

FANFARE **CIOCARLIA**

Contemporary Gypsy brass music has its roots in the Turkish military bands that faded along with the Ottoman Empire, but over the last century it has evolved into its own distinct style. This celebratory music is often heard at weddings--and after seeing a couple performances by Serbia's great Boban Markovich (whose contributions to the sound track of Emir Kusturica's film *Underground* helped introduce the tradition to a wider audience) at last year's World Music Festival, I can attest that it's just as good at driving a regular party. Of the growing number of Gypsy brass bands whose music has become available in the U.S. over the last five years, Fanfare **Ciocarlia**, from the tiny village of Zece Prajini in Romania, is easily the most progressive and adventurous. The band's most recent album, *Iag Bari* (Piranha, 2001), features an international roster of guests: the women's choir Bulgarian Voices-**Angelite** adds spooky harmonies to "Lume, Lume," Romanian pop star Don Armeanca contributes some ripe vocals on a few tunes, and there's some giddy accordion and violin from pomo Hungarian Gypsy group Rom Bengale on several tracks. But the group's core sound--a trio of reeds, a slew of brass (including trumpet, tuba, and baritone horn), and speedy percussion--doesn't need help. Each of Fanfare **Ciocarlia's** albums includes a number of pieces that gallop as furiously as any hardcore song you care to mention--up to 200 beats per minute. I'm not sure how the group, whose members range in age from 23 to 69, can pull this stuff off live--it demands a level of physical endurance that would send most jazzers home in a defeated lump. But they've made some of the most exciting records I've ever heard, and I've been waiting for their Chicago debut for years. The free performance kicks off this season's SummerDance series.