

Text and Music in Romanian Oral Epic

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Studies of oral composition in epic poetry have traditionally focused on textual analyses. However, since oral epic is a sung genre, the relationships between text and music are fundamental to understanding oral composition. Does the music aid the singer in the composition of the text? What types of patterns are evident as singers combine text and music? What determines units of structure in the text and music? In an attempt to confront these and other questions, I will be analyzing the relationships between units of textual and melodic structure in the epic song repertoires of six contemporary Romanian traditional singers.

Oral epic poetry is still a living tradition in Romania. Singers continue to sing their tales today as they have for centuries. The existence of traditional narrative poetics in the modern world, such as the Romanian genre, allows for extensive observation and documentation in investigations of both text and music. I argue in this article that Romanian epic singers sense fundamental structures of text and music as well as clear relationships between them, such that units in the text and music function and interact with remarkable consistency. Rhetorical-compositional devices serve to underscore textual units and are repeatedly reinforced by patterns within the music, creating structures characterized by unity of form and content. To demonstrate these points I will contrast the singing styles of professional gypsy singers with those of non-professional ethnic Romanian singers. The professional singers, who generally exhibit a more developed and crafted style, structure both the text and music of their songs with an artistry and logic that the non-professional singers less frequently display. After a brief introduction to the six singers whose songs are analyzed in this study and a short description of the Romanian epic, I will examine the various units of text and music and how they interact.

Romanian Oral Epic Tradition

1. Traditional Singers and their Songs. The Romanian oral epic is found now almost exclusively in villages in south central Romania. The singers from this

rich area of epic singing are primarily professional traditional male singers, *lăutari*, of gypsy descent. Ethnic Romanian peasant singers, generally male, also sing epic, but in most cases they are not professional musicians; hence, their style is less developed than that of the *lăutari*. Epic singers typically play the fiddle, although a variety of other stringed instruments, such as the *cobză* (a strummed instrument often replaced at the present time by the guitar), *țambal* (hammer dulcimer), double bass, and violoncello, occasionally are employed. An epic singer usually is accompanied by a small group of musicians, a *taraf*, whose instruments characteristically include any of the instruments named above, and sometimes the accordeon or the clarinet.

Four of the six singers whose repertoires are analyzed in this article were *lăutari*: Costică Staicu (1913-83), Mihai Constantin (b. 1912, d. ?), Mitică Burcea (b. 1886, d. ?), and Alexandru Cercel (b. 1883, d. ?). The two ethnic Romanian peasant singers examined are Vasile Anghelache (1920-?) and Marin Dorcea (b. 1895, d. ?).¹ All of the singers were from Oltenia and Muntenia in south central Romania, where epic singing has continued to flourish. Each singer played the fiddle. Most of them were semi-literate, having completed two, four, or in one case five years of grade school. Mihai Constantin, one of the finest contemporary Romanian *lăutari*, did not receive any formal education and was unable to read or write. Similarly, all of the singers were virtually illiterate with regard to music.

Romanian oral epic includes a large body of heroic songs, fantastic and mythological songs, *haiduc* songs (on the exploits of heroic social outlaws), and balladic narrative songs of a more lyric nature. Although epic songs formerly were sung at a variety of festive occasions, they now are performed in Romania primarily at village weddings. *Lăutari* play at weddings throughout the nuptial season, traditionally autumn, and earn a considerable amount of money for these services. Their repertoires include lyric, ritual, and dance genres, as well as epic songs, termed *cîntece bătrînești* (ancient songs). During the traditional two- or three-day-long nuptial celebration, several epics are customarily requested by the wedding guests. The non-professional peasant singers also play occasionally at weddings, but rarely; *lăutari* tend to have a monopoly over wedding entertainment.

Singers' epic repertoires vary in size; they generally know somewhere between twenty and forty different songs. A total of eighty-four epic songs were examined in this study. The singers each provided at least three different epic recordings for this article, representing only a fraction of their total repertoires. The *lăutar* Costică Staicu, my informant from a lengthy study on compositional style, sang for me on numerous occasions; sixty-two of his recordings are treated in this analysis. In some cases, published texts, including melodic excerpts for a few of them, have supplemented my own textual and melodic transcriptions.²

2. *The Format of the Romanian Epic.* Romanian epic songs range from approximately 150 to 400 lines. The average length of those analyzed for this article is 212 verses. While performances last on rare occasions for only seven or eight minutes, lengthier songs extend up to a half hour or longer. Songs in this study average sixteen or seventeen minutes.

Romanian epic songs typically begin with an instrumental introduction played by the singer and the members of his ensemble. The instrumental introduction contains melodic themes from the vocal sections to follow, developed and embellished, with the singer playing the melody on his fiddle. In former times, the introduction was often preceded by an instrumental section, termed *taxîm*, unrelated thematically to the song itself (see Alexandru 1980:58). The *taxîm* is rarely played at the present time and does not figure in any of the epic songs analyzed here.

After the instrumental introduction, the singer frequently calls for the attention of his noisy and preoccupied audience at the Sunday evening wedding feast. A typical invitation to his listeners from the *lăutar* Staicu's repertoire was: "Atențiune, masă frumoasă! Vărog foarte mult, ascultați acest cântec; ieste al lu' nașu!"³ ("Attention, great wedding table! Please listen to this song; it's for the best man!").

Following the instrumental introduction and call for attention, the singer then begins to sing while his fellow musicians play a harmonic accompaniment. The epic song consists of vocal sections of varying lengths that are separated by instrumental interludes. The singer typically assumes the lead with the melody on his fiddle during the instrumental interludes, embellishing and developing melodic themes from the vocal sections while the ensemble continues to accompany him. While the length of each instrumental interlude varies, it generally does not last longer than a minute. Following each instrumental interlude, the singer resumes his narration. This interplay between vocal section and instrumental interlude continues throughout the song. The perpetually variable length of each vocal section is characteristic of the classic Romanian epic performance. At the end of the epic, the ensemble customarily plays a lively dance tune (termed *vivart*), unrelated thematically to the music of the song. The *vivart* lasts on the average somewhat longer than a minute.

3. *Metrical, Poetic, and Musical Considerations.* Romanian epic songs are characterized by generally trochaic verses of seven or eight syllables. In addition, a small number of songs have lines which are penta- and hexasyllabic. In this study, the seven- or eight-syllable meter is predominant.

The poetry frequently contains successive groups of two or more lines that rhyme or assonate. Morphological rhyme accounts for a great deal of the acoustic parallelism in the genre. Where analogous syntactic patterns are repeated successively, the words in final position frequently rhyme or

assonate, due to the nature of the grammatical categories in Romanian. Other types of sound patterns in the poetry include anaphora, parallelism, alliteration, and various kinds of repetition, from individual sounds and morphemes to words and entire lines.

The scales employed in the music of the Romanian epic are for the most part gapped. Half of the songs in this study are sung to pentatonic scales, roughly one-third to hexatonic scales, about one-eighth to tetrachords, and a very small number to diatonic scales.

4. Styles of Recitation. Romanian epic consists primarily of sung verses, but occasionally includes verses that are spoken. The melodic style, in which melodic formulas have a syllabic correspondence to textual lines, is the principal mode of recitation. Melodic lines account for almost three-fourths of the poetic verses in this study. The identity of each melodic formula can be determined by its contour: where the line begins, whether it is descending, ascending, or a combination thereof, and the cadence. Divergences within the contour of each melodic formula include primarily rhythmic and melodic variation, as well as ornamentation—grace notes, melisma, and other expressive devices.

Although Romanian singers typically claim that each narrative song has a distinct melody, in actuality most songs have clearly related clusters of melodic formulas. There is a relatively stable pool of melodic formulas that circulate within each singer's repertoire, as well as in the genre at large. Similar melodic formulas usually recur in various renditions of any given song that a singer performs and frequently across song boundaries. However, no two songs, nor even two performances of the same song by a single singer, contain precisely the same combination of melodic formulas. There is much flexibility and variation within a relatively fixed pool of melodies.

As distinct from the melodic style, the *recto-tono* style consists of the same musical tone repeated for each syllable in the line, creating a chant-like, monotonic quality. The *recto-tono* style is employed in only a minute percentage of the poetry.

The *parlato* style of recitation is distinguished by verses that are spoken rather than sung. Due to the fact that the metrical framework provided by the music is lacking in such lines, their character is markedly different from that of the sung portions. The tempo of the poetry in the *parlato* recitation style is much quicker than that of the sung segments. Spoken lines often lose the metrical regularity of sung verses because singers are not directed by the restrictions that the music creates. For example, the tonic accent of spoken language prevails in the *parlato* sections, as opposed to the trochaic patterns normally heard in the sung poetry. Furthermore, while singers usually speak metrically regular verses, at times they lapse into segments of *parlato* delivery

in which the lines are irregular. In extreme cases, such as in the songs of the peasant singer Marin Dorcea, the number of syllables fluctuates from as few as two to twelve or more per line. About a fourth of the verses in this study are delivered in the *parlato* style.

Singers vary considerably in their use of the sung and spoken styles of recitation. For example, the *lăutar* Alexandru Cercel does not turn to the spoken style at any time during his performances; his poetry is entirely sung. On the other hand, the peasant singer Dorcea actually sings only about one-fourth of his verses. Rather, he relies predominantly on the *parlato* style, which is a less demanding manner of telling stories in poetic form than the sung style. In this way, Dorcea regularly opts for significantly less taxing performances than does a singer such as Cercel, who excels in ornamental, melodic deliveries.

Relationships between Text and Music

There is a great deal of flexibility in the organization of an epic song when the many elements that contribute to its structure are considered. Needless to say, no song is ever put together exactly the same way during different performances. Although the essential story remains reasonably constant, the content and ordering of the small units of narrative vary with each rendition, including elaboration, addition, or omission of text, as well as flexibility in the sequence of actions and descriptions. Similarly, while the fundamental set of melodic formulas remains relatively stable, the combinations of melodic formulas used in each song are ever fluid and changing. Despite the fundamental fluidity of text and music, the relationships that ensue when they intersect reveal that the text and music generally function in a unified and mutually reinforcing way.

1. Sentences and Musical Strophes. The fundamental unit of narrative content in epic poetry is the complete thought, which is expressed as a complete sentence, with a subject and a predicate. Complete sentences in the Romanian genre may include only a single verse or a cluster of lines. It is these individual units that, when strung together, form the story. In the Romanian epic, musical strophes are the principal units of musical structure. A musical strophe includes a variable number of sung or spoken lines. It is framed much of the time by an initial melodic formula and virtually all of the time by either a final melodic formula or a *parlato* line followed by an instrumental cadence. Each vocal section consists of one or more musical strophes.

Example 1 contains the first vocal section from the epic “Miu haiducu,” sung by the *lăutar* Staicu in 1979.⁴ It illustrates many of the elements that intersect in the textual and musical organization of the song. The vocal section contains four musical strophes (indicated by Roman numerals).

Example 1

Ex. 1

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I

1 Foa-ie ver-de lo-bo-dă, mă 2 In cur-te la Ńte-fan vo-dă
Green leaf of the pigweed, In the court of Prince Stephen

3 S-a strîns bo-ie-rii la vor-bă,
The boyars have gathered to speak, 3a S-a strîns bo-ie-rii la vor-bă:
The boyars have gathered to speak:

4 Bo-ie-rii dă-va-nu-lui, 5 Stîl-pii Ńa-ri-gra-du-lui,
The boyars of the divan, The pillars of Constantinople,

6 Pej-ni-cii-'m-pă-ra-tu-lui. mă
The emperor's advisors.

II

7 Ma-re ma-să mi-es-te-'n-tin-să. 8 Dă mulți bo-ieri mă-e co-prin-să.
A great table is set out. It is surrounded by many boyars.

9 Iar pă ma-să ce mi-a-vea? 10 Mi-a-vea peș-te și-un mo-trun,
And what was on the table? There was fish and a sturgeon,

11 C-au-zii dîn bă-trîni, 12 C-ă-lă ie-un peș-te mai bun:
As I heard the elders say, That it is a better fish:

13 Știu-cu-li-ța, lun-gu-li-ța 14 Car' să ia pîn fur-cu-li-ța.
A long, little pike To take with your little fork.

15 Să vezi, pîi-ne dă Hir-lău 16 Șa-de pă ma-să me-reu.
Look, bread from Hir-lău Is always sitting on the table.

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III

17 Vor - bă, ne - ne, mi - o fă - cea. mă 18 Ște - fan vo - da le spu - nea: mă
They were talking, uncle. Prince Stephen said to them:

19 "Beți, bo - ieri, vă - n' - ve - se - liți!" 20 Pfi - nă - n' zi - ua vă gă - tiți - i:
"Drink, boyars, be merry! Prepare yourselves for tomorrow:

21 Pă la șa - le buz - du - ga - ne, 22 La spi - na - re - o flin - tă ma - re.
A mace at your side, A large rifle on your shoulder.

23 Să fa - cem d-o vi - nă - toa - re
Let's go hunting

IV

24 Du - pă pă - sări găl - be - oa - re, 25 Că sin' bu - ne la mîn - ca - re
For golden birds, Because they're good at mealtime

26 Și u - goa - re la cul - ca - re, 26a Și u - goa - re la cul - ca - re."
And easy on you at nighttime, And easy on you at nighttime."

The image displays two systems of musical notation, each consisting of four staves. The notation is written in a single melodic line on a five-line staff, typical of traditional Romanian folk music. The first system contains four staves of music, and the second system also contains four staves. The music features a variety of rhythmic values, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. There are several instances of triplets, indicated by a '3' over a group of notes. The notation includes various accidentals (sharps, naturals) and phrasing slurs. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots at the end of the fourth staff in the second system.

A complete sentence in the Romanian epic may be expressed in one independent verse, characterized by the absence of necessary enjambement. A single-line sentence is designated in this study as a "short sentence." Short sentences frequently begin with the direct or indirect object of the sentence and end with a third-person imperfect verb, such as in line 17 in example 1. Another common type of short sentence is the introductory question, which also typically ends with a third-person imperfect verb, as in line 9. Other syntactic patterns characteristic of short sentences include subject + verb + adjective (line 7) and object + implicit subject + verb + adjective (line 8). A complete sentence may also be expressed in a sequence of verses, a unit including a main clause contained in a single line, preceded or followed by dependent clauses and additional phrases, each usually comprising one verse. Such verses are distinguished by necessary or unperiodic enjambement. Sentences containing two or more lines are termed "long sentences" in this study. In the majority of cases, long sentences begin with a main clause and are followed by dependent clauses, including subjunctive and other verbal constructions, prepositional phrases, and noun phrases. Long sentences end with the final clause or phrase of a completed idea, a verse that by definition contains no enjambement. Any number of clauses and phrases combine to form long sentences. The long sentence extending from line 10 to line 14 in example 1 begins with a main clause (10) and is followed by two dependent clauses (11, 12), a noun phrase (13), and the final dependent clause (14).

Long sentences in this study contain an average of four verses. However, the average number of lines per long sentence among *lăutari* typically is higher than among peasant singers. *Lăutari* frequently draw out and embellish individual narrative ideas through the use of additional clauses and phrases that modify the main clause. Such is the case in the long sentences in lines 1-6, 10-14, 20-22, and 23-26a in example 1, which are seven, five, three, and five lines long, respectively. Peasant singers, on the other hand, tend to relate the narrative in successive short sentences, where subject and predicate follow one upon another with little ornamentation of the main idea.

While musical strophes vary considerably in size, their average length in the songs examined here is eight to nine lines. Marked differences are evident in the length of musical strophes sung by peasant singers and those sung by *lăutari*. The peasant singers compose musical strophes that average twelve lines, while those of the *lăutari* average seven. For instance, the four musical strophes in example 1, sung by the *lăutar* Staicu, are seven, ten, seven, and four lines long respectively. There are several possible explanations for this divergence in practice between peasant singers and *lăutari*. In the repertoire of the peasant singer Dorcea, for example, the lengthy musical strophes may be accounted for by his heavy reliance on the *parlato* style of recitation, in which cadential melodic formulas designating the end of strophes occur with less frequency than in musical strophes which are sung. The extended musical

strophes in the songs of the other peasant singer, Vasile Anghelache, may be due in part to the fact that they generally include a relatively high number of repeated textual lines, thus naturally retarding the pace of the narrative and prolonging the duration of the musical strophe. In comparison, the musical strophes sung by the *lăutari* are generally not marked by excessive *parlato* verses or repeated textual lines. They tend to be more compact units of musical and textual content.

On the average, between five and six musical strophes comprise a typical vocal section in the six repertoires. While the two peasant singers sing vocal sections that typically contain between one and two musical strophes, the *lăutari* sing vocal sections that are clearly lengthier, comprising nine strophes on the average. Peasant singers rely on a less taxing mode of singing than do *lăutari*. They break up their songs into short sections of text and music, thereby allowing themselves ample time during the frequent musical interludes to rest from singing and gather their thoughts for each subsequent portion of the narrative. *Lăutari*, on the other hand, with greater endurance and mastery, sing lengthy vocal sections, where many verses follow one upon another in succession. In light of all of these textual and musical differences, it is clear that *lăutari* and peasant singers have contrasting styles of composition and that *lăutari* have mastered the skills of composition to a far greater degree than peasant singers. The *lăutari* evidently have learned a set of techniques that allow them to compose more elaborate and more highly structured epics than peasant singers. An examination of these techniques reveals the ways in which text and music interact in oral composition.

2. *Verses and Melodic Formulas.* Music actively reinforces text in the Romanian epic, with framing devices in the melodic structure corresponding to framing devices in the poetry. The intersection of text and music is conspicuous as singers delineate structures in performance.

The initial and final melodic formulas are the most stable melodic lines in a musical strophe. They determine the beginning and end of each musical unit (melodic formulas are indicated in the examples by capital letters to the left of each verse). The initial melodic formula that appears most frequently in this study has a distinct contour. It is typically initiated from an octave or seventh above the tonal center and rests on a fifth or third above it, such as in the formulas labeled "A" in example 1 (lines 1, 2, 7, 8, 17, and 18). All of these descend from an octave to a third above the tonal center, which is *g'* in this song. Slightly more than a third of all musical strophes in the songs examined here begin with this type of initial melodic formula. When musical strophes do not start with this formula, singers most often turn to an alternative melodic formula or a *parlato* verse. In example 1, musical strophes I, II, and III begin with the initial melodic formula "A" (lines 1, 7, and 17). However, the fourth musical strophe (IV) does not; it is initiated by an alternative melodic formula

“E” (line 24).

Initial melodic formulas typically coincide with the beginnings of sentences; in this way text and music concur. The vocal section in example 1 begins with two initial melodic formulas (“A”: lines 1 and 2) which announce the beginning of the entire song. Line 1 is a traditional introductory textual formula and line 2 is a dependent clause that ushers in the narration; the repeated initial melodic formula underscores this sequence. Introductory textual formulas, such as line 1, are widespread in the Romanian epic, and they are generally noun phrases characterized by vegetation imagery. Such introductory textual formulas are usually sung to initial melodic formulas and as such are virtually always sung at the outset of musical strophes, as in example 1.

The initial melodic formulas (“A”) in musical strophes II and III from example 1 coincide with short sentences (lines 7, 8, and 17) or with the beginning of a long sentence (line 18). The repetition of the initial melodic formula, as in musical strophes I, II, and III, is a frequent stylistic device that singers employ to signal the beginning of the musical strophe. From the example it is clear how the initial melodic formulas simultaneously underscore short sentences or beginnings of long sentences.

The final melodic formula is the definitive feature of a musical strophe because of its stability and consistency in the musical structure as a whole. In the vast majority of final melodic formulas, the line is descending, most commonly from a fifth or fourth above the tonal center. It rests on the tonal center and is repeated during (and sometimes already before) the second half of the line, reinforcing in this way the cadence of the musical strophe. The final melodic formulas labeled “F” in example 1 (lines 6, 16, 23, and 26a) all descend from the fifth to the tonal center (g^ˆ). Final melodic formulas play a key role in the framing of musical strophes. Four-fifths of the musical strophes in this study contain a distinct final melodic formula. All of the musical strophes in example 1 end with this type of final melodic formula.

A penultimate melodic formula frequently precedes the final melodic formula, thereby reinforcing the cadence of the musical strophe. In this type of melodic formula, the singer anticipates the subsequent final melodic formula by resting on the tonal center in mid-line before a leap of a large interval. The penultimate melodic formula commonly ends on a major or minor third above the tonal center. Labeled “P,” it is sung in three of the musical strophes in example 1 (lines 15, 22, and 26). Approximately one out of three final melodic formulas in this study is preceded by a penultimate phrase.

When singers do not signify the end of the musical strophe through a final melodic formula, they most often utilize the *parlato* style of recitation as the musical strophe is brought to a close. In such cases, the singer plays a final melodic formula on his instrument immediately following the *parlato* line,

such that a melodic cadence is effected. Among the present songs, many of the musical strophes that end with *parlato* verses belong to the repertoire of the peasant singer Dorcea, unique in his heavy reliance on the spoken style of recitation.

Another way in which music regularly underscores text in the Romanian epic is the use of final melodic formulas to reinforce final clauses of sentences. A close look at example 1 clearly reveals this in three of the four musical strophes. The first musical strophe (I) coincides exactly with the first long sentence in the song (lines 1-6). It ends with a final melodic formula on line 6, which is the last verse in the long sentence. Compositional-rhetorical devices further underscore the structure as a whole. The last three textual lines, genitive noun phrases that bring the sentence and musical strophe concurrently to a close (lines 4-6), are united by syntactic parallelism and final rhyme.

Throughout the songs in this study, patterns of final rhyme or assonance coincide in various ways with musical strophes. A full seventy percent of musical strophes that end with completed sentences in this study terminate with a sequence of lines that rhyme or assonate. The rhyme or assonance in such verses is not resumed in the subsequent musical strophe, such as in musical strophes I and II in example 1. In this way, a clear unity of sound and syntactic pattern reinforces the sentence, which is further underscored by the cadence of the musical strophe.

Musical strophe II in example 1 (lines 7-16) ends with a penultimate followed by a final melodic formula. This coincides exactly with a rhyming couplet (lines 15-16), the concluding long sentence in the musical strophe. The last musical strophe in the vocal section (lines 24-26a) ends with a pair of penultimate and final melodic formulas that coincide with lines 26-26a. This is the last verse of the long sentence, which moreover is repeated. The completion of the narrative idea and the musical strophe is reinforced in this way. Acoustic patterns similarly underscore the unity of the passage; final assonance begins in line 22 and continues until line 26a.

Medial melodic formulas, the lines that are situated between the initial and final melodic formulas, have distinct contours. In this study, they are most frequently formulas with an overall descending pattern, including upward intervals within the line. They end most typically on a third above the tonal center. This type of medial melodic formula includes all of the formulas labeled "B" (line 3) and "C" (lines 3a, 4, 5, 13, 14, 19, 20, and 21) in example 1. Another relatively common type of medial melodic formula in this study includes an overall ascending contour, such as the melodic formula "E" in example 1 (lines 9, 10, 11, 12, 24, and 25), which typically rests on a third above the tonal center (g^{\flat}). The ordering of medial melodic formulas within the musical strophe is ever variable, as is evident in example 1. Short sentences (line 9, 19), long sentences (lines 10-14), and portions of long

sentences (lines 3-5, 20-21, and 24- 25) are sung to medial melodic formulas, as the example illustrates.

The average number of distinct melodic formulas per song in this study is between five and six. A large number of melodic formulas and considerable variation within them characterize songs by skilled singers. For example, the *lăutari* Staicu and Constantin both normally work with about seven basic melodic formulas per song, although at times they may include up to ten. The song from which example 1 is excerpted, sung by Staicu, includes eight melodic formulas that he varies throughout the song with considerable imagination. On the other hand, in the repertoire of the peasant singer Dorcea, who relies at times on as few as three melodic formulas per song and customarily employs very little variation, the effect is often repetitive and somewhat monotonous.

3. Form and Content. A singer's delivery is often neatly organized. Completed sentences and completed musical strophes coincide in the majority of cases, as observed in example 1. Eighty-five percent of all musical strophes in this study end with a short sentence or concluded long sentence, while only twelve percent end with an unfinished long sentence, thereby marked by necessary or unperiodic enjambement. Moreover, musical strophes and completed sentences coincide at likely resting points in the narrative, such as at the end of passages of discourse, descriptions, actions, or events.

Example 1 provides a typical illustration of the logic of the singer's delivery. Musical strophe I (lines 1-6) depicts the court of Prince Stephen, where a gathering of boyars is assembled. The second musical strophe, containing five sentences (lines 7-16), is a description of the festive dinner table around which the boyars are seated. Musical strophes III and IV (lines 17-23 and 24-26a) comprise the episode in which Prince Stephen proposes a hunt, on which the boyars will accompany him. The fourth musical strophe concludes elegantly with the end of the prince's address to the boyars. In all cases the narrative content is clearly reinforced by the music.

Comparisons of performances at different times by the same singer illustrate how singers perpetually fashion varying, but nonetheless neat and consistent structures in their songs. In recordings from 1966 and 1980 of the song just discussed, "Miu haiducu," by the *lăutar* Staicu,⁵ musical strophes are completed at different but still perfectly logical resting points in the narrative. As in the performance in 1979, short or long sentences that correspond to actions, occurrences, descriptions, and passages of discourse are underscored by musical units. Points in the text that serve as narrative junctures may occur at a large number of places. Cadential points in the music and completed ideas in the narrative generally concur.

Examples from the repertoires of other singers illustrate comparable patterns in the arrangement of text and music. Other highly skilled singers repeatedly match textual units with musical units in their performances. For instance, example 2, an excerpt from the epic “Tănislav,” sung by the *lăutar* Constantin in 1951,⁶ exemplifies a typical ordering of text and music. Musical strophe XIV (lines 115-18) contains a short sentence at the outset, corresponding to the melodic formula “G,” which in this song is an alternative to the initial melodic formula. It ends with a completed long sentence (lines 117-18) and a final melodic formula, “F.” Tănislav, the hero of the story, has been thrown by some Turks, while sleeping, into the Danube River with a stone tied around his foot. Constantin describes how Tănislav wakes up and makes his way to the surface in musical strophe XIV. It is a compact passage in which text and music form a single unit. Musical strophe XV, of which only the first six lines are included (lines 119-24), begins with an introductory question (line 119), sung to “G.” It outlines the start of a new event in the story—how Ilenuța spots the hero floundering in the water and attempts to solicit help from her brother in order to save him (*parlato* verses are signified by +).

Ex. 2

XIV

G 115 O dată să opintea.	He moved around a little.
C 116 'N fața apii că ieșa.	He rose to the top of the water.
A 117 'Nota ca un păstrăghior	He swam like a little trout
F 118 Cu pietricica după iel.	With the little stone trailing him.

XV

G 119 Iar pe iel cine-l vedea?	And who saw him?
A 120 Ilenuța Șandrului,	Ilenuța, the daughter of Sandru,
A 121 Ibonnica, frate, -a lui;	His beloved, brother;
+ 122 La frate-său să ducea.	She went to her brother.
+ 123 De genuchi îngenunchea	She knelt down on her knees
+ 124 Și de iel că să ruga	And implored him
etc.	etc.

Introductory questions frequently frame units of narrative content at the beginning of a musical strophe. They are typically sung to initial or alternative melodic formulas that introduce musical strophes, such as in example 2, line 119. Example 3, a musical strophe from the epic “Miu haiducu,” by the *lăutar* Cercel in 1957,⁷ also illustrates how an introductory question (line 94), sung to the initial melodic formula “A,” begins a musical strophe. Final assonance unites the entire passage. It ends neatly with penultimate and final melodic formulas at the conclusion of the long sentence (lines 99-100).

Ex. 3

A 94 Dar Florica ce-m' făcea?	But what did Florica do?
B 95 Sărea în deal, sărea-n vălcea,	She jumped over hill and over dale,

C 96	Și-o pustie dădirea.	And made her way across a field.
C 97	La București ajungea.	She arrived in Bucharest.
B 98	Boierii culcați mi găsea	She found the boyars asleep
P 99	Și ia, frate,-i deștepta,	And she woke them up, brother,
F 100	Și-n vânătoare că-i pornea.	And sent them out on the hunt.

As illustrated in example 1, an introductory textual formula signifies the beginning of a musical strophe. Sometimes an introductory textual formula is immediately followed by an introductory question at the outset of a musical strophe. Thus, several devices simultaneously serve to articulate the beginning of the passage. Example 4, a musical strophe from the epic “Miu haiducu,” sung by the *lăutar* Constantin in 1951,⁸ illustrates this phenomenon in lines 27-28. The introductory textual formula in line 27, reinforced by the initial melodic formula “A,” is followed by the introductory question in line 28, also sung to an initial melodic formula. They clearly announce the beginning of the episode. The musical strophe ends with a short sentence (line 32) sung to a final melodic formula “F.”

Ex. 4

A 27	Foaie verde viorea,	Green leaf of the violet,
A 28	Stefan-vodă ce-m' făcea?	What did Prince Stephen do?
C 29	Di la ușa ca-m' striga:	He shouted from the door:
D 30	“Beați, boieri, da' nu prea beatî!	“Drink, boyars, but don't drink too much!
E 31	Mîncaz' de vă săturați!	Eat until you are satisfied!
F 32	Pînă-n ziuă vă sculaț'!	Wake up by morning!

On occasion, an introductory question at the beginning of a musical strophe is also repeated; in this way several effects function concurrently to announce the event. Example 5, another musical strophe from the *lăutar* Cercel's “Miu haiducu,”⁹ demonstrates how an introductory question, sung to an initial melodic formula “A” in line 41, is repeated in line 41a, framing the beginning of the passage. Line 43, a short sentence repeated and sung to a final melodic formula “F” in line 43a, structures the end of the musical strophe. The passage is united by final assonance.

Ex. 5

A 41	Dar Florica ce-m' făcea?	But what did Florica do?
B 41a	Dar Florica ce-m' făcea?	But what did Florica do?
C 42	Papuc pe talpa că-m' lua.	She put some slippers on her feet.
C 43	Sărea-n deal, sărea-n vâlcea.	She jumped over hill and over dale.
F 43a	Sărea-n deal, sărea-n vâlcea.	She jumped over hill and over dale.

Passages at times are introduced by repeated statements, either short sentences or opening clauses of long sentences. They frequently correspond

to initial melodic formulas at the beginning of a musical strophe. Such framing devices reinforce the unity of the structure, both in the text and music. One example is the musical strophe in example 6 from the epic “Scorpiia,” performed by the peasant singer Anghelache in 1966.¹⁰ The long sentence stretching from line 6 to line 9a is contained neatly in the musical strophe. Line 6, sung to an alternative initial melodic formula “D,” is repeated in line 6a as Anghelache underlines the beginning of the sentence. Penultimate and final melodic formulas match the last textual line of the sentence, which is repeated (lines 9-9a).

Ex. 6

D 6	Trei coconi, feciori de domni,	Three young lads, sons of the king,
D 6a	Trei coconi, feciori de domni,	Three young lads, sons of the king,
D 7	Mi-a plecat la vînătoare	Set out on a hunt
D 8	Cu merinde-n trestioare	With food in their bags
P 9	Și cu apă prin sacale,	And with water in their sacks,
F 9a	Și cu apă prin sacale.	And with water in their sacks.

Sequences of parallel lines, most notably characterized by anaphora, often coincide with the ends of sentences and musical strophes. Singers in this study sometimes terminate sentences and musical strophes with at least two verses marked by anaphora and syntactic parallelism, often corresponding to penultimate and final melodic formulas. This creates a repetitive rhythm combined with acoustic and syntactic patterns that correspond to closures in the text and music. An example is the musical strophe in example 7 from the *lăutar* Staicu’s “Tănislav,” sung in 1965.¹¹ The two verses marked by anaphora (lines 164, 165) are sung at the end of the musical strophe to penultimate and final melodic formulas.

Ex. 7

C 160	Pă Tănislav că mi-1 loa.	They took Tanislay.
C 161	Acasă că să ducea.	They went home.
E 162	Cu fata popii să logodea.	He married the priest’s daughter.
E 163	Nuntă, frate, că-m’ făcea	They had a wedding, brother,
P 164	Și bea, neică, să cinstea,	And they drank, uncle, they made toasts,
F 165	Și, neică, să-nveselea.	And, uncle, they made merry.

4. *Lack of Agreement between Text and Music.* It is evident that a distinct connection between completed narrative and musical ideas pervades the structuring of passages of text and musical strophes in the epic songs in this study. This is especially true with regard to the songs of the *lăutari*. However, there are exceptions to this. Some singers, usually peasant singers, at times display a lack of agreement between text and music. Several typical patterns emerge. The most common type of disharmony between text and music involves musical strophes that terminate with a textual line marked by unperiodic enjambement. Such is the case at the end of musical strophe III in

example 1, where line 23 appears to be a short sentence; when viewed with the subsequent musical strophe IV, it is the main clause within the long sentence stretching from lines 23 to 26a.

On occasion, verses marked by necessary enjambement are sung at the end of a musical strophe. This includes primarily the separation of main clauses from dependent clauses at the juncture between two musical strophes. In example 8, an excerpt from the *lăutar* Mitica Burcea's 1951 recording of the epic "Novac,"¹² musical strophe I is a series of ornamental dependent clauses, with no subject or predicate. The last verse of the musical strophe (line 6), sung to a final melodic formula "F," is a hanging dependent clause marked by necessary enjambement. The musical strophe that follows (II) is a continuation of the same long sentence; the main clause is finally sung in line 9.

Ex. 8

I

R 1 Munții Steri Dealului,	The mountains of the Old Hill,
R 2 Tocmai la muntii-’nalt	Even at the tall mountain
A 3 Unde pazvanții să bată,	Where the old giants fight,
A 4 Tocmai la muntii seci	Even at the barren mountain
B 5 Unde vitejii să-ntrec,	Where the heroes compete,
B 5a Unde vitejii să-ntrec,	Where the heroes compete,
F 6 La ciardacu lui Novac,	At Novac's castle,

II

D 7 A lui Novac, Baba Novac,	Novac's, Baba Novac's,
A 8 Car' trăește-acum d-un veac,	Who has lived for a century,
B 9 Mare masă mi-e-ntinsă.	A great table is set out.
etc.	etc.

At times, a verse announcing direct discourse, clearly a hanging clause, is the final line in a musical strophe, such as in example 9, another excerpt from the peasant singer Anghelache's "Scorpiu."¹³ Line 40, sung to the final melodic formula "F," is the beginning of a long sentence that is completed in the following musical strophe in lines 41-42.

Ex. 9

VI

...	...
E 39 Cel voinic le răspundea.	The heroic one answered them.
F 40 Din guriță-așa-mi zicea:	From his little mouth he said:

VII

A 41 "Și ieu am fost ca voi,	"I too was once like you,
G 42 Fără' dă griji, fără' dă nevoi'.	Without worries, without needs.
etc.	etc.

Occasionally, an introductory question posed at the end of a musical strophe similarly disrupts the continuity of the passage. An excerpt from "Tănislav," sung by the peasant singer Dorcea in 1962,¹⁴ illustrates this in example 10. Dorcea completes musical strophe XXVI with a repeated

introductory question on lines 210-10a, sung to the final melodic formula “F.” The response to the question continues in the next musical strophe, beginning with the introductory melodic formula “A” in line 211.

Ex. 10

XXVI

B 209 Pă Tănislav mi-1 scotea.	He pulled Tănisla out.
B 210 Da' Tănislav ce făcea?	But what did Tănisla do?
F 210a Da' Tănislav ce făcea?	But what did Tănislav do?

XXVII

A 211 La un popas să ducea	He went to a resting spot
+ 212 Și veșmintili că i le lua	And he took the garments
+ 213 Și iel popă sa făcea.	And he made himself a priest.
etc.	etc.

In this as well as the preceding two examples, where the agreement between text and music is violated, the effect is unsettling. The listener has the impression that the singer has lost his train of thought and is not actively involved in the telling of his tale.

Conclusion

Oral composition in Romanian epic is characterized by a congruity between textual and musical ideas. Singers clearly sense a relationship between text and music and utilize complex patterns of interaction as they construct their traditional songs. A deep structure in the text, in which complete thoughts are formulated, functions in conjunction with a deep structure in the music, in which integral musical ideas are generated. Rhetorical devices that frame sentences and passages, most notably introductory textual formulas, introductory questions, repeated verses, syntactic parallelism, rhyme, and anaphora, regularly coincide with specific melodic formulas and other patterns in the musical structure. Thus, music persistently reinforces text.

A comparison of the singing techniques of *lăutari* and peasant singers reveals distinct styles of composition. The *lăutari* display a more developed and eloquent command of epic singing. They have mastered the skills and techniques of the art, allowing them to compose neatly structured, expressive epics. The devices surrounding the effective welding of text and music that have been detailed in this article are precisely those skills of composition that the *lăutari* have learned and perpetuated from generation to generation. They are the skills that provide for the telling of a good story, which is, after all, the aim of the oral poet. This mastery is repeatedly demonstrated through deliveries that, though they differ from performance to performance, are logically conceived and well-told time after time. The peasant singers are also by and large good storytellers. However, they plainly exhibit a less skilled

and demanding approach to composition. The differing compositional styles of peasant singers and *lăutari* reveal the various mechanisms and techniques that can be used to join text and music as epic is sung. Despite the differences among individual singers, a clear correlation between narrative and musical ideas permeates the composition of all the epic songs in the repertoires examined. Singers perpetually fit coherent and logically structured narrative and musical ideas together as they sing their tales in poetic form. The further exploration of relationships between text and music in the epic poetics of other traditions could serve to enlarge our perspective of oral composition.

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Notes

¹ The epic songs used in this analysis were collected during field trips in Romania in November 1979 and September 1980, as well as obtained through the generosity of the Institute of Ethnology and Dialectology in Bucharest, under whose auspices I was given copies of epic song recordings made in the 1950's and 1960's. Sources of information regarding the singers include my own field notes, field notes that I was kindly permitted to examine from the Archives of the Institute of Ethnology and Dialectology, and biographical notes contained in Amzulescu 1974:517-18, 520-24, and 529-30. M. Constantin and M. Dorcea are deceased, although the exact years of their deaths are not known. C. Staicu died in 1983. The other singers, with the possible exception of V. Anghelache, are presumed dead.

² Supplementary published materials are from Amzulescu 1974, 1981; Amzulescu and Ciobanu 1956.

³ Costică Staicu, "Cintecul naşului," recorded by myself, September 5, 1980 in Bleşti-Teleorman, spoken introduction. Unpublished.

⁴ Costică Staicu, "Miu haiducu," recorded by myself, November 2, 1979 in Bucharest, lines 1-26a. Unpublished.

⁵ Costică Staicu, "Miu haiducu," recorded by Alexandru Amzulescu, March 31, 1966 in Bucharest. Unpublished. Tape numbers 2991b and 2992a, Archives of the Institute of Ethnology and Dialectology, Bucharest; Costică Staicu, "Miu haiducu," recorded by myself, September 4, 1980 in Bleşti-Teleorman. Unpublished.

⁶ Mihai Constantin, "Tănislav," recorded by Alexandru Amzulescu, February 22, 1951 in Desa-Dolj, lines 115-24. Published in Amzulescu 1981:377-83. Tape number 17a, Archives of the Institute of Ethnology and Dialectology, Bucharest.

⁷ Alexandru Cercel, "Miu haiducu," recorded by Paula Carp and Ghizela Sulişteanu, May 31, 1957 in Cîmpulung-Argeş, lines 94-100. Unpublished. Tape number 1100a, Archives of the Institute of Ethnology and Dialectology, Bucharest.

⁸ Mihai Constantin, "Miu haiducu," recorded by Alexandru Amzulescu, February 22, 1951 in Desa-Dolj, lines 27-32. Published in Amzulescu 1980:506-14. Tape number 18a, Archives of the Institute of Ethnology and Dialectology, Bucharest.

⁹ Alexandru Cercel, "Miu haiducu," 1957, lines 41-42a. See note 7.

¹⁰ Vasile Anghelache, "Scorpia," recorded by Alexandru Amzulescu, October 12, 1966 in Graeca-Oltenița, lines 6-9a. Unpublished. Tape number 3090Ia, Archives of the Institute of Ethnology and Dialectology, Bucharest.

¹¹ Costică Staicu, "Tănislav," recorded by Alexandru Amzulescu, September 10, 1965 in Blești-Teleorman, lines 160-65. Tape number 2878Va, Archives of the Institute of Ethnology and Dialectology, Bucharest.

¹² Mitică Burcea, "Novac," recorded by Alexandru Amzulescu and Gheorghe Ciobanu, March 24, 1951 in Merenii de Sus-Vida, lines 1-9. Published in Amzulescu and Ciobanu 1956:67-72. Tape number 92f, Archives of the Institute of Ethnology and Dialectology, Bucharest.

¹³ Vasile Anghelache, "Scorpia," 1966, lines 39-42. See note 10.

¹⁴ Marin Dorcea, "Tănislav," recorded by Emilia Comișel and Ovidiu Bîrlea, July 18, 1962 in Ciuperceni-Teleorman, line 209-13. Unpublished. Tape number 2203a, Archives of the Institute of Ethnology and Dialectology, Bucharest.

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