

DONA DUMITRU SIMINICA*Sounds from a Bygone Age, Vol. 3***Asphalt Tango 1106**

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Adding to their ongoing survey of rare Eastern European Gypsy recordings, Dona Dumitru Siminica's dream-like falsetto proves an excellent choice at number three in this Asphalt Tango series. Common themes run throughout this trio of albums, most notably many of the *lautari* musicians being exchangeable. Turns out Siminica crawled through pubs and cafes searching out talent, a standard practice in Romania in the '60s (as were fierce drinking bouts *after* performances). The style for which women swooned to Siminica's feet was dubbed *muzica lautareasca* – "quiet suburban songs." Apparently his stature was that of a Bucharestian Pablo Neruda, the feminine sex unable to control heart flutters when his tongue let fly this poetry. In many ways these songs are not far from Parisian café music; even the accordion adds the dramatic, mournful effect of a sad Sunday afternoon. Equally difficult is it to distinguish Siminica's vocals from a female voice, adding to the androgynous effect. Even when he adds a bit of bass, as on the heartbreaking, downtrodden "Afare E Intuneric," he can't resist ascending to high notes before long. His violin playing is equally potent – and equally depressive. Of course sadness is cathartic; sometimes by pushing through pain we recover solace. This idea is symptomatic of Siminica's entire career, first by continuing his familial tradition of bricklaying, then through laying foundations in song. The slow crawl of the piano and bass create the sonic circumstances under which Siminica became a master. Relatively unknown outside the small circle of the *lautari*, as so many of Eastern European artists are, this bygone age is dutifully, and enjoyably, being rediscovered. — DB