

**Béla Bartók**

**ROMANIAN FOLK DANCES**

*Arranged for Saxophone Quartet (SATB)*

*by*

*Ted R. Marcus*



1. Stick Dance (*Jocul cu bâță*)
2. The Belt (*Brâul*)
3. Dance In Place (*Pe loc*)
4. Dance from Bucsum (*Buciumeana*)
5. Romanian Polka (*Poarga Românească*)
6. Fast Dances (*Mărunțel*)

## PROGRAM NOTES

Béla Bartók (1881-1945) was a Hungarian composer, pianist, and teacher. He was also a founder of the academic discipline now called ethnomusicology. He visited rural areas in Hungary, Romania and neighboring Slavic countries to collect folk music, using a state-of-the-art Edison cylinder phonograph to record performances by peasants and villagers. Bartók incorporated much of that music into compositions for piano or orchestra, adding harmony and accompaniment in his own distinctive style.

*Romanian Folk Dances* is a suite of seven brief dance tunes from Transylvania, originally played on a fiddle or pennywhistle. Bartók wrote the suite for piano in 1915, and then reworked it for small orchestra in 1917. The dances convey a range of emotions, from pensive and meditative to festive and frenetic.

## ARRANGER'S NOTES

The orchestra version of *Romanian Folk Dances* has some significant differences from the piano version. Bartók changed all the marked tempos, altered articulations, and modified some of the accompaniment figures. He added a four-measure introduction to the first movement and a repeat to the fourth movement, and altered harmonies in the final Fast Dance. I based this arrangement on the orchestra version, transposing as appropriate; but I used the piano version when I found it more suitable for a saxophone quartet. The metronome markings are from the orchestra version, except for the third and fourth movements that reflect the piano version. The suite is intended as a single work, with minimal pauses between movements.

**1. Stick Dance (*Jocul cu bâta*).** Originally in A minor. Bartók heard this melody played by two violinists. He scored it for two clarinets and the 1<sup>st</sup> violins in unison. It needs a steady, moderate tempo to avoid dragging, which is surely why Bartók changed the ♩ = 80 marking of the piano version to ♩ = 104.

**2. The Belt (*Brâul*).** Originally in D minor. *Brâul* is a dance that involves a belt or a sash. The piano version is slightly faster (♩ = 144) than the orchestra version (♩ = 134). I think the more deliberate tempo works better. The overall effect should be light and playful, to contrast with the two more introspective dances that follow it.

**3. Dance In Place (*Pe loc*).** Originally in B minor. For me, the two movements at the center of the suite evoke *nigunim*. A *nigun* (“knee-goon,” plural *nigunim*, “knee-goo-neem”) is a wordless chant, usually based on the minor scale or a similar mode, sung to nonsense syllables. *Nigunim* are an essential part of life for Hasidic Jews, who sing them to enhance prayer, meditation and celebration, and to attain spiritual ecstasy. The authors of *Fiddler On The Roof* used *nigun* in “If I Were a Rich Man” to elucidate the character of Tevye. As many *nigunim* derive from East European secular folk music, it’s possible these Transylvanian dance tunes (or some variants of them) were actually used as *nigunim*. I offer this background as a possible approach to playing these melodies.

Bartók heard *Pe loc* played on a pennywhistle, and accordingly scored it for a solo piccolo. At the end, the melody fades away in the middle of a phrase. I used the baritone’s top register to give the “rocking” accompaniment a thin, ethereal sound. The orchestra version is marked ♩ = 116. I prefer the slightly slower tempo (♩ = 112) of the piano version.

**4. Dance from Bucsum (*Buciumeana*).** Bartók gave this meditative melody to a solo violin, marked *dolce*. On the repeat (not in the piano version), two flutes and the 1<sup>st</sup> violins play it in octaves, *espressivo*. I have taken the liberty of lowering the violin solo an octave for the tenor. The tenor and the soprano (on the repeat) should play as expressively as possible, even prayerfully or meditatively if so inclined. I have marked the accompaniment *no vibrato* for greater contrast with the expressive melody. The orchestra version is marked ♩ = 74. I prefer the more moderate tempo (♩ = 100) of the piano version.

**5. Romanian Polka (*Poarga Românească*).** Originally in D major. Bartók gave the lower strings the melody in the second half of this festive little dance. So this is the baritone’s moment in the spotlight! The piano version is marked a ridiculously fast ♩ = 152.

**6. Fast Dances (*Mărunțel*).** I call this movement “Hungarian Hoedown.” It’s actually two separate dances from different regions of Transylvania. The first, a mere 16 measures (originally in D major), serves as an introduction to the faster and longer second one (originally in G major). The orchestra version gives them separate numbers, but I’ve followed the piano version that combines them into one movement. The piano version is marked ♩ = 152 for the first dance and ♩ = 160 for the second, but I agree with Bartók that such a frantic tempo isn’t practical. The slightly faster tempo at measure 235 and the crescendos at measure 241 through the end are my additions. Be careful to maintain the balance as the soprano and alto trade off on the melody.

Ted R. Marcus

# Romanian Folk Dances

Score

Béla Bartók  
Arranged by Ted R. Marcus

## 1. Stick Dance (Jocul cu bâță)

**Allegro moderato** ♩ = 104

Soprano Saxophone

Alto Saxophone

Tenor Saxophone

Baritone Saxophone

S. Sx.

A. Sx.

T. Sx.

B. Sx.

S. Sx.

A. Sx.

T. Sx.

B. Sx.

*f*

*mf*

*f*

*mf*

*f*

*mf*

12

13

21

*mf*

*mp*

*mp*

*mp*

*mp*

22

*mf*

*mp*

*mp*

*mp*

## 2. The Belt (Brâu)

Allegro ♩ = 134

53

Soprano Saxophone

Alto Saxophone

Tenor Saxophone

Baritone Saxophone

*p*

61

S. Sx.

A. Sx.

T. Sx.

B. Sx.

69

S. Sx.

A. Sx.

T. Sx.

B. Sx.

*mf*

PREVIEW

77

S. Sax.

A. Sax.

T. Sax.

B. Sax.

3. Dance In Place (Pe loc)

Andante ♩ = 112

85

Soprano Saxophone

Alto Saxophone

Tenor Saxophone

Baritone Saxophone

*mp*

*p*

92

S. Sax.

A. Sax.

T. Sax.

B. Sax.

*p*

94

116

S. Sx.

A. Sx.

T. Sx.

B. Sx.

121

*pp*

### 4. Dance from Bucsum (Buciumeana)

Molto moderato ♩ = 100

no vibrato

125

Soprano Saxophone

Alto Saxophone

Tenor Saxophone

Baritone Saxophone

*p*

*mf dolce*

3

3

131

S. Sx.

A. Sx.

T. Sx.

B. Sx.

135

3

3

154

S. Sax. *mp* *p*

A. Sax. *p* *pp*

T. Sax. *p* *pp*

B. Sax. *p* *pp*

5. Romanian Polka (Poarga Românească)

Allegro ♩ = 132

159

163

Soprano Saxophone *f* *f*

Alto Saxophone *f* *mf*

Tenor Saxophone *f* *mf*

Baritone Saxophone *f* *mf*

166

169

S. Sax. *f*

A. Sax. *f*

T. Sax. *f*

B. Sax. *f*

### 6. Fast Dances (Mărunțel)

187 **Allegro** ♩ = 132

Soprano Saxophone *f* *mf*

Alto Saxophone *mf* *f*

Tenor Saxophone *f* *mf* *f* *mf*

Baritone Saxophone *f* *mf* *f* *mf*

193

S. Sax. *f*

A. Sax. *mf*

T. Sax. *f* *mf* *f* *mf*

B. Sax. *f* *mf* *f* *mf*

199 **Più allegro** ♩ = 144

S. Sax. *mf* *f*

A. Sax. *f* *f*

T. Sax. *f* *mf* *f*

B. Sax. *f* *mf* *f* *mf* *f*



205

S. Sx.

A. Sx.

T. Sx.

B. Sx.

211

S. Sx.

A. Sx.

T. Sx.

B. Sx.

217

S. Sx.

A. Sx.

T. Sx.

B. Sx.

*sfzp* ————— *f*      *sfzp* ————— *f*

223

S. Sx.

A. Sx.

T. Sx.

B. Sx.

*sfzp* *f* *sfzp* *f*

227

229

S. Sx.

A. Sx.

T. Sx.

B. Sx.

235 [a little faster ♩ = 148]

S. Sx.

A. Sx.

T. Sx.

B. Sx.