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# The Oșeni and the Dynamics of their Emblematic Music

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## Speranța Rădulescu

### Abstrakt

The Oaș is a small rural region in the far north of Transylvania. Before 1990, its community life and local culture was still very lively. Music, with its distinct identity, was supported by several traditional institutions: the Sunday dance, the wedding, collective pastoral feasts, the bee, and caroling. The Oșeni were better off than their fellow countrymen, because the men often left their villages to find employment, taking hard, but well-paid seasonal jobs all around the country (e.g. repairing high-voltage poles). As their wealth grew, so did their ambition to show it off. Like today, the symbols of prosperity were houses (multistory, with monumental gates), and music, deliberately different from all other Romanian music. Emigration to the West began in the 1990s and intensified in the 2000s. At the beginning, it was riddled with deprivation. In a few years, the Oșeni organized themselves in communities where each newcomer could find shelter and a job. After a turbulent period, the Oșeni adhered to lawfulness, and their earnings from construction work grew substantially. They invest all of their money in houses (the construction of which is supervised by their parents, who stayed behind in the village), in lavish parties with live music, and in expensive traditional costumes, which they put on occasionally, making sure they are also photographed in them. They come back on short vacations at Easter, on the Feast of Dormition, and at Christmas. The rest of the time, their houses are empty. In the new socio-economic mechanism, music, which the Oșeni play at home, but also take with them abroad, plays an essential role. Like houses, it runs a constant race to the heights, the super-acute register symbolizing prestige, success, and uniqueness. This music, which I am going to speak about, has now reached a pitch that threatens the singers' throats and the physical integrity of the accompanying violins.

### Klíčová slova

Romanian (rural) music; emblems of identity; musical identity

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