

RootsWorld Bulletin #382

Dona Dumitru Siminica is an unlikely heartthrob. A tidy, unremarkable looking man with a neat mustache and an eerily androgynous voice, he has the aura of a proto-Klaus Nomi, but without the outré fashion sense. But he set the Bucharest ladies' hearts all atwitter with his remarkable singing. This collection of songs recorded in the early '60's shows him in firm command of the Romanian equivalent of the blues. Highly ornamented, warmly emotive, and profoundly sorrowful, Siminica's smoky alto-range voice goes beyond haunting and into some otherworldly space. On "Afare e Intuneric," for example, his singing is positively operatic. One can hear shades of rebetika and a hint of Turkish influence here as well, owing to the crossroads culture of Bucharest during Siminica's heyday. These are songs of heartbreak, not the happy dance music of your local taraf, though there are a couple of instrumentals to break up the mournfulness. Siminica was a skilled violinist as well, and he displays his high, sweet fiddle tone on these tracks. Marin Marangros' plucky cimbalom and Costica Serban's fluttering accordion run throughout the disc, laying a lacy backdrop for Siminica's singular voice. A quiet man whose life was shrouded in mystery, Siminica died of a heart attack in the early '80's. He was only in his fifties at the time. A unique talent would have been lost to the world if not for this treasure of a re-issue. - Peggy Latkovich