, als wie in der funktionelle[n] Notierung. Dieser Zusammenhang ist – was ich schon seit Langem ahne – das[s] die

Skalentöne des Banat's  sich in Bihor (und teilweise Hunedioară etc.) insoferne verändert haben, als "a" "b" "c" um eine Stufe aufwärts gerückt sind und zu "b" "c" "d" geworden sind. Nun ist aber dieser Vorgang in dieser Notierung  viel ersichtlicher, greifbarer, als in dieser Notierung  ! Wenigstens meinem Empfinden nach." Bartók to Brăiloiu, 6 December 1933, published in László, "36 Bartók-Briefe aus dem Nachlaß von Constantin Brăiloiu", 408.

²⁹ Bartók, *Rumanian Folk Music, Vol. II: Vocal Melodies*, 36.

³⁰ Brauner, "Bartók Béláról".

³¹ "Inzwischen habe ich weiter an der Revision meiner rumänischen Aufnahmen gearbeitet, wobei sich viel Interessantes gezeigt hat. Dass ich einige Beispiele für den sogenannten "bulgarischen Rhythmus" gefunden habe (die ich seinerzeit infolge mangelhafter Erfahrung etwas zu lapidarisch in 2/4 mit der Bezeichnung: *zigeunerhafter Rhythmus* aufgezeichnet habe!), habe ich Ihnen vielleicht schon neulich mitgeteilt. Seit der Zeit habe ich noch welche gefunden; es scheint dass dieser Rhythmus von Mureș Turda über Turdă Arieș bis Arad bei gewissen Tanzarten

ten such melodies together with his letter. Although this enclosure is not known to us, it is possible to identify some of these melodies based on Bartók's comments. I would mention here only two examples. Concerning his fourth examples Bartók gave the description of the three-stringed second violin that accompanied the melody played on the first violin, and noted that since the rhythm seemed remarkable to him already at the field collection, he recorded the accompaniment also separately; "when played back twice as slowly, even an untrained ear hears clearly this rhythm"³². There is only one melody among Bartók's phonograph recordings that matches this description, a *De alungu* collected by him in Idicel, Mureș county, in April 1914³³. The performers of this melody are the same two gypsies who played the *Romănie* arranged by Bartók as the opening melody of his 2nd Violin Rhapsody (BB 96)³⁴. And on the early transcriptions of certain melodies played by these two violinists we can indeed find Bartók's typical comment: "rettenetes cigánykodás" [terrible gypsyism]³⁵. – The other example which should be mentioned here is again a violin melody with accompaniment, that Bartók introduced the following way: "No. 10 is even faster, but thanks to the accompaniment (two sticks are struck against an un-stringed cello) the rhythm is clearly audible (especially at half speed)"³⁶. Then he referred to the *Pe picioare* melodies of Arad county as having this rhythm – he collected twelve melodies with rhythmic accompaniment in Pârnești, Arad county, four of which are *Pe picioare* in so-called Bulgarian rhythm³⁷. The description of the accompanying instrument is especially remarkable as this is a very early mentioning of the traditional percussive cello used in Romanian as well as in Hungarian folk dance music, known commonly as *hit gardon*³⁸. At the same time, it is an important addition to Bartók's Romanian collection, as in his late monograph these melodies appear without specifying the instrument, and the note containing its description is also missing³⁹.

The question of the so-called Bulgarian rhythm is a thoroughly discussed topic in the Bartók literature, given its outstanding importance as a personal idiom of Bartók's compositional language⁴⁰. Bartók's revelatory encounter with the work of the Bulgarian folklorist, Vasil Stoin, and subsequently his identification of this rhythmic phenomenon – later known as *aksak* (i. e. "limping") rhythm in folk music literature, using the Turkish term introduced by Brăiloiu – in his own collection, gave actually the main impetus for revising his Romanian transcriptions. Thousands of master sheets reflect Bartók's enormous energy invested in providing his folk music collections with the most accurate and detailed transcriptions possible⁴¹. However, this piece of correspondence sharing Bartók's personal reflections on the revising process bring this part of his activity in unique closeness. The subject of the "Bulgarian rhythm" recurs several times in later letters. In 31 December 1934 Bartók sent some more data on the dance melodies he found in Turda and Alba districts, enclosing his revised transcription of the *Buciumeana* melody he arranged earlier in his Romanian Folk Dances for piano (BB 68)⁴². In addition, he remarked: "it would be absolutely necessary to make gramophone recordings of these melodies as soon as possible", and urged Brăiloiu to make systematic collections in that district "already this winter"⁴³. His insistence was evidently a consequence of his encounter with the rich collection of phonograph and gramophone recordings of the Bucharest Folklore Archive on the occasion of his visit to Bucharest earlier that year, an experience that drew his attention to, among others, the incomparably better sound quality of gramophone recordings compared

verbreitet ist. [...] Ich habe die Ahnung, dass dies keine bulgarische Spezialität ist, (bloss bei den Bulgaren am besten konserviert ist) sondern früher am ganzen Balkan verbreitet gewesen sein mochte. Gewisse Zeichen sprechen z. B. dafür, dass auch die Sekler derartiges kannten." Bartók to Brăiloiu, 6 December 1933, published in László, "36 Bartók-Briefe aus dem Nachlaß von Constantin Brăiloiu", 409.

³² "Da mir der Rhythmus schon damals merkwürdig vorkam, habe ich die Begleitung auch separat aufgenommen; bei doppelt langsamen Abspielen hört auch ein ungeübtes Ohr genau diesen Rhythmus." Bartók to Brăiloiu, 6 December 1933, published in László, "36 Bartók-Briefe aus dem Nachlaß von Constantin Brăiloiu", 409.

³³ Cf. melody no. 400 of Bartók's posthumous monograph, *Rumanian Folk Music, vol. I: Instrumental Melodies*, 348.

³⁴ Lampert, *Folk Music in Bartók's Compositions: A Source Catalog*, 163.

³⁵ See the first transcriptions of melodies no. 231 and 400 of Bartók, *Rumanian Folk Music, Vol. I: Instrumental Melodies* (Gábor Vásárhelyi's collection, BH: I/97, fol. 131v; photocopy in the Budapest Bartók Archives).

³⁶ "No. 10 ist noch rascher, aber dank der Begleitung (zwei Stäbe werden gegen einen unbeseitigten V[iolon]cello! geschlagen) ist der Rythmus (namentlich bei halber Geschwindigkeit) klar zu vernehmen. In Komitat Arad ist nur "pe-picio[a]re" in diesem Rythmus, alle anderen Arten normal." Bartók to Brăiloiu, 6 December 1933, published in László, "36 Bartók-Briefe aus dem Nachlaß von Constantin Brăiloiu", 409.

³⁷ Cf. melodies no. 130b, 326a, 382a and 418 of Bartók, *Rumanian Folk Music, Vol. I: Instrumental Melodies*.

³⁸ In Arad county the small bass, known usually as *broancă*, was used traditionally as such percussive instrument, played also with a bow, see Florea, *Folclor muzical din județul Arad*, 27-30. I owe thanks to Dániel Lipták for calling my attention to this data.

³⁹ Cf. also melodies no. 155, 186g, 219, 320, 364, 395f, 489 and 628 of Bartók, *Rumanian Folk Music, Vol. I: Instrumental Melodies*. A description of the instrument can be found also on the master sheet of one of these melodies: "Húr nélküli gordonka; a muzsikuskus a ritmust egyik (jobb?) kezében pálcával, másik kezével csak úgy üresen veri rajta ki [Violoncello without strings; the musician beats the rhythm on it with a stick in one (the right?) hand, and with the other hand empty". Master sheet of melody no. 320 of Bartók, *Rumanian Folk Music, Vol. I: Instrumental Melodies*, Museum of Ethnography Budapest, NM H 3661b, online access: <https://bartok-neprajz.hu/neprajz.06.12.php?bm=1&as=10449&kv=944773>.

⁴⁰ For more recent discussions of the subject, see Rice, "Béla Bartók and Bulgarian Rhythm"; Vikárius, "Ötös ritmika Bartók zenéjében".

⁴¹ For a presentation of the extensive and manifold manuscript material of Bartók's folk music collections, see Lampert, *Folk Music in Bartók's Compositions*, 16-35.

⁴² Lampert, *Folk Music in Bartók's Compositions*, 115; online access: <http://bartok-nepzene.zti.hu/en/browse/record/BB068-L131-04/>.

⁴³ "Es müssten unbedingt und sobald als möglich Grammophon-Aufnahmen von diesen Melodien gemacht werden [...] Könnten Sie nicht jemanden noch diesen Winter in diese Gegend senden oder noch besser selber hinreisen, um diesen Tanz (Choreographie etc.) gründlich zu studieren?" Bartók to Brăiloiu, 31 December 1934, László, "36 Bartók-Briefe aus dem Nachlaß von Constantin Brăiloiu", 423.

to that of the phonograph he was accustomed to. From that on, the significance of gramophone recordings of folk music became ever more imperative for Bartók⁴⁴.

The subject of folk music recordings is another frequently recurring motif of the Bartók-Brăiloiu correspondence. Its importance became evident already from the earlier known Brăiloiu letters of the 1930s. In his article Ferenc László discussed in detail all the recordings mentioned here that they sent to each other, attempting to identify them as far as the short notes referring to them permitted⁴⁵. The Bartók letters of the Brăiloiu estate offer in many cases important additional information that can clarify hitherto ambiguous details, or present certain cases from the other angle. I would mention here only one example briefly. As László emphasized, Brăiloiu sent to Bartók a copy of the Folklore Archive's very first disc made with electronic technology, and as they began with Bihor County, he could foreshadow Bartók's joy over it, being fully aware of his special attachment to that repertoire. However, as we learn from Bartók's reply, when receiving Brăiloiu's gift, his first reaction was not entirely positive: "The recordings are indeed wonderful, only – too little! At least 10 of the Bihor *cântec* [proper song] style should have been recorded. Because these are performed with such a peculiar singing technique that is unique in the world [...]"⁴⁶. When describing the proper songs of Bihor in his late monograph Bartók characterizes the performance of these melodies in a similar manner adding a footnote about his concerns over the extinction of this unique style⁴⁷. The disc in question contained a single proper song⁴⁸. This however was fully exploited later by Bartók, using it as illustration in lectures on folk music, and even including its transcription in his *Rumanian folk music*⁴⁹.

We have touched upon only a few of the most significant subjects that occur among the 35 Bartók letters considered here. There are many other topics that could be discussed in detail. Let us mention only their terminological debate on the *hora lungă* and the curious case of the "Pandora's box" (11 and 14 November 1935, 19 October 1936, 10, 22 and 28 December 1936, 17 March 1937, 10 April 1937, 1 May 1937); Brăiloiu's inquiry about the funeral songs collected by Bartók (21 May 1933); significant additional information regarding the publication history of Bartók's *Colinde* monograph (21 May 1933, 6 December 1933, 9 August 1934, 6 October 1934, 5 and 31 December 1934, 30 June 1935), concerning the preparations of Bartók's 1934 Bucharest visit and its offensive side events (15 and 28 January 1934, 3, 5, 10 and 22 February 1934, 3 March 1934); or the plans for copying vs. buying Bartók's Romanian phonograph cylinders (5 December 1934, after 19 March 1937, 10 April 1937, after 12 April 1937, 17–27 January 1938, 11 May 1938). As the foregoing hopefully show, these letters are rich sources to a better understanding of Bartók's folkloristic activity, and unique documents of a special relationship that unfolded between two great authorities of two nations in a particularly difficult period of history.

⁴⁴ For a discussion of Bartók's role in realizing the first Hungarian folk music gramophone discs in 1936, see László Somfai's introductory study to *Hungarian Folk Music: Gramophone Records with Béla Bartók's Transcriptions*, Hungaroton.

⁴⁵ László, "Az együttműködés dokumentumai Constantin Brăiloiu Bartók Bélához intézett leveleiből"; László, "Documentele colaborării. Scrisorile lui Constantin Brăiloiu către Bartók Béla".

⁴⁶ "Wirklich herrlich sind die Aufnahmen, nur – zu wenig! Von der Bihorer *Cântec* Art sollten wenigstens 10 Melodien aufgenommen werden. Denn die werden mit einer derart eigenartigen Gesangstechnik vorgetragen, die einzigartig in die Welt dasteht [...]" Bartók to Brăiloiu, 16 March 1936, published in László, "36 Bartók-Briefe aus dem Nachlaß von Constantin Brăiloiu", 433.

⁴⁷ Cf. Bartók, *Rumanian Folk Music, Vol. II: Vocal Melodies*, 15.

⁴⁸ Cf. Brăiloiu's letter to Bartók on 14 November 1935. Brăiloiu was planning an extensive regional anthology of Romanian folk music, out of which only one series could be published due to financial difficulties (*Antologia sonoră a muzicii populare românești: I. Țara Oașului (Satu Mare)*, 5 discs). The Bihor proper song in question is available in: *Document. Arhivele Folclorice Românești. Rădăcini*, no. 35.

⁴⁹ Cf. Bartók, "Some Problems of Folk Music Research in East Europe", 184; Bartók, *Rumanian Folk Music, Vol. II: Vocal Melodies*, Appendix II/1, 171.



Fig. 1. Harry Brauner and Béla Bartók at the Folklore Archive of the Society of Romanian Composers, February 1934
(Collection of the Budapest Bartók Archive)



Fig. 2. The Bartók and the Brăiloiu couple in the garden of the Bartóks' house, Budapest, Csalán street 29, June 1937
(Collection of the Budapest Bartók Archive)

Appendix

The Bartók-Brăiloiu correspondence⁵⁰

Bartók → Brăiloiu	Brăiloiu → Bartók	Edition
1924.11.05. [before 10.07.1925]	21.10.1924	László/76, László/03, Comişel/08 László/99
06.05.1926	12. 07.1925	László/76, László/03, Comişel/08 Demény/71, Benkő/74, Demény/76, László/76b
27.06.1926	[before 12.06.1926]	
	16[–17.]02.1927	Demény/55, Benkő/74, Demény/76, László/77 Dille/68, László/76a, László/03, Comişel/08
	07.03.1927	László/76, László/03, Comişel/08
	02.02.1928	Dille/68, László/76a, László/03, Comişel/08 Benkő/74, Demény/76, László/77
02.07.1930	[01.12.1930] [03.12.1930]	
19.12.1930	[10.02.1931]	Benkő/74, Demény/76, László/77
17.02.1931	[before 22.02.1931]	Benkő/74, Demény/76, László/77
22.02.1931	[25.02.1931]	Demény/71, Benkő/74, Demény/76, László/77
04.03.1931		Benkő/74, Demény/76, László/77
06.03.1931		Benkő/74, Demény/76, László/77
23.03.1931		Benkő/74, Demény/76, László/77
22.05.1931		Benkő/74, Demény/76, László/77
	28.05.1931	Gombocz/86, László/03 Benkő/74, Demény/76, László/77
31.05.1931	[03.06.1931]	
11.06.1931		Benkő/74, Demény/76, László/77
13.01.1932		Benkő/74, Demény/76, László/77
	[before 21. 01.1932]	
23.01.1932		Benkő/74, Demény/76, László/77
26.03.1932		László/99
23.07.1932		Benkő/74, Demény/76, László/77
10.04.1933		Benkő/74, Demény/76, László/77
	[??.04.1933]	
21.05.1933		László/99
	[after 23.05.1933]	
06.12.1933		László/99
	[09.01.1934]	
15.01.1934		László/99
	[after 12.01.1934]	
28.01.1934		László/99
03.02.1934		László/99
	[01.02.1934]	
05.02.1934		László/99
	[06.02.1934]	
10.02.1934		László/99
22.02.1934		László/99
03.03.1934		László/99
09.08.1934		László/99
	15.08.1934	László/76a, László/03, Comişel/08 László/99
06.10.1934		
	[before 03.12.1934]	
05.12.1934		László/99
31.12.1934		László/99
	[after 02.01.1935]	
30.06.1935		László/99
01.09.1935		László/99
	06.09.1935	László/76a, László/03, Comişel/08 László/99
11.11.1935		
	14.11.1935	László/76a, László/03, Comişel/08 László/99
28.11.1935		László/99
18.01.1936		László/99
	09.02.1936	László/76a, László/03, Comişel/08
[before 25.02.1936]		
	27.02.1936	László/76a, László/03, Comişel/08

⁵⁰ The following table contains the data of all letters available up to now, including also in square brackets all those items that are clearly documented as having once existed but missing at present. The items considered in the present article are given in boldface. We give the first edition and main collected editions for each item.

Bartók → Brăiloiu	Brăiloiu → Bartók	Edition
16.03.1936		László/99
[before 14.07.1936]	04.05.1936	Dille/68, László/76, László/03, Comișel/08
	16.07.1936	László/76a, László/03, Comișel/08
	06.09.1936	László/76a, László/03, Comișel/08
	19.10.1936	László/76a, László/03, Comișel/08
	24.10.1936	László/76a, László/03, Comișel/08
01.11.1936		László/99
18.11.1936		László/99
25.11.1936		László/99
08.12.1936		László/99
	10.12.1936	László/76a, László/03, Comișel/08
	12.12.1936	László/76a, László/03, Comișel/08
1936.12.22.		László/99
	28.12.1936	László/76a, László/03, Comișel/08
08.01.1937		László/99
17.03.1937		László/99
	after 19.03.1937	László/76a, László/03, Comișel/08
10.04.1937		László/99
	after 12.04.1937	László/76a, László/03, Comișel/08
01.05.1937		László/99
	07.05.1937	László/76a, László/03, Comișel/08
19.05.1937		László/99
14.07.1937		László/99
	[before 12.1937]	
17–27.01.1938		László/99
	11.05.1938	László/76a, László/03, Comișel/08
	17.05.1938	László/76a, László/03, Comișel/08
12.06.1938		László/99
?? 1938		László/90, László/93
06.03.1939		László/99

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