

BRÎUL PE ȘASE (Brîulețul din Muscel)

(Romania)

Romanian folk dance specialists give the name *brîu* (BREE-oo, "belt"; plural *brîuri*, BREE-oor) to a category of fast, complicated dances done in a line or semicircle, with arms on neighbors' shoulders, crossed in back, or grasping neighbors' belts. This category includes such dances as *rustem* and *sîrba*, as well as numerous dances which the villagers themselves specifically call *brîu*.

In the region of Muntenia, in the foothills of the Carpathian mountains, several different *brîuri* are done at holiday dances, wedding celebrations, etc., and the last dance done at the traditional Sunday afternoon dance gathering is almost always a *brîu*.

Although the *brîu* was the exclusive domain of men in times past, women have participated in it during the last generation or so. At family celebrations, husbands and wives dance next to each other in the *brîu*, and the older people sometimes do less energetic forms of it. At more public dance events, only the younger, unmarried people dance the *brîu*. The young men generally begin the dance and are eventually joined by their girl friends. Skill in dancing the *brîu* is especially important in establishing a young person's social status in the village. In Muscel, where the variant described below comes from, the dancers even hold *brîu* contests, complete with betting and prizes for the winners.

Muntenian *brîuri* are further classified as "8-count" (*Brîul* pe opt*) or "6-count" (*Brîul pe șase*, BREE-oo peh SHAH-seh), according to the number of beats in the dance phrase. With rare exceptions, the music for the 8-count *brîu* is in 4 measures of 2/4 time, while that of the 6-count *brîu* is in 3-measure phrases. Both of the above names are professional terms used by Romanian musicologists and choreographers. The inhabitants of Muscel call the 8-count *brîu* "*Brîul ăl mare* (big *brîu*)" and the 6-count dance "*Brîuleț* (little *brîu*)."

Brîul pe șase (Brîulețul) as described below is a selection of four figures from several dozen found in the Muscel-Pitești region.

Recordings: (a) Folkraft F-LP-33, "Romanian Folk Dances," Side A, Bd 2, *Brîul pe șase* (b) London SW 99456, "Music from Rumania," Side 1, Bd 1, *Brîul din Muscel* (c) Nevofoon 12153, "Roemeense Volksdansen," Side 1, Bd 1, *Brîul pe 6*.

Meter and rhythm: *Brîul pe șase* is conventionally notated in 2/4 meter, and its highly syncopated rhythm varies with each figure. In the description below, the rhythm pattern is given by the cue letters "q" (quick), equivalent to an eighth note value, and "S" (SLOW), having the value of a quarter note.

Formation: Dancers in a line or semicircle, arms on neighbors' shoulders (most common form) or grasping neighbors' belts (seen occasionally in Pitești). End dancers hold free hand behind back or on hip.

* The -ul ending, pronounced "-oo" (colloquial) or "-ool" (more formal usage) is a form of the Romanian definite article, the equivalent of English "the;" hence *brîu* = "belt," *brîul* = "the belt."

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MEAS

ACTION

Figure 1 - Basic traveling step

- 1-2 q Facing slightly R of ctr and moving R, hop on Lft, kicking Rft loosely forward low.
 S Step Rft fwd.
 S Step Lft fwd.
 S Step Rft fwd.
 q Leap Lft fwd.
- 3 S Step Rft fwd.
 S Step Lft fwd.
- 4-12 Repeat mov'ts of meas 1-3 three more times for a total of four.

Figure 2 - Kick-out ("flutter") steps in place

- 1 q Hop on Lft in place, momentarily turning to face slightly L of ctr and "fluttering" R leg out to side loosely, articulated from hip with "snap" of R knee, R ankle relaxed.
 S Facing ctr, step Rft in place.
 q Hop on Rft in place, momentarily turning to face slightly R of ctr and "fluttering" L leg out to side loosely, articulated from hip with "snap" of L knee, L ankle relaxed.
- 2 q Facing ctr, step Lft in place.
 S Facing ctr, step Rft in place.
 q Hop on Rft in place, momentarily turning to face slightly R of ctr and "fluttering" L leg out to side as above.
- 3 q Facing ctr, step Lft in place.
 q Facing ctr, step Rft in place.
 S Facing ctr, step Lft in place, extending Rft fwd low.
- 4-12 Repeat mov'ts of meas 1-3 of this figure three more times for a total of four.

Figure 3 - Flat steps sideward with scuffs

- 1-3 q Facing ctr, hop on Lft in place.
 S Facing ctr, step flat Rft sideward R with accent.
 S Facing ctr, step flat Lft behind Rft.
 S Facing ctr, step flat Rft sideward R.
 S Turning to face slightly R of ctr, scuff L heel fwd past Rft.
 q Still facing slightly R of ctr, tap L heel (no weight) in front of Rft.
 S Step onto flat Lft (taking weight) in front of Rft and turn to face ctr.
- 4-12 Repeat mov'ts of meas 1-3 of this figure three more times for a total of four.

Figure 4 - "Rat-a-tat" crossing steps in place

- 1 q Hop on Lft in place, momentarily turning to face slightly L of ctr and "fluttering" R leg out to side as above.
 q Facing ctr, step Rft in front of Lft.
 q Step Lft in place behind Rft.
 q Step Rft beside Lft.

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BRIUL PE SASE (concluded)

MEAS

ACTION

Figure 4 (concluded)

- 2 q Step Lft in front of Rft.
 q Step Rft in place behind Lft.
 q Step Lft beside Rft.
 q Step Rft in front of Lft.
- 3 q Step Lft in place behind Rft.
 q Step Rft beside Lft.
 q Step Lft in front of Rft.
 q Step Rft in place behind Lft.
- 4 q Step Lft beside Rft.
 q Step Rft in front of Lft.
 q Step Lft in place behind Rft.
 q Step Rft beside Lft.
- 5 Same as meas 2.
- 6 q Step Lft in place behind Rft.
 q Step Rft beside Lft.
 S Step Lft in front of Rft.
- 7-12 Repeat mov'ts of meas 1-6 once more for a total of twice through.

SEQUENCE:

Among native dancers, the sequence of figures is determined either by agreement beforehand or a "sixth sense" that develops among dancers who know each other well and often dance together. A fixed sequence useful to non-natives consists of Fig. 1, 2, 1, 3, 1, 4 done in that order and as written above (12 meas per figure). This sequence fits the Folkraft record exactly, three times through.

Description by Dick Crum

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