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In-Cult



Knowledge Section

**Interviews on Romanian cultural
treasures**

Liga Scriitorilor Filiala

Timisoara Banat, Romania

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BRÂUL – traditional dance from Mountain Banat

The interview with Ana Cocie was conducted by Lucia Elena Popa



Teacher Ana Cocie, now retired, carried out her teaching activity in the village of Borlova, at the foot of "Muntele Mic". In addition to her work at the department, she also dedicated herself to the cultural life here as an instructor of dance teams, together with her husband Nicolae Cocie, teacher, ethnologist, instructor and choreographer.

In an interview given to the Timișoara newspaper, the choreographer Toma Frențescu said: “Borlova, without exaggeration, was and still is the most important choreographic center in Banat. Everyone is dancing there; the first thing they learn is to dance. ” Based on this appreciation, please tell us about the unbridled passion for dance of the villagers.

The folk dance and the passion of the villagers to give it life constantly, dates back to the earliest times of Christianity and is linked to the local religious customs of the times. They danced on the holy ground, that is, in the churchyard, even on the Day of the Dead, which falls on the Romanians, the day after Easter. In Borlova there is a saying from the ancestors "Children first learn to dance and then to walk!". This passion for the folk and old dance is the first felt by children in our village, becoming part of the DNA of the community that is transmitted over the centuries and does not lose its originality and authenticity, despite the technology that dominates us today.

Folklorists claim that the “brau” from Mountain Banat, at its origins, is a pastoral dance. What arguments could you put forward to support this claim?

Every peasant traditional dance “hora” begins with the “brau”. It is specific to the mountain peasant, who climbs the sheep in the spring and descends to Borlova in the autumn like a bride heading for the altar of promise and hope. The peasant traditional dances, including the “brau”, were organized according to the descent of the shepherds with the sheep from the

mountain, for the winter, that is, from September to April, when the shepherds went up the mountain with the animals again. As their occupation was the main source of livelihood, the whole social life of the community was programmed around and in direct connection with the shepherds and their program. We can strongly state that the “brau” from Mountain Banat was born with the shepherd.

One speaks with admiration especially about the “Old Brau”. What special value does this have in the hierarchy of dances in the village during the holidays?

Every traditional dance “hora” starts with the “Old Brau”, played only by men, but along the way there were also women, one for each man, on the left side of it. The “Old Brau” is much more alert than other games. Sometimes, some young, good players, during the break between dances, launched the challenge of showing off what they know and how they know how to dance. Thus, they began to present, in the most beautiful and elegant way, different “brauri” to the admiration of those who watches.

It is known that together with your husband Nicolae Cocie you made known the treasure of Borlova dances in the area, in the country and abroad. I remember the success of the Banat Brau at the 1977 Festival, the national phase. Could you continue the series of the most important successes of the trained ensembles?

Borlova's dance ensembles have won the title of Country Laureate four times, with the First Prize and the Gold Medal at the Amateur Artistic Competitions, as well as many II or III Prizes; represented the country at the Balkan and Adriatic Festival; they have made numerous tours around the country, being invited to various events.

It is important to promote the cultural treasure of the Romanian folk dances. In our case, the famous “brauri” can become a real country brand. The question is how the inhabitants of the present village contribute to the preservation of this treasure?

The legacy of folk dance continues in the village of Borlova today. The love of dance and folk costumes, as well as their preservation, are found in the passion of young people and current inhabitants who on the big holidays, on their own initiative, wear folk costumes and start dances as in ancient times, in the spirit of tradition that I also promoted. Also, the dance group trained by me and my husband in the past years, continues its activity today, having as instructor my nephew Gheorghe Cocie, to whom I consider that I transmitted the feeling of appreciation of the folk dance.

The Art of the Romanian Traditional Blouse - Ia

The interview with Ecaterina Hulea was conducted by Roxana Băcanu



Ecaterina Hulea is a craftswoman, collector, living human treasure, a woman possessed only by the thrill of work and respect for authentic values. She was born in the village of Odaia Manolache, Vânători commune, Galați county in Romania

The preservation and conservation of the local port occupies an important place in the national culture. How did you manage to set up the ethnographic museum?

The idea came to me in 2005, when I participated in a project to preserve the folk costume, a project of the Cultural Center "Dunărea de Jos"/"Lower Danube" in Galați. I was part of the research team of this project to preserve the folk costume specific to our area. I knocked on a lot of doors for a year and collected almost 100-year-old traditional objects. Most of the invaluable items were donated to the future museum. Now this museum is the pride of our village

When did you start the "great adventure"? When did you start creating traditional patterns?

The "great adventure" began as a child when I learned to sew in stitches, to embroider, to get acquainted with the traditional elements. From 2016 I started sewing the Romanian traditional blouses – "ii", which have always fascinated me. There is no house in my village where I have not left my mark. I sewed "ii" and different parts of the Romanian traditional costume, I created different patterns or something to decorate the house for the pupils I had as teacher. I sewed over 200 "ii" with different patterns.

You have won several awards for your contribution to preserving and transmitting the values of folk culture and safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage of Vânători commune, Galați county. Do you think that what you are doing is important?

I am very proud to be Romanian, I am very proud to work these traditional blouses with embroidery and to contribute at maintaining our folk traditions. The traditional blouse with embroidery defines us as a people, reminding us of our past and carrying on the history of our nation. In 2021, the UNESCO file “The Art of the Traditional Blouse with Embroidery on Shoulder (Altită) - an Element of Cultural Identity in Romania and the Republic of Moldova” was finished and advocates the inclusion in the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

What work techniques do you use to create an “ia”?

From the research I did, I found out that every woman wanted to wear something unique. “Ia” was cut in the shape of a cross, made of linen, hemp, borangic, homemade cloth, melted cloth, Ia was created for many generations. For a single “ia”, 10 working techniques were used, such as: cross stitch, chain stitch, fir tree etc, and a different color depending on the area. .

Depending on the model and the material chosen, I can work on one “ia” for a period of time, from two weeks to three months. I use melted cloth and cotton.

To create an “ia” in a human life is a wonderful thing. I wear that one now, my child will wear it, my niece will wear it, many generations will wear it. History will talk about that. It will be an object of honor for any generation.

Romanians are proud of their folk costume. Famous fashion houses were inspired by it. Famous painters immortalized woman in “ia”. Where did the inspiration come from to create the specific patterns on the traditional blouse with embroidery?

Romanian women had a very rich imagination. Women have always been inspired by social life, nature, the cosmos. They used floral, geometric, zoomorphic elements.

To recognize an authentic “ia” it can be seen that it is not finished. It is considered that nothing made by man is perfect, perfection belongs to God.

CAROLLING “COLINDATUL”

The interview with Laurian Micu was conducted by Simona Perian



Laurian Micu is one of the members of the Epiphany Choir, a choir recognized for outstanding performances, for numerous awards won at various competitions, but also for the beautiful shows organized, in collaboration with famous ensembles, shows that have always highlighted the carols.

Carols are an integral part of the Epiphany choir's repertoire. What is the carol for the man Laurian Micu and then for the chorister Laurian Micu?

The carol represents our cultural background, which we must exploit to the maximum, to value it and to publicize it as much as possible. The thrill of reading a new score, which imprints an old text with diverse valences, is invaluable. I believe that these very different visions can lead to the updating of ancestral texts, especially in a world always eager for something new. For me, the ancient text means something new and more, it contains pieces of what I am.

What does Christmas mean to you? Do you have any special memories related to this holiday and, of course, a special memory related to the moments when you went caroling?

Christmas is definitely my favorite holiday. The joy of having the family around, at a tasty meal and a mulled wine that grinds everyone's vocal qualities, is priceless. In addition to the pleasure of caroling, I have a boundless joy of being caroled, of orchestrating the traditions from the perspective of the host. It may sound mercantile, but after a day full of caroling, more joy, like when I got home and shared the sweets, I don't think it was and I don't think it has been surpassed until today.

What is your favorite carol? Do you have a special reason to love this carol?

The carol of God is called, and I chose it because it seems to me that it has an inner peace, which you inevitably assume as an interpreter and more than that, the feeling is also perceived by the listener.

You certainly went caroling as a child. Tell us briefly how the child Laurian spent a Christmas Eve caroling.

Even today, the child Laurian survives in the world of adults and does not perceive Christmas Eve without carols. Even if I don't put into practice an actual caroling program as before, at least one carol with family or friends is a must.

A caroling evening was actually a whole day, walking around the houses, singing, eating goodies and a lot of good cheer. Energy transfer, good thoughts, and wishes are a treasure for the year to come.

Laurian, let's go back in time and draw a parallel - the carolling yesterday / the carolling today. Something has changed?

I may sound anachronistic, but I don't think so.

Contemporary man, in addition to his keen desire to relate to modernity, also has a sine qua non connection to the traditions of his people.

It is the charm of the forerunners' stories that determines the revitalization of today and not only from the perspective of carols, but of all the traditions that become desirable and even an integral part of the existence of contemporary man.

What does a beautiful Christmas look like for you?

Calm, full of carols, somehow at the stove, relaxed, receiving real lessons in the history of the Romanian people, the geographical features of the area of the song and especially, real lessons in spirituality and why not models worth following from the lyrics of the songs.

MĂRȚIȘORUL

The interview with Simona Neacșu was conducted by Andrușa R. Vătuiu



Simona Neacșu is the deputy director of the "Constantin Negreanu" High School in Drobeta Turnu Severin.

Among the creative activities carried out by the students within the “Constantin Negreanu” High School from Drobeta Turnu Severin, there is also the making of “martisoare”. Please tell me how this activity came about and what it consists of?

The Romanian „martisor” traditions are beautiful and because we want to keep and promote them, we initiated and carried out, annually, the project entitled Snowdrop and Martisor - small rays broken from the sun, whose purpose is to develop students' ability to value and perpetuate the traditions left by the forerunners regarding „martisor”, by their involvement in pleasant and constructive actions. The children received this project with delight, the student Pădurețu Ioana, in a discussion with the press, even confessing: *We work as a team, we discover our talent and skill in making original „martisoare”, we are proud of the fruits of our work and we welcome spring with delight and joy. Giving a „martisor” we make someone happy, offering from the warmth of our soul and from our love.*

So, beyond the hours spent at school, it is a real joy to see the little ones involved in actions that develop not only skills to become useful, but also practicing an activity that inspires them to keep the traditions so ingrained in the being of the Romanians.

Tell us about the significance of “martisor”

The meaning of “martisor” has remained the same over time: the two intertwined threads, one white and one red, symbols of love, friendship and gratitude, announce joy and love at the beginning of spring. The white and red strings with an amulet (penny, a shell) were tied by the parents to the children's hands, given to the girls by the boys, exchanged by the girls with a sense of good wishes, health as "pure silver, like a river stone, like the shell from the waters ". The “martisor” given at the dawn of the first day of March was worn for 9-12 days, sometimes even until the sight of the first flowering tree, then it hung on the flowering branches, believing that like this would be the year of the one who wore it.

Nowadays, the “martisor” is a harbinger of spring, and its realization has become a true work of art. Therefore, we decided to intertwine the tradition with the creative desire of the students, to stimulate and encourage their creative spirit, bringing “to light” all that is best and most beautiful in a child's soul!

I visited and photographed the “martisor” exhibition in the "Constantin Negreanu" gymnasium, where I admired hundreds of models made of various materials: paper, textiles, wood, ceramics, leather, etc. I wonder if these beauties of artistic creation also has a purpose through public exhibition or sale?

Every year, the “martisoare” made by the students were displayed on boards in the school premises, but we also set up an exhibition for sale in the gallery of Cora Hypermarket. The activity was an unexpected success, and the handmade “martisoare” sold very well. The money raised from the sale of the “martisoare” was donated to the school children from low-income families.

We thus close the manufacturing - display - capitalization circuit. The “martisor” tradition is part of the intangible cultural heritage. Is this tradition somehow found in the school curriculum?

The school programs allow discussions about this tradition in various disciplines: history, Romanian language, plastic education, and primary education in the discipline *Visual arts and practical skills* has the specific competence *Realization of functional and / or aesthetic creations using basic materials and techniques* where they can propose “martisor” activities.

ROMANIAN PROVERBS

The interview with Maria Mona Vâlceanu was conducted by Elena Armenescu



Maria Mona Vâlceanu is a Romanian language teacher and a writer.

In your career, you have also taught lessons about folk literature, including anonymous poets and proverbs - considered a treasure of wisdom. How can we motivate this beautiful definition "treasure of wisdom"?

Folk literature itself is a treasure trove of cult literature. As for the proverbs, let us think of Anton Pan, the clever one as a proverb and the eternal story of speech, who perceived this very treasure of wisdom and gathered it into a collection that faces the times. The proverb has a moralizing purpose, to protect us from laziness, hatred, stupidity, greed, we can say that it is a true code of ethics that has been passed down from generation to generation.

One of the most important proverbs is this: "Whoever has a book has a part", close to "The book is the mother of teaching." What would be the explanation?

Let's think about the symbol of the book first. The book means learning, enlightenment of the mind, for a nation busy throwing seeds in the furrow, raising their flocks and defending their ancestral estate is very interesting how this symbol of the book remained, enlightenment of the mind, high destiny in life. By learning from books and not only you will be able to achieve your goals, to succeed in everything you set out to do, and superficial learning can sometimes be detrimental. A book is like the torch of the world, and the teaching is the best fortune of each of us.

Do you think that the ironic spirit of some proverbs, for example, "Like a fly to the plough", helps to understand the message, is it enough to say for the interlocutor to understand?

The proverbs expressively reflect the nature of the Romanian, inclined towards beauty, love, justice, harmony. They represent, as I said, a code of ethics, satirize, sting the flaw to get rid of it, but also a collection of teachings that you must take into account in life. I don't know if the expression "like a fly to the plough" can still be understood by the younger generation, but the teachings of other proverbs can be easily accepted even today. The Romanian knows something about life and teaches his descendants precisely through these proverbs, as Ion Rotaru also beautifully aligned them: *The Romanian knows that if he wants to get far he has to get up in the morning, that only autumn counts the freshmen and that what is in his hand is not a lie and that is why it is not good to give the sparrow in the hand for the one on the fence, self-praise does not smell good, and the satiated never believes the hungry.*

We are a country where archaic rituals are still practiced. How do you explain that these as well as folklore in general and proverbs have not disappeared?

Yes, this question is well thought out, Mircea Eliade is the one who emphasizes this ancestral substratum, showing the importance of rituals and myths for the imposition and preservation of that primordial time, of the beginnings, so rich in sacredness. They could not disappear, they are part of the being of our nation, which has kept its language, its customs and its place on this earth, despite so many winds that have beaten it throughout history.

Are they in danger of perishing in the face of the new wave of globalization?

The problem is more complex, it takes time for us to notice it, but I believe that as long as folklore has passed into cult literature, it can no longer perish, it will always be known and valued. I noticed that the Romanians who now work in other countries take in their hearts as if on a shield or as a connection, the love for our folklore, as if they take part of our dowry with them. There is evidence that globalization makes folklore even more loved by the departed Romanians, for whom folklore means home among foreigners.