

# New Europe College *Ștefan Odobleja* Program Yearbook 2016-2017



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# POPULAR MUSIC AND OFFICIAL CULTURE IN 1980s SOCIALIST ROMANIA

## Abstract

This article addresses the entangled relationship between various genres of popular music and official culture in socialist Romania during the last part of the communist regime, the 1980s. It provides an analysis of the cultural and political context of late socialist Romania, focusing on the communist regime's attempts at cultural control and uniformization and on the negotiations with various popular music scenes which emerged throughout the country. Furthermore, the article addresses issues of censorship, cultural transnational networks, and it explores the relation between amateur and professional artists, both in the official context of political festivals and in the often informal one of local music festivals and performances, in an attempt to go beyond the received wisdom of 1980s Romania as a closed society.

**Keywords:** popular music, Romania, socialism, culture, censorship, political festivals, amateur artists, transnational networks.

## Introduction

This article aims at construing popular music genres in socialist Romania, during the 1980s, in an attempt to go beyond the national framework of analysis, while paying attention to the numerous transnational cultural networks, formed either officially, or within the realms of the black market. In terms of popular music, 1980s socialist Romania represented an all-encompassing mixture of genres: a rejuvenated and, most of the times, artificially reconstructed folk culture, that was addressed to both the new urban class and to the so-called "working peasantry", coexisted with a postindustrial popular culture, made up of traditional light music, pop music, as well as various subgenres of rock and jazz music.

Almost every existing genre was made to fit the official culture paradigm: from choirs praising the economic achievements of the single Party and folk singers dedicating songs to the national past, to hard rock

bands supporting the fight for peace and disarmament. Traditional religious and secular festivals were joined by numerous, newly emerged, recurring artistic manifestations, organized at a political level; thus, the last decade of communist Romania was marked by the “National Festival of Socialist Culture and Education *Song of Romania*” which had started out as a unifying cultural competition for professionals and amateurs alike, only to become instrumental to Nicolae Ceaușescu’s personality cult during the 1980s. Alternative youth culture ranged from the increasingly politicized “Cenaclul Flacăra”, led by official poet Adrian Păunescu, to officially sanctioned rock bands, that managed to eschew official propaganda lyrics, while delving into classic Romanian poetry and mythology, thus earning the admiration of the college educated elitist youth. The 1980 also saw the emergence of a low-brow type of popular music, the so-called oriental music, or *proto-manele*, a genre never represented in official culture, which, nevertheless, enjoyed tremendous popular appeal and nurtured an entire black market.

While the 1980s in socialist Romania have been perceived as a period of economic crisis, political dictatorship, and cultural autarchy based on a resurgence of nationalism, a historical inquiry of popular music during this period can nuance one’s understanding of the cultural landscape during late socialism. Furthermore, it can redefine not only the entangled relations between ideology, state, cultural policies, alternative and official culture, but also the way in which cultural centers and peripheries are constructed beyond the national framework of analysis.

I will start with a brief overview of popular music genres and of the relation between amateur and professional artists, as part of the state institutional network. I will, thus, first focus on the 1960s and 1970s, and I will pay attention to the case study of Radio Free Europe journalist Cornel Chiriac and on how it influenced popular music (especially rock music) in Romania, during the 1980s. For the latter period, I will present the cultural context, dominated by the *Song of Romania* festival, as well as the main popular music genres of the 1980s: jazz music, rock music, *muzică populară*, light music, and *proto-manele*. My aim will be to analyze how the official cultural context of the 1980s influenced the existence of these music genres and how the socialist state sought to negotiate the boundaries of cultural activity, with various artists and audiences.

## **Official Culture and Popular Music in Late Socialist Romania: The Beginnings**

In the late 1940s, the ideology of the Romanian Workers' Party made a clear difference between professional artists and amateur ones, as evident from all reports presented at official plenaries, congresses and directorate meetings. In terms of policies, this translated into the financial retribution of the professional artist and the status attributed to the amateur one. For instance, after 1948, actors, musicians, singers, or script writers were forced to become "state artists", which, for them, meant receiving a fixed salary<sup>1</sup>. They had to perform for working people and worker peasant audiences, but they were also paid for activities with amateur artists. Nevertheless, certain artists continued to make money informally out of concerts. While for classical music or early jazz musicians this was harder, as the number of halls and restaurants with an audience for such genres was limited, for folklore performers this became relatively easy, when they performed in the province.

The explanation for this situation is twofold: on the one hand, control in Bucharest restaurants was stricter, as their audience was more heterogeneous and included foreigners as well, embassy employees in the early 1950s, but also tourists, later on. The second explanation is ideological, and had to do with the Party's view of so-called cosmopolitan genres, like jazz, seen as foreign and representative for foreign, Western ideology. While this will oscillate over time, the 1950s are marked by a rigid opposition to any foreign styles, other than the ones from the Soviet Union or friendly socialist countries.<sup>2</sup>

The 1960s brought a new popular music genre onto the scene, that of rock music. Movies and an increased tourist activity played a key role in the development of rock music in socialist Romania.<sup>3</sup> Initially, the genre was the perquisite of young amateur musicians. While state officials kept a close eye on the amateur movement, what they failed to take into account was the separation that still existed between the working class and those working in the educational sector, in terms of cultural and artistic tastes. Thus, activists remained strictly focused on their own propaganda materials, that prescribed ever changing activities, without considering everyday life realities. By 1970 however, music bands, particularly young ones, tended to professionalize, that is, to turn their activity into a permanent one, or to search for opportunities in higher education (such as attending the Conservatory, or the Theatre and Film National

School). This meant that not only would their tastes change, but also their repertoire, while at the same time making them much less malleable to influences from the propaganda apparatus. Throughout the 1960s, such amateur bands became the first professional popular music young bands in Romania, such as *Phoenix*, *Sincron*, *Entuziaștii*, *Sideral*, and *Mondial*.

Initially, they were marginalized by the regime, more tolerated than encouraged. However, by the mid-1960s the state owned *Electrecord* record company began to issue the first 7 inch records of bands such as *Entuziaștii*, *Sincron*, or *Coral*, which played beat music: either adaptations of Western hits, such as *Entuziaștii*<sup>4</sup>, or of traditional folklore, played in a rock 'n' roll manner, such as *Sincron*. The latter band, for instance, used beat rhythms, vocalist – choir duets and electric guitar solos in their adaptation of the traditional *Hăulita de la Gorj*.<sup>5</sup> The late 1960s would bring about not just a more tolerant and liberal attitude from the state, but also the release of original beat songs, sung in Romanian, as would be the case with the record debut of the band *Phoenix*. The reason for this is purely financial: initially, *Electrecord* viewed the release of original Romanian beat songs as unprofitable, and focused on records either by Romanian bands singing in English, or on foreign singers and bands (from Italy, Sweden, France, GDR) who sang primarily in English, but also French and Italian. The first EP record by *Phoenix* contained two adaptations by *The Beatles* and two original songs. When the record's success (and sales) was higher than that most such records, *Electrecord* allowed the band to record a second EP of original songs in Romanian. Such an example shows that finances were, at times, more important than ideology. Throughout the 1970s, more and more amateur bands which started in local houses of culture would make their way toward professionalization, while also taking part in various artistic and cultural festivals and competitions.

The case of amateur bands turning professional and opening up toward Western influences played a significant part in the history of festivals and artistic competitions, especially in urban areas (large centers, as well as small towns) and for the young generation. Western radio stations, particularly US sponsored ones, such as Radio Free Europe, small contraband traffic in the border areas, especially in the western part of Romania, and, equally important, international tourism, that allowed foreign tourist to bring in their own everyday life consumer culture to Romania, all these influenced youth culture, as well as amateur artistic activities.<sup>6</sup> In order to assess how these exchanges were possible, what their influences were, and, more importantly, what negotiations (formal or



informal) took place between various state institutions and ordinary people, one can use a variety of sources. Oral history interviews are one such solution, both in terms of sources and in terms of investigating the issue. Another source is represented by the *Securitate* files. Ordinary people, as well as celebrities, found themselves either kept under surveillance, or approached and forced into becoming informants. Of course, when reading such files, one has to take everything with a grain of salt. Despite its fearsome reputation, the *Securitate* was primarily a bureaucratic institution. It needed to maintain an ever-present image in front of the RCP, that it was the one institution to rely on in order to keep things under control. In doing so, the *Securitate* kept huge amounts of informative reports on various people, in many cases just for the sake of providing the Party leadership with the image of laborious activity. Even the smallest details were recorded, either by zealous *Securitate* officers, or simply offered by informants who thought they showed cooperation. These details, found *passim* in various such informative reports, can be used to reconstruct the youth culture of the 1960s, and beyond, as well as everyday life activities, that would be, otherwise, lost or neglected in present day memories. One such case is that of Cornel Chiriac' *Securitate* file.

### **Official versus Popular: The Case of Cornel Chiriac and Its Influence on the 1980s**

Cornel Chiriac was a radio producer, journalist, and, occasionally, a jazz drummer. He remains famous, however, for his radio broadcast for Radio Free Europe, named *Metronom*, from 1969 until 1975, when he was assassinated in Munich.<sup>7</sup>

In the early 1960s, while he was a high school pupil in his native town of Pitești, Chiriac came under the attention of the *Securitate*, for so-called "subversive actions" [*activitate de agitație cu caracter dușmănos*].<sup>8</sup> According to the *Securitate* agents who kept him under surveillance, Chiriac had manifested a "hostile attitude toward our country, the Romanian People's Republic" and had condemned Romania's attitude and policies toward the promotion of jazz music.<sup>9</sup> He was also presented as a follower of "the surrealist abstractionist movement, which is a reactionary movement, with no materialist basis whatsoever."<sup>10</sup>

Because of this, the *Securitate* infiltrated collaborators among Chiriac's close friends, to find out about his habits, musical tastes, correspondence,

and sources of information.<sup>11</sup> Chiriac openly expressed his disdain for the difficulties of having access to jazz music in Romania, as well as of popularizing jazz music, in letters to his friends, some of which were intercepted by the *Securitate*.

In a letter to a certain Mr. Colan, Chiriac asserted his frustration at not having received any feedback from the *Contemporanul* magazine, after he had sent an article about the history and importance of jazz music:

I was a bit rushed in my last letter, since I was under pressure with my letter to the *Contemporanul*. The sixteen pages, in which I presented my points of view and opinions on jazz, have cost me a night without rest.

I haven't received any answer until today. I don't know what to believe. Anyway, I'll keep on waiting. I have also sent them a note on the *Electrecord* record which has kept me busy for almost a month. I have, also, put forth a proposition about an introductory class on jazz in a magazine column inside the *Contemporanul*, dedicated to the topic.

I even went as far as citing a quote from the "Bases of Marxist-Leninist Esthetics" regarding music. Indeed, I did write in harsh terms about certain persons. Anyway, this is the last time (as it is the first time as well) when I try to write to a Romanian publication.<sup>12</sup>

The *Securitate* report containing the facsimile of the letter asked for operative measures to keep Chiriac under surveillance on a permanent basis. A few weeks later, a report from one of the *Securitate* agents, in charge of Chiriac, contained data about the latter's room and magazine collection. The room had the word "jazz" written on the wall in letters made of fir cones. Chiriac also had a transistor radio which he used – according to source "Rose" – to listen to Radio Free Europe. He had also written an underground fanzine, called "Jazz Cool", which he intended to send to his friends by post.<sup>13</sup>

Eventually, the *Securitate* intercepted Chiriac's fanzine collection, in 1963, and even had the young jazz fan report to its county headquarters in Pitești, to give a full statement of his actions. Chiriac acknowledged that he had been too "fiery and hotheaded" about his remarks about the republic, but he defended jazz music, which he saw as the music of the oppressed, the music of those who fight capitalism around the world:<sup>14</sup>

I started working on the magazine in (August) 1962 and I continued working until July 1963. I was not forced, neither was I advised by anyone

when I took this initiative. I acknowledge the fact that I have broken the rules of our state when I started editing an illegal magazine. Its content is purely musical, politically harmless. But a fact is a fact: I have committed a crime, by writing it and by disseminating it amongst the youth. [...] I saw the magazine as a means to straighten out certain problems of jazz: its deeply popular origins, (jazz is black people's music, born in the fire of the struggle for freedom, against slavery and humiliation inflicted by the American bourgeois society, founded on the domination of the white race. I was also looking to show that there is no connection between the true jazz music and commercial productions of fashionable light music: Rock 'n' Roll, Twist, Cha-Cha-Cha, Mambo, etc.<sup>15</sup>

Chiriac's case is enlightening not only because it deals with a music genre generally marginalized in Romania until the 1960s.<sup>16</sup> It is interesting because it shows the musical tastes and means of access to musical information for a young person who lived in the province. What is also interesting is the authorities' attitude toward jazz. While the *Securitate* agents considered it to be cosmopolitan and reactionary, by 1963 the state label *Electrecord* had already released a few recordings of Romanian jazz musicians, such as Teodor Cosma<sup>17</sup> or Jancsi Kőrössi. This makes the relation between state and jazz (or other music genres) more ambiguous and shows that it could vary according to the agency of the people involved. Furthermore, the reason why jazz or beat music were important for the amateur artistic movement was that it was not considered, for the most part, by the state to be part of professional musical activities, thus being relegated to amateur activities of the young generation.<sup>18</sup> This situation maintained well into the 1970s and was particularly obvious when attempting to secure a record deal with *Electrecord*. In an article in *Flacăra* Magazine in 1971, George Stanca, a pop music reviewer, noticed how hard it was for any pop artist to release a record, as they had to pass through several levels of official acceptance.<sup>19</sup> The most important one was to get official approval from the Union of Composers and Musicologists in Romania, which only included professional musicians, primarily those with a music higher education. Amateur pop bands were excluded, from the start, from such membership and faced a much tougher environment, as they had to gain support from various television and radio officials, as well as from the public. Their repertoire was, usually, the most relevant for audiences, while ordinary amateur bands were mainly artificially supported by the State, through factories and educational institutions. Cornel Chiriac's case study is of importance for exactly these amateur

bands, whose potential the socialist state never fully realized. While other such case studies are necessary to fully grasp the intricacies of state policies and everyday life reactions, it sets, nonetheless, the framework for analyzing the negotiations that took place between state and ordinary people.

## 1980s Political Festivals and Popular Music

Although political festivals played an important role throughout the history of the Romanian communist regime, they became even more important in the early 1970s, with the advent of Ceaușescu's personality cult and the shift toward a mixture of nationalism and socialist ideology. Political festivals took on the task of articulating the discourse of national commemorations through an extended series of cultural and artistic practices. Illustrating the regime's attempt at unified control and pompous celebrations, all local and national political festivals in Romania were joined together in 1976 under the umbrella of the so called "National Festival of Socialist Education and Culture *Song of Romania*".<sup>20</sup> This festival appeared after the Eleventh Congress of the Romanian Communist Party (1974) and the first Congress of Political Education and Socialist Culture (1976), when the regime included more and more nationalistic elements into its communist ideology.

Initiated in 1976, *Song of Romania* lasted until 1989, comprising seven editions, which were held every two years. Each edition lasted from autumn of one year until the summer of the following one.<sup>21</sup>

The festival focused especially on amateur artists (whether workers, pupils, peasants, etc.). It consisted of a network of artistic competitions, between all types of social, professional and age categories, and it included several phases: a lower, mass level, a county and a regional one, as well as a republican level of competition, in which, the propaganda claimed, only the selected best of the other levels would participate. Although the festival focused on amateur artists, it also included professional artists, but their function was often reduced to that of supervising the activity of amateurs. Therefore, many intellectuals and professional artists came to view *Song of Romania* as a means for depriving them of their traditional status, of creators of culture. Although, at an institutional level, this was more and more obvious in the increase of state control over professional artists' unions, the relations between "intellectuals", the regime and *Song*

of *Romania* are more complex.<sup>22</sup> By the mid-1970s, the regime had started making budget cuts in the amount of paper for magazines and books. After 1976, *Song of Romania* brought a further budget cut, by drawing in most of the state funding for artistic activities. This affected professional writers and artists directly, as indicated by reports from the *Securitate* archive.<sup>23</sup> Notwithstanding this, professional artists maintained their role and their work, as both supervisors and competitors, which in turn, preserved their social and artistic status and augmented their incomes. Thus, the official intentions of the socialist regime turned into a series of intricate negotiations, which could mean either competing for state resources in a society marred by increased shortage, resisting to it or, simply, complying with situation, in what has been called for a different ideological and historic case study “passive participation”.<sup>24</sup>

From 1976 until 1989, *Song of Romania* underwent an increase in the number of participants, ranging from 2,000,000 members for its first edition of 1976-1977, to 5,084,000 “performers and creators of various ages and professions” in 1989.<sup>25</sup> To these data, one should also add the number of passive participants, such as spectators, or persons in charge of organizing the performances.

As Anca Giurchescu points out, *Song of Romania* did not bring anything innovative concerning the type of artistic performances, continuing, in fact, a line of artistic festivals, which had been set up, with the proclamation of the communist republic.<sup>26</sup> For instance, *Festivalul filmului la sate* [The Film Festival for Villages] existed before 1976.<sup>27</sup> However, after the emergence of *Song of Romania*, this festival was incorporated in it, along with other festivals already in existence at a local or regional level.<sup>28</sup>

Nonetheless, *Song of Romania* represented the main context within which all cultural activities would take place throughout the 1980s. Thus, the festival also influenced and shaped the evolution of popular music in the last decade of socialist Romania, with consequences leading well into the post-communist period.

In the political, economic, and cultural context of 1980s socialist Romania, certain popular music genres not only survived, but flourished, while others struggled to maintain their existence. The causes for these oscillations were manifold and they went beyond the ideological realm, encompassing factors which, at times, had to do more with the evolutions of music genre publics than with Party plenums. As already seen, festivals were the basis of official culture in the latter part of Romanian late socialism. This aspect also reflected in the life of jazz music. As jazz critic

Virgil Mihaiu points out, jazz festivals played a crucial role for musicians and audiences interested in the genre.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, jazz festivals grew in number throughout the 1980s: from one major festival, held initially in Ploiești and, later on, in Sibiu, an entire framework started to grow, comprising recurring manifestations in Brașov (during winter time) and Costinești, on the Black Sea coast (during the summer). These three festivals managed to retain a recurring feature, while others, held in cities and towns, such as Iași, Satu-Mare, Zalău, etc. had only a sporadic existence. Such festivals started out in the periods of relative liberalization.<sup>30</sup>

The ones which were best organized and became most important did so also with the help of foreign musicians who played in Romania. Either from Western, capitalist countries (Roberta Flack, Chick Corea), or from socialist ones (Vladimir Tarasov, Vladimir Chekasin), these musicians wrote letters to Romanian officials, in which they described the positive experiences they had had while playing to Romanian audiences. As a consequence, they would ask Romanian officials for permission to return to such jazz festivals, thus ensuring their existence. Not only foreign musicians played an important role. Foreign magazines, namely the Polish *Jazz Forum*, provided Romanian jazz musicians and critics with an arena, within which they could present Romanian jazz life to international audiences.<sup>31</sup> This latter aspect was particularly important, since, as Virgil Mihaiu had pointed out in 1982, Romanian jazz music was not accurately reflected in Romanian newspapers and cultural magazines at the time.<sup>32</sup>

Jazz festivals and concerts could, at times, represent realms of a more open-minded approach to cultural issues. This was especially true of the Costinești festival, which was also broadcasted live on *Radio Vacanța* (Radio Holiday), a local radio station, whose range of transmission was limited, nonetheless, to the Costinești holiday resort. Notwithstanding this aspect, when it came to records, jazz music found itself in a rather dire situation throughout the 1980s: less than 15 jazz records were released by *Electrecord* from 1980 until 1989.<sup>33</sup> The musicians lucky enough to have records released during this decade were already established artists and had started to release records since the 1970s. Vocal jazz, jazz rock, contemporary jazz were considered accessible enough by *Electrecord* officials to deserve a release, while more experimental subgenres, such as free jazz, were mainly left aside.

Harry Tavitian's case was symptomatic for this latter aspect. Tavitian's first two records were released abroad, in the UK, on the independent label *Leo Records*, which had started out with the purpose of disseminating

East European and Soviet jazz music to Western audiences.<sup>34</sup> Jazz critic Virgil Mihaiu managed to smuggle a series of tape recordings, which featured Tavitian's concerts, and bring them over to the UK label. This, in its turn, released them as a series of long play records. However, not only Western audiences were intrigued by them. According to Tavitian, the *Securitate* also became interested and, indirectly, this led to the musician's first record released in Romania, with the help of the Goethe Institute.<sup>35</sup> Released in 1988, *East-West Creativ Combinations* was based on Harry Tavitian's concert of the same year, together with Corneliu Stroe and German musicians Reinhart Hammerschmidt and Hans Kumpf. The music features a combination of folk music themes, which form the basis for a series of free jazz improvisations, based on vocals, percussion, and woodwind instruments, as well as piano. Unlike other jazz records released in Romania throughout the 1980s, which enjoyed a relatively high press run, Tavitian's record was pressed in only 200 copies, and most of these were destined for the West German market.<sup>36</sup>

In a way, such cases reflected closely on jazz music's situation in the larger cultural context dominated by a festival such as *Song of Romania*: there was little official interest, but once artists started making themselves noticed abroad, personal agency could play an important role in making the system's wheels turn.

Rock music in 1980s socialist Romania had already had its own history of conflict with the regime, even though most releases by Romanian rock bands had followed the ideological principles set by the Romanian Communist Party. Thus, it is quite ironic, and telling of how Romanian rock music developed during communism, that, by 1981, the leaders of Romania's two most important rock bands had fled the country. In 1977, Nicolae Covaci had made a spectacular escape, taking with him most of the band *Phoenix*, except vocalist Mircea Baniciu.<sup>37</sup> In 1981, Dan Andrei Aldea, the leader of the other significant Romanian rock band, *Sfinx*, asked for political asylum, while on tour in Belgium, and settled in Munich. *Phoenix* had released three records during the 1970s. These had been the subject of official censorship, to various degrees. Thus, the band's first LP, *Cei ce ne-au dat nume* (1972), was supposed to feature several songs, which never passed the scrutiny of censors, for reasons which remain obscure until today.<sup>38</sup> Notwithstanding this, *Cei ce ne-au dat nume* also featured an almost fifteen minutes song, titled *Negru Vodă* (Black Voivode), which told the story of a medieval prince (voivode), who defends his motherland from foreign invaders. The song's

theme chimed well with the Romanian Communist Party's then recent ideological turn toward nationalism. At the same time, it incorporated a contemporary hard rock sound, as well as jazz improvisations, which were perfectly synchronized with the music of *Phoenix's* Western counterparts. Similarly, the LP *Zalmoxe*, *Sfinx's* second album, from 1979, dealt with the theme of the Dacian deity of the same name.<sup>39</sup> One should stress that, by the late 1970s, the history of the Dacians was considered of particular importance for reasons which had to do more with ideology than with scientific reasons.<sup>40</sup>

The histories of Nicolae Covaci and Dan Andrei Aldea are representative for the larger context within which rock musicians and rock music fans were constrained to operate not only in the 1970s, but also in the 1980s. Classically trained musicians and those who performed lighter or more traditional genres of music (such as light/pop music, or *muzică populară*) benefited from official support, when it came to reaching the status of professional artist, a title which enabled them to perform, record, and be officially acknowledged for their cultural activity. This was also because the state directly sponsored the above-mentioned music genres through institutions and music ensembles, and because it also provided aspiring musicians and artists with an educational framework, which only served to underline their cultural activity as an official one. Jazz and rock musicians did not benefit from such leverage. However, throughout the late socialist period, as the state changed its attitude toward Western based popular music genres, musicians could make use of its network of houses of culture, in order to pursue a music career. Nonetheless, in general, rock musicians encountered more difficulties. Thus, to reach the goal of getting a record deal from *Electrecord*, one needed to have success at a local level first (by playing in a house of culture, or a restaurant).<sup>41</sup> This represented a first occasion to obtain better instruments. For the musicians who lived in major cities, such as Bucharest, Cluj, or Timișoara, or near the Western border, there were more such opportunities along with the possibility of getting hold of the latest records, either as original copies, or in bootleg format. This latter aspect was also important for the informal education of aspiring young rock musicians. Likewise, family background played an important role in becoming a rock musician: in most cases, young people from middle class families, had better access to records and instruments. There were also exceptions to the rule, when houses of culture provided the instruments which were necessary. In certain cases, at major student festivals, bands which were already established and owned



better instruments agreed to lend their gear to younger performers.<sup>42</sup> For most bands, the crucial step was moving to one of the main cities. For those living in smaller towns, this happened as they pursued their higher education, a step which usually meant the break-up of previous bands and the formation of new ones, in the new location. Playing in a major house of culture or in a major restaurant could bring bands in the spotlight, as long as these would get the attention and, later on, the support of journalists who worked for a central newspaper or magazine. This was followed by the opportunity to record several songs for the national radio station. Since 1977, this radio station was usually *Radio 3 Tineret* (Radio 3 Youth), which had been established as a response to Radio Free Europe and its broadcasts on popular music, initiated by Cornel Chiriac.<sup>43</sup> Finally, if a song would enjoy popularity on the radio, then there might have been the possibility to record for the state company, *Electrecord*.<sup>44</sup> For certain bands, being part of the Festival *Song of Romania* also played a role in getting the opportunity to have their recordings released by the state label. One striking example is that of the band *Accent*, from Tulcea. A progressive rock band, playing in a highly experimental and inaccessible style, *Accent* won 1<sup>st</sup> Prize at the 1981 Edition of *Song of Romania*.<sup>45</sup>

Being a rock music fan meant that one either had to form or to become part of an already formed network, which combined informal connections and official institutions. Obtaining the latest Western records was socially conditioned: the higher the social status, the easier it was to get hold of physical copies of records, which acquired a symbolic status. Music journalist Florin-Silviu Ursulescu provides an insightful image of what it meant to become part of such networks. His sources included TAROM air pilots and truck drivers, who travelled abroad. In order to make use of their services, however, he needed foreign currency, which was only available from foreign students, who had come to study in Romania, or from low rank employees of foreign embassies.<sup>46</sup> Later on, after he started working for *Radio 3 Tineret*, he had to use his informal contacts again, this time not only to obtain the latest records of successful Western rock bands, such as *Led Zeppelin* or *Pink Floyd*, but also of more obscure artists from Italy or France, who had recorded for *Electrecord* during the 1960s and were accepted by censorship for radio broadcasting.<sup>47</sup>

According to the musicians who lived during late socialist Romania, censorship was omnipresent. It manifested itself at various levels and its agency took on many forms. For instance, as Ursulescu recalls, radio censorship comprised several stages: a sound engineer would verify the

tape on which the music was recorded and approved it from a technical point of view. Foreign lyrics were translated. A second censor would listen to the tape, while reading the lyrics. Only then would the tape be marked as *bun de emisie* (approved for broadcast).<sup>48</sup>

*Electrecord* also had its own censors, who could decide whether the artwork, music, or lyrics for a record were inappropriate for a variety of reasons. Rodion Roșca, the leader of the band *Rodion G.A.*, recalls how lyrics were modified for no reasons, or in order to oust just one word which was considered troublesome. For instance, for the song *Satul de rouă* (The Village Made of Dew), the lyrics *Sufletu-mi la tine vine,/Să-l purifici și să-l ierți* (My soul comes to you/So you may purify and forgive it) had the word *purifici* (purify) replaced with *întâmpini* (welcome). According to Roșca, the word *purifici* was considered mystical and this led to it being censored. One can only wonder then why another word such as *suflet* (soul) was left unmodified.<sup>49</sup> In other cases surprisingly daring lyrics managed to appear on disc. One such case was of the song *Protest*, by the band *Metrock*, from the city of Oradea. *Protest* opened the B side of the band's sole LP, *Castelul de nisip* (The Sand Castle). It featured lyrics such as *Vreau să știu de ce se uită unii după mine/Fiindcă am păr lung și barbă, c-așa-mi stă mai bine* (I want to know why some people look strangely at me/Because I have long hair and a beard, 'cause this is how I look my best).<sup>50</sup> Furthermore the lyrics opened the song and were repeated in the second stanza, after an aggressive, hard rock style, guitar solo. One explanation for this situation is the fact that the song's theme dealt with peace and the fight against war, a topic which had been a favorite of official propaganda during the 1950s and had been brought again upfront during the 1980s. Such a theme also allowed *Metrock* to feature its four members on the LP cover wearing long hair and beards, a rather uncommon feature for the *Electrecord* artwork at the time.<sup>51</sup>

Similarly, the most famous Romanian hard rock band of the 1980s, *Iris* used the theme of peace, to feature a portrait of AC/DC guitar player, Angus Young, on the cover of their second LP, *Iris II*, in 1987.<sup>52</sup> Created by fellow musician and illustrator Alexandru Andrieș, the front cover of *Iris II* depicted Angus Young during a live performance, dressed in his trademark school-boy uniform. One cannot see the guitarist's face, as his head is leaned forward. Both his head and the guitar head are painted to indicate an explosion of energy and fire. Furthermore, the one song on the album which dealt explicitly with the theme of peace, *Lumea vrea pace* (People want peace), combines the musical styles of two of the

most prominent hard rock/heavy metal Western bands of the 1980s: *AC/DC* and *Judas Priest*. The chorus of the song is built following the *AC/DC* pattern: the backing vocalists repeat the word *pace* (peace), supporting the front vocalist. *AC/DC* would use the same type of chorus, to underline messages that, nonetheless, dealt with sexuality, over-the-top masculinity, or debauchery.

Other bands enjoyed less luck. For instance, the band *Celelalte Cuvinte* had the cover for their first album rejected, because it depicted antique ruins and modern buildings. Allegedly, the reason behind this rejection had to do with the year of the LP release, which coincided with the tenth-year commemoration since the 1977 earthquake. One should notice that *Celelalte Cuvinte*'s music style was that of progressive rock, including numerous folk influences. By the second half of the 1980s, the genre was not only unfashionable among Western audiences, but it had lost any features which the official regime might have regarded as threatening.<sup>53</sup> Notwithstanding, censorship was much more permissive when it came to live concerts in smaller venues. Audiences could manifest themselves: scream, shout, sing in unison with the band. Performers could play, while imitating their Western counterparts and role models.<sup>54</sup>

The black market and informal networks played a crucial part in the history of both jazz and rock music during late socialist Romania, but, as the 1980s carried on, they became more important. Distribution networks were created with the purpose of disseminating popular music records among students, high-school pupils, as well as factory workers who resided either in urban or rural areas. While certain networks were facilitated by the very modernization process the socialist state had started (such as airline or maritime transportation, access to Romanian higher education for foreign students), others depended heavily on connections that existed before the communist period. In this latter sense, areas such as Banat (in the western part of Romania, bordering Hungary and Yugoslavia) or the cities of Brăila and Galați (both ports on the Danube, in the eastern part of the country) saw the development of black markets, centered around the distribution and manufacture of recordings, which depended more on their historical transnational character.

By the mid-1980s, Western editions of the then fashionable hard rock/heavy metal bands could cost as much as 800 lei per copy. By comparison, the price for one *Electrecord* record was 26 lei, seldom reaching 28. Most sellers made copies of the record and either sold the copies and kept the original, or vice versa.<sup>55</sup> A special case study is that of the Romanian

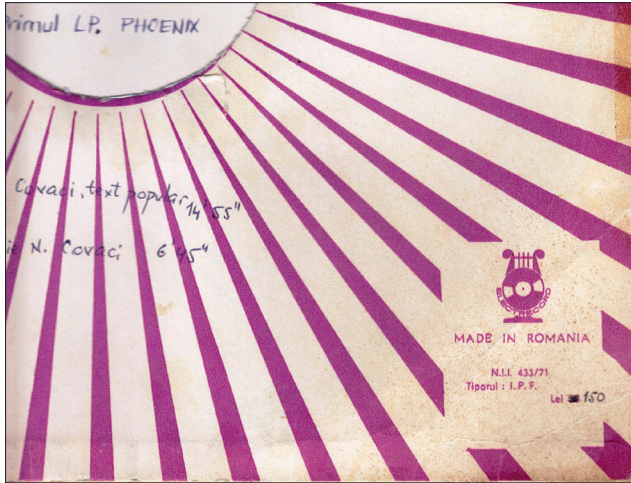
band *Phoenix* and of the *Sfinx* recordings which featured Dan Andrei Aldea.<sup>56</sup> Because most members from *Phoenix* and several from *Sfinx* had either fled or immigrated, the 1970s records of the two bands were not accessible anymore. Furthermore, the band *Phoenix* was eliminated altogether from the Romanian rock music guide published in two editions, 1977 and 1979.<sup>57</sup> The fact that *Electrecord* did not reissue these bands' releases did not prevent fans from purchasing them illegally, most of the times from official vendors in the main music magazines.<sup>58</sup> One worker from the *Electrecord* pressing plant even started printing bootlegs of the three LPs *Phoenix* had released during the previous decade. Allegedly, he gave them away as presents, until one day a *Securitate* colonel asked for a copy of such a bootleg from the *Electrecord* director. Despite the colonel's claim that the copy was supposed to be a present for his daughter, the director denied the whole story, started an internal investigation and, eventually, fired the worker.<sup>59</sup>



Phoenix, *Cei ce ne-au dat nume* (1980s Bootleg Copy)  
(Author's Personal Collection)

The story was presented in one of the main Romanian newspapers in the early 2010s. The worker, who wished to remain anonymous, omitted, however, an important part of the narrative. The bootleg records were not offered as gifts, but got sold for sums of money which varied from 150 to 200 lei per LP.<sup>60</sup> This meant, for instance, that *Phoenix's* double LP, *Cantofabule*, sold for as much as 400 lei. The records came in generic

*Electrecord* sleeves and had no labels. Certain buyers designed their own labels and artwork.<sup>61</sup> Even compared to the prices for Western made records, those paid for unofficial copies of Phoenix LPs seem unusually high, given the bootleg audio quality and the lack of original artwork. The fact is indicative for the high regard the band still enjoyed from its audiences.



Price of a *Phoenix* Bootleg LP (Detail)  
(Author's Personal Collection)

Jazz and rock music during the 1980s survived rather than developed, an aspect which holds especially true when one considers the number of releases by *Electrecord* for each genre. While the number of rock music records was higher than that of jazz records, the two-combined represented an almost insignificant number, when compared to those dedicated to classical music, folk, light music, or political records. Furthermore, it would seem rather odd to include the so-called *muzică populară* in the realm of popular music. The term has been closely associated with that of folklore, usually referring to oral music, which developed independently of state institutions.<sup>62</sup> Leaving aside the (completely erroneous) juxtapositions one might make between the word-by-word English translation of *muzică populară* and popular music *per se*, in this case, by *muzică populară* one understands the hybrid musical form, based on traditional folk music which

emerged in the interwar period. *Muzică populară* combined influences from the contemporary light music, as well as elements of early jazz music. Thus, *muzică populară* existed before the communist regime, but it was changed by the latter. State socialism brought in the large orchestral ensembles, following the Soviet model. Furthermore, instruments such as the saxophone, which was not typical for traditional folk music, were incorporated by *muzică populară* performers and ensembles. Likewise, vocal styles underwent a drastic change: vocal styles more specific to light music replaced the sudden changes between vocal registers, which used to be a feature of traditional folk music.

The repertoire of *muzică populară* included both old and new songs. Some had been written as so-called “cântece românești” (Romanian songs) during the interwar period, but were later re-orchestrated with the use of large ensembles.<sup>63</sup> At the start of the 1980s, *muzică populară* comprised a mixture of traditional folk songs, “Romanian songs”, and new songs whose lyrics dealt with the achievements of state socialism (or so-called “fakelore”).<sup>64</sup> *Muzică populară* performers started their careers in the same way as all other performers, in houses of culture, often taking classes in școli populare de artă (people’s schools of art). Later, they could join ensembles of state institutions and become better known as performers.<sup>65</sup> This was a major step in any *muzică populară* performer’s career. Because they were hired in official ensembles which went on tour and often recorded for *Electrecord*, performers of *muzică populară* could afford a decent living. The most famous and commercially successful ones enjoyed even better conditions, despite the financial losses caused by institutions such as the state record label, or *Agenția Română de Impresariat Artistic* (The Romanian Agency for Artistic Management).

While *muzică populară* and *fakelore* were not synonymous, they shared an entangled relation, which is best noticed in the releases put out by *Electrecord*. Thus, one can identify two main approaches: the first one was that of compilations of the so-called *cântece de viață nouă* (songs of new life). Such LPs were released by the state label, bearing either the actual title of one of the songs, or generic titles such as *Țară nouă, cântec nou* (New Country, New Song). Such a record would comprise several singers, among whom, usually, there were one or two famous ones (such as Maria Ciobanu, Sofia Vicoveanca, or Nicolae Furduliu).<sup>66</sup> The second approach was that of solo albums, by famous *muzică populară* performers, which would include one *fakelore* song. One such example is *Eu vreau pace, eu vreau pace*, by singer Ion Dolănescu, released on

cassette, in 1982. The title song is typical for the state folklore of the era, while the selection of the remaining songs from the album includes *muzică populară* and folklore. In this case, one should also underline the physical format of the album, since cassettes cost 100 lei at the time, a considerable price, which symbolized Dolănescu's commercial success.<sup>67</sup>

Light music performers benefited, more or less, from the same advantages offered by the socialist state, as did *muzică populară* singers. During the 1980s, the majority of light music songwriters still bore the influences of Italian pop music and French chansons, which had permeated through the Iron Curtain during the 1960s. Thematically, lyrics dealt with abstract and vague stories of love, hope, and fulfillment. There was also a modernizing trend, which encompassed genres such as electronic music, new wave, synth-pop or Italo-disco, and this would form the mainstream style by the end of the 1980s.<sup>68</sup> With the advent of *glasnost* and *perestroika* in the USSR in the second half of the 1980s, Western influences manifested more from the east than from the west, as can be noticed on several songs released in the late 1980s.

One such example is *Voi cânta pentru mileniul III*, performed by Angela Similea and written by Marius Țicu.<sup>69</sup> Released on *Electrecord* in 1987, the intro to the song featured a series of sound effects specific for the so-called *cosmic disco* subgenre. *Cosmic disco* had begun in France in the late 1970s and had enjoyed tremendous success in the USSR in the early 1980s. Bands like *Zodiac* sold impressive amounts of album copies and their records, released by the Soviet label *Melodiya*, also circulated in Romania.<sup>70</sup> In terms of lyrical content, censorship manifested itself as vigorously as in rock music. Words and themes were scrutinized. The criteria for censorship varied, however, and depended heavily on agency and personal interaction.

The content of lyrics was not a major problem for the last genre of this overview, that of the so-called *proto-manele*. The term refers to a group of performers, from various cities and provinces of Romania, who played a combination of folk music, *muzică populară*, pop music, using modern, electronic instruments. Musical influences were multiple: from the Yugoslav *novocomponovana narodna muzika* to Greek music, from the traditional *muzică lăutărească* to Middle-Eastern music.<sup>71</sup> *Proto-manele* bands, such as *Azur* from Brăila, or *Generic* from Galați, benefitted tremendously from the multicultural and multiethnic life of their native cities and this aspect was evident in the music they performed in restaurants and at weddings. The lyrics included themes about unshared love, the



brevity of life, and made extensive use of innuendos about social and intimate life. Unlike jazz or rock music, not to mention *muzică populară* or light music, *proto-manele* were tolerated only informally, and only at a local level, by local state officials. *Proto-manele* bands never took part in any edition of *Song of Romania*, *Electrecord* never released any LPs and mass media remained completely silent about the existence of such performers. Notwithstanding, *proto-manele* bands enjoyed more and more commercial success, at first among local audiences. The existence of black markets, informal networks and cassette bootleggers only served to increase their appeal at a national level.<sup>72</sup> The performers of such bands were officially acknowledged by the state, but their music and lyrics were not. From this point of view, *proto-manele* represented a low-brow cultural alternative to the high-brow one, represented by jazz and rock music. While the audiences for the above-mentioned music genres were almost diametrically opposed in terms of music taste, social class, education, they both profited from cultural alternatives which were rather tolerated by the socialist state than encouraged. Furthermore, they profited in different ways. The communist regime had a tighter grip on jazz and rock music, especially when it came to officially released records. Notwithstanding this aspect, the audience and performers often found the alternative they were looking for in the music they were listening. This became particularly true in the context of live concerts. *Proto-manele* audiences were mainly ignored by state officials, which also meant that they could enjoy more freedom within a mainly live performance context, not only when it came to music, but also to lyrics.

## Concluding Remarks

When concluding this overview of popular music in the cultural context of 1980s socialist Romania, one needs to point out several aspects. First, popular music in socialist Romania was much more diverse than met the eye, and alternative music included both high and low-brow genres of music. Not only educated, cultured urban people resented officially approved political music, although, in their case, they developed a strong sense of elitism, which was not entirely specific to the time and space context of 1980s socialist Romania. By the 1980s, jazz listeners had developed a similar sense in liberal democracies and in more permissive socialist states as well. However, the identity of such listeners



and musicians was formed under the influence of both the political and music context.

Second, the communist regime was not a monobloc; it had numerous layers, starting from the top decisions, in whose approval Ceaușescu had increasing authority, going through an intermediate level, including party activists, people with functions in the Council of Socialist Culture and Education, all the way down to local level activists, sound engineers and sound editors, or newspaper editors. In certain cases, such as those of *proto-manele* bands, the public played a crucial role. This is not to downplay the role of the audiences for other music genres.

Regarding rock music, it may not be one of the first things one thinks of when remembering the legacy of Romanian state socialism, which is still embedded either in the dark image of Nicolae Ceaușescu's authoritarian regime, or in the nostalgic colors of socialist achievements. Nevertheless, rock music played an important part within the youth culture of the 1970s and 1980s: from underground student concerts and festivals to performances held on stadiums, from unofficial tapes of concert recordings, to official record sales numbering in the hundreds of thousands. Censorship, bribes, and personal connections, all mattered in the quest for releasing an album, or even an EP, on the state-owned record company, named *Electrecord*. More than this, the state constantly sought to adapt the youth's pop and rock aspirations to its own ideological creed, and the result often consisted of albums with intended tracks missing because of censorship tags, such as "mystical lyrics", delayed albums, because of "esthetically inappropriate" vocals, or albums with songs dedicated to themes that were central to the state propaganda of the time, such as the fight for disarmament.

While the popular music scene was much more nuanced and open to foreign influences than the official sources would acknowledge, the entangled relationship between official and alternative types of music culture would have an impact on the evolution of popular music genres well into the post socialist period.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> This was regulated through numerous normative acts published in the *Buletinul Oficial al M.A.N. al R.P.R.* See, for instance, *Ibidem*, no. 6, 1948, pp. 67-69; *Ibidem*, no. 2, 1950, pp. 34-37; *Ibidem*, no. 9, 1953, pp. 145-146.
- <sup>2</sup> This is particularly evident in the content of articles published in *Îndrumătorul cultural* (The Cultural Guide) over the 1950s.
- <sup>3</sup> See Timothy W. Ryback, *Rock around the Bloc: A History of Rock Music in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, pp. 121-126.
- <sup>4</sup> See <http://www.discogs.com/Entuzia%C8%99tii-Dynamite-A-Girl-Like-You-Got-A-Funny-Feeling-She-Is-So-Sweet/release/1736432> ; (last retrieved on November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016)
- <sup>5</sup> See <http://www.discogs.com/Sincron-Sincron/release/4975235> ; (last retrieved on November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016)
- <sup>6</sup> Timothy W. Ryback, *op. cit.*, p. 122.
- <sup>7</sup> See Daniela Caraman Fotea, Cristian Nicolau, *Dicționar rock, pop, folk*, [Rock, Pop, Folk Music Dictionary], Bucharest: Humanitas, 1999, p. 89-91.
- <sup>8</sup> The Archive of the National Council for the Study of the *Securitate* Files [further presented by its Romanian acronym ACNSAS], File I 204265, Surveillance File for Chiriac, Cornel, Volume 1, p.5.
- <sup>9</sup> ACNSAS, File I 204265, Volume 1, p. 7.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, p.4.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 24.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 90.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 31 and pp. 45-46.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, Volume 1, p. 132.
- <sup>15</sup> ACNSAS, File I 204265, Volume 1, p. 131.
- <sup>16</sup> Very few jazz recordings had been released by *Electrecord* in the late 1950s and early 1960s. They were mostly presented as dance music and edited on 78 rpm records with two songs, one per each side. One exception to this was a 10inch vinyl record including world dance music and a few jazz numbers, one starring the pioneer of jazz in Romania, Jancsi Kőrösy. See <http://www.discogs.com/Orchestra-Electrecord-Dirijor-Teodor-Cosma-lancsi-Kőrösy-Muzic%C4%83-De-Dans-Programul-Nr-2/release/4469445>. Last retrieved on June 23, 2017. Kőrösy himself would make his recorded debut on labels in Czechoslovakia and Hungary, before releasing his first album in in 1965 in Romania, the first of what was to become *Seria Jazz* (The Jazz Series). See <http://www.discogs.com/Jancsi-K%C3%B6r%C3%B6ssy-Jancsi-K%C3%B6r%C3%B6ssy/release/1417776> . Last retrieved on June 23, 2017.
- <sup>17</sup> See <http://www.discogs.com/artist/Teodor+Cosma> . Last retrieved on June 23, 2017.

- 18 For further information, see Nelu Stratone, *Rock sub seceră și ciocan. Prima parte din cronica muzicii rock în România*, Timișoara: Ariergarda, 2016, p. 337-350.
- 19 George Stanca, "Cât de greu se scoate la noi un disc", in *Flacăra*, No. 7 (284)/1971, p. 14.
- 20 The original Romanian title is *Festivalul Național al Educației și Culturii Socialiste Cântarea României*. The name of the festival was inspired by a famous poem, with the same title, written by Alecu Russo, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The original poem emphasized the love of the author toward his country, as well as the beauty of Romanian lands. In choosing this name for the festival, the regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu intended to resort to national ideology as means of gaining legitimacy.

English translations of the name have varied, but without essential differences. The translation encountered mostly is that of "Song of Romania". Other alternatives are "Singing of Romania" (as the name of the festival is translated in the Subject Files of the Romanian Unit, at the Open Society Archives: <http://www.archivum.ws/db/fa/300-60-1-1.htm> Last entry: February 04, 2017). This is due to the fact that "Cântarea României" is an ambiguous term, allowing both translations. The festival was also known as "Cântare României", which can only be translated as "Song to Romania", acknowledging the existence of the dative case, and not the genitive case, as it happens with "Singing of Romania". Katherine Verdery took into account only the genitive case, using the translation "Song of Romania" (see Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism. Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu's Romania*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991, pp. 114, 212. This latter translation is also the one I have opted for, taking into account Nicolae Ceaușescu's intentions for the festival. On November 1<sup>st</sup> 1976, during the meeting of the Executive Bureau of the National Council of Socialist Unity Front, Ceaușescu considered that the name "Cântarea României"[Song of Romania] is better, arguing that "Trebuie să cînte România, nu să cîntăm pentru România." [It is Romania that must sing, not us for Romania]. See ANIC, Secția organizatorică, file 20/1976, folio 2 v.
- 21 Few researches have been conducted on this topic, despite its importance and spectacular character. This means that the history of the festival "Song of Romania" is still under-researched. Anca Giurchescu was among the first to focus on this festival, and the first to construct a theoretical analysis of the latter. Her 1987 article on "Song of Romania" puts forth a typology of functions of the festival and its main features, focusing especially on the political uses of folklore by the communist regime. However, the article lacks primary sources and represents mainly a 1980s perspective on "Song of Romania", while the festival was still underway. See Anca Giurchescu, «The National Festival "Song of România", Symbols in Political Discourse», in Claes Arvidson, Lars Erik, Blomqvist, *Symbols of Power: The Esthetics of Political Legislation in the*

- Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*. Stockholm, Almqvist & Wiskill International, 1987, pp. 163–171. A more comprehensive, as well as more recent, analysis of the festival is to be found in Vintilă Mihăilescu, «A New Festival for the New Man: The Socialist Market of Folk Experts during the ‘Singing Romania’ National Festival», in Vintilă Mihăilescu, Ilia Iliev, Slobodan Naumovic (eds.), *Studying peoples in the people’s democracies. II: socialist era anthropology in south-east Europe*, Berlin, Lit, London, Global, Piscataway, NJ, Transaction Publishers, 2008, pp. 55-80.
- 22 One important question for this discussion refers to the definition of an “intellectual class” in a socialist regime, more precisely in socialist Romania. Since the socialist regime operated with an ideology based on a static class structure, “intellectuals” were to be defined by what they were not, namely peasants and workers. Thus, their role became ambiguous: on the one hand, they, together with peasants – who were gradually turning into peasant workers – were supposed to lose their specific features on the long run, by the creation of the “new man”. However, in the permanent transition toward communism, they were assigned a crucial role, that of media between the Party’s ideology and the uneducated classes.
- 23 The file of Romanian poetess Nina Cassian (who was kept under surveillance by the *Securitate* for more than 12 years, for her private or public criticisms to the Party’s policies) contains several references to budget cuts in artistic activities that affected her and other professional artists directly or indirectly, as well as mentioning of the *Song of Romania* Festival, seen as a threat to professional artists’ status. Thus, in one private meeting, recorded and transcribed by the *Securitate*, Cassian complains that “while writers are deprived of all their advantages, billions of work hours are spent for *Song of Romania*, and the competitors don’t want to go back to the factories and manifest a desire for becoming professionals”. A.C.N.S.A.S., Nina Cassian (Ștefănescu Renee Annie), Dosar Informativ No. 256690, Vol. 4, file 139. This sort of complaint is expressed on various occasions in the company of fellow writers and artists. See for instance, A.C.N.S.A.S., Nina Cassian (Ștefănescu Renee Annie), Dosar Informativ No. 256690, Vol. 1, file 28 back page, file 246, or file 293, or Vol. 4, file 84.
- 24 For the latter aspect, see Detlev J.K. Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition, and Racism in Everyday Life*, Yale University Press, 1989. Stephen Kotkin discusses the usefulness of such an approach for the study of the 1930s Soviet Union. See Stephen Kotkin, «1991 and the Russian Revolution: Sources, Conceptual Categories, Analytical Frameworks», *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 70, No. 2 (June, 1998), p. 419.
- 25 HU OSA 300-60-1. Romanian Unit. Subject Files. Box 109. Folder 804. Bucharest Agerpress, September 8, 1989.

- 26 Anca Giurchescu, «The National Festival “Song of Romania”: Manipulation of Symbols in the Political Discourse», in Claes Arvidsson, Lars Erik Blomqvist, *op. cit.*, p. 164.
- 27 This particular festival is mentioned, for instance, in *Scînteia*, January 11, 1975, 4. *Song of Romania* only started in 1976.
- 28 See the mentioning of the Film Festival for Villages, 1976-1977 Edition, in *Scînteia*, December 2, 1976, 4. The Festival is officially organized under the auspices of the *Song of Romania* festival.
- 29 Virgil Mihaiu, *Jazz Connections in Romania*, Bucharest: Institutul Cultural Român, 2007, pp. 89-91 and 105-116.
- 30 When using the term “relative liberalization”, one must consider the context of the 1980s in socialist Romania, marked by Nicolae Ceaușescu’s personality cult, cultural autarchy, and nationalism. Such periods were brief and they allowed film makers, musicians, writers, or visual artists to release works which went beyond the narrow canons of official propaganda, while not going against the main principles set by the Party. In filmography such a period was during the early 1980s and it included movies by Dan Pița or Mircea Danieliuc. See Cristian Tudor Popescu, *Filmul surd în România mută. Politică și propagandă în filmul românesc de ficțiune (1912-1989)*, Bucharest: Polirom, 2011, p. 235. In rock music, *Electrecord* released albums such as the Club A compilation (1981), which featured rock bands and jazz groups live in concert. Until 1989 this was the only live rock album released by *Electrecord*.
- 31 One such article, published in *Jazz Forum* No. 100 (1986) was a review by Sorin Antohi to Virgil Mihaiu’s first book on jazz music, *Cutia de rezonanță*. Mihaiu’s book was one of a handful published in Romania on jazz music in general during late socialism. See also Virgil Mihaiu, *op. cit.*, p. 108.
- 32 See Virgil Mihaiu, *Cutia de rezonanță*, Bucharest, Editura Albatros, 1985, p. 269. Mihaiu’s first book on jazz music included a series of essays dealing with jazz music in general from a 1980s perspective. The last essay of the collection, sent to the publishing house in 1982, reflected on Romanian jazz music at the start of the 1980s. See Virgil Mihaiu, *Cutia de rezonanță*, pp. 267-287.
- 33 Among these were Aura Urziceanu – „Once I Loved” (*Am iubit odată*) (1981, *Electrecord* ST-EDE 01892); *Over the Rainbow* (1984, *Electrecord* ST-EDE 02505/02506); Marius Popp – *Nodul Gordian* (1984, *Electrecord* ST-EDE 02377); *Acordul fin / Fine Tuning* (1989, *Electrecord* ST-EDE 03503); Johnny Răducanu – *Confesiuni II / Confessions II* (1982, *Electrecord* ST-EDE 02079); *Confesiuni 3* (1986, *Electrecord* ST-EDE 02923); *Jazz Made in Romania* (1987, *Electrecord* ST-EDE 03140).
- 34 For an overview of the label, see its official webpage: <http://www.leorecords.com/> (accessed July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017) and its Discogs page: <https://www.discogs.com/>

- com/label/28723-Leo-Records (accessed July 1st, 2017). See also Virgil Mihaiu, *Jazzorelief*, Bucharest, Editura Nemira, 1993, p. 65.
- 35 See *Muzici și faze*, Interview with Harry Tavitian. Available at: <http://www.muzicisifaze.com/interviu.php?id=21> (accessed on July 1st, 2017). See also, Virgil Mihaiu, *Jazz Connections in Romania*, pp. 103-104.
- 36 Harry Tavitian, personal communication with the author, May 2016.
- 37 See Nicolae Covaci, *Phoenix în să eu...*, Bucharest: Nemira Publishing House, 1994, pp. 427-432. Also, Nicolae Covaci, *Giudecata înțeleptilor*, Bucharest: Integral Publishing House, 2014, pp. 9-24.
- 38 See Nelu Stratone, *op. cit.*, p. 179.
- 39 For more on how the *Zalmoxe* LP actually fell in line with the official ideology, see Caius Dobrescu "The Phoenix That Could Not Rise: Politics and Rock Culture in Romania: 1960-1989", in *East Central Europe*, 2-3, no. 38 (2011), pp. 255-290.
- 40 Not only rock music dealt with the history and mythology of ancient Dacia. Contemporary classical musicians also wrote numerous works dedicated to the Dacians. See for instance, Ștefan Niculescu, *Simfonia a II-a, „Opus Dacicum”* (1980), Mansi Barberis, *Itinerar Dacic* (lieder), or Liviu Glodeanu, the opera *Zamolxe* (1969). For further information, see Valentina Sandu-Dediu, *Muzica românească între 1944-2000*, Bucharest: Editura muzicală, 2002, p. 245 and p. 236 respectively.
- 41 This aspect was true for rock musicians since the beginnings of rock music in Romania. See Nelu Stratone, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-51.
- 42 *Ibidem*, pp. 160-166.
- 43 Florin Silviu Ursulescu, *FSU: Florin Silviu Ursulescu în dialog cu Doru Ionescu*, Bucharest: Casa de pariuri literare, 2015, p. 68.
- 44 Even then, however, there was the possibility of being rejected by sound editors and censors, for a variety of reasons. For instance, one band, *Kappa*, from Cluj, allegedly refused to pay a bribe to one of the sound editors from *Electrecord* and never had the chance to record a song during the 1980s. See <http://www.clujulcultural.ro/exclusiv-clujenii-de-la-kappa-primul-album-de-rock-progresiv-dupa-30-de-ani/> 9Last accessed: July 3rd, 2017).
- 45 Back cover of the LP Grupul Pro Musica / Grupul Accent – *Formații Rock 9* (1986, Romania: *Electrecord* ST-EDE 02918).
- 46 Florin-Silviu Ursulescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-14.
- 47 *Ibidem*, p. 64.
- 48 *Ibidem*, pp. 66-67.
- 49 Rodion Ladislau Roșca, personal communication, June 2017.
- 50 One review of the album misread the lyrics as *Vreau să știu de ce se uită unii după mine/Fiindcă am păr lung și barbă, c-așa-mi stă mai bine* (I want to know why some people look strangely at me/Because I have long hair and a beard, 'cause this is how I look my best). See Mihai Plămădeală,

*Review Metrock – Castelul de nisip*. Source: <http://www.muzicisifaze.com/trupa.php?id=248&cat=1> (accessed on July 10th, 2017). However, *Metrock* songwriter, lyricist, guitarist, and vocalist Marius Luca denies this variant. Marius Luca, personal communication, July 2017.

51 See *Metrock, Castelul de nisip* (1982, *Electrecord* ST-EDE 02077). Artwork available at <https://www.discogs.com/Metrock-Castelul-De-Nisip/release/1490617> (Last accessed on July 4th, 2017). Also available in Traian Doru Marinescu, *Disc(RO)mania. Enciclopedia albumelor muzicale românești pop/rock/folk/jazz 195-2014*, Bucharest: Act și Politon, 2017, p. 123.

52 See *Iris – Iris II* (1987, *Electrecord* ST-EDE 03138). Artwork available at <https://www.discogs.com/Iris-II/release/1379792> (Last accessed on July 4th, 2017). See also, Traian Doru Marinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

53 For the censored artwork and official front cover, see *Celelalte Cuvinte – Celelalte Cuvinte* (2017 CD Reissue, Soft Records, SFTR-044-2) Available at <https://www.discogs.com/Celelalte-Cuvinte-Celelalte-Cuvinte/release/10004622> (Accessed on July 4th, 2017). See also Traian Doru Marinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

54 See, for instance a live performance from May 1989 by the rock band *Pro Musica*, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ZOeuQ4iWQM> (accessed on July 5th, 2017). See also Radu Lupașcu, “Interview with Florin Ochescu”, in Radu Lupașcu, *Rock Interviuuri*, Bucharest: Blumenthal, 2012, p. 148.

55 E.C., personal communication, March 2017. A.M., personal communication, April 2017.

56 Sfinx released a third record in 1984, without Dan Andrei Aldea.

57 See Daniela Caraman Fotea, Florian Lungu, *Disco Ghid-Rock*, Bucharest: Editura muzicală, pp. 218-220. The dictionary includes the bands Passport, Pesniari, Picket Wilson, Pink Floyd, omitting Phoenix.

58 A.M., personal communication, April 2017. The price for Sfinx’s *Zalmoxe* LP was 40 lei during the 1980s, compared to the official 26 lei one.

59 See Paul Rogojinaru, “Cum s-au editat discuri cu Phoenix sub nasul cenzurii comuniste”, in *Jurnalul național*, December 4, 2012. Available at: <http://jurnalul.ro/special-jurnalul/interviuri/cum-s-au-editat-discuri-cu-phoenix-sub-nasul-cenzurii-comuniste-630675.html> (Accessed on July 5th, 2017)

60 E.C., personal communication, March 2017. I.R., personal communication, December 2016. E.C. bought his bootleg copy of the record *Cei ce ne-au dat nume* for 150 lei and, later, sold it for the same amount. I.R. bought all three albums for 200 lei per LP, 600 lei in total.

61 *Ibidem*.

62 See Speranța Rădulescu, “Actors and Performance” in Margaret Beissinger, Speranța Rădulescu, Anca Giurchescu, *Manele in Romania. Cultural*

*Expression and Cultural Meaning in Balkan Popular Music*, Lanham, Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016, pp. 139-140 and p. 157.

63 One of the most famous examples is that of “Sanie cu zurgălăi” (Sleigh with bells), written in 1937 for singer Maria Tănase and later recorded by folk and muzică populară singer Maria Lătărețu, with a different chorus and altered lyrics. For further info, see <https://folclormuzical.wordpress.com/2014/12/26/saniecuzurgalai/> (accessed on July 6<sup>th</sup>, 2017).

64 For further information on the topic of *folklorism* and *fakelore* see Anca Giurchescu, “The Power of Dance and Its Social and Political Uses”, in *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, Vol. 33. (2001), p. 117.

65 One such case was of muzică populară singer Ion Dolănescu, who started out in a people’s school of art. During his military service, he became part of the “Ciocarlia” Ensemble, which was his artistic and commercial breakthrough. See [https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ion\\_Dol%C4%83nescu](https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ion_Dol%C4%83nescu) (accessed July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017).

66 See, for instance, Various artists, Țară nouă, cântec nou (1975, *Electrecord* EPE 01172). For further information, see <https://www.discogs.com/Variou-%C8%9Aar%C4%83-Nou%C4%83-C%C3%AEntec-Nou/release/4660130> (accessed on July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017).

67 See Ion Dolănescu, *Eu vreau pace, eu vreau pace* (1982, *Electrecord* STC 00174).

68 The most prominent songwriter and composer, who spearheaded the influence of electronic music onto Romanian pop music, was Adrian Enescu.

69 See Angela Similea, Marius Țeicu, *Nu-mi lua iubirea* (1987, *Electrecord* ST-EDE 03130). For further information, see <https://www.discogs.com/Angela-Similea-%C8%98i-Marius-%C8%9Aeicu-Nu-mi-Lua-Iubirea/release/3260622> (last accessed on July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017).

70 See, for instance, Zodiac, *Music In The Universe* (1982, USSR, Melodiya, C60 — 18365-6). For further information, see <https://www.discogs.com/Zodiac-Music-In-The-Universe/release/242244> (accessed on July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017).

71 An excellent example for the multitude of music influences is that of Dan Armeanca. Armeanca started out as a factory worker and amateur musician. According to him, he was influenced by so-called „Oriental music” (music played in Middle-Eastern countries, such as Syria or Iraq), rock guitarists, Italian pop music, and traditional muzică lăutărească. See <https://www.vice.com/ro/article/53bd8d/cine-a-inventat-manelele-in-romania> (last accessed on July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2017).

72 For more detailed information, see an interview with Nelu Vlad, leader of the and Azur, from Brăila: <https://www.vice.com/ro/article/3dq5nb/interviu-nelu-vlad-trupa-azur> (last accessed July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2017).



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- Celelalte Cuvinte – *Celelalte Cuvinte* (1987, Romania: *Electrecord* ST-EDE 03137)
- Celelalte Cuvinte – *Celelalte Cuvinte* (2017 CD reissue, Romania: *Soft Records* SFTR-044-2)
- Compact / Grup 2005 – *Formații Rock 6* (1981, Romania: *Electrecord* ST-EDE 02145)
- Grupul Pro Musica / Grupul Accent – *Formații Rock 9* (1986, Romania: *Electrecord* ST-EDE 02918)
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