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THE GYPSY IN VIOLIN MUSIC: A LECTURE RECITAL FEATURING THE  
MUSIC OF KREISLER, RAVEL, AND SARASATE; TOGETHER WITH  
THREE RECITALS OF MUSIC BY BARTÓK, BEETHOVEN,  
CHAUSSON, DVORÁK, SCHOENBERG, SCHUBERT,  
SHOSTAKOVICH, AND TCHAIKOVSKY

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the  
University of North Texas in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

By

John A. Thomson, L.R.S.M, B.M. (Perf) ., M.M.

Denton, Texas

December, 1990

Thomson, John A., The Gypsy in Violin Music: A Lecture Recital Featuring the Music of Kreisler, Ravel, and Sarasate; Together with Three Recitals of Music by Bartók, Beethoven, Chausson, Dvořák, Schoenberg, Schubert, Shostakovich, and Tchaikovsky. Doctor of Musical Arts (Violin Performance), December, 1990, 36 pp., 4 illustrations, bibliography, 46 titles.

The lecture recital is an examination of Gypsies and their music with particular emphasis on violin repertoire. The lecture was followed by a performance of Kreisler's La Gitana, Sarasate's Zigeunerweisen, and Ravel's Tzigane.

In addition to the lecture recital, three other public recitals were performed. The first, on April 18, 1988, included works of Tchaikovsky and Shostakovich. The second program, a solo recital on March 6, 1989 featured works by Beethoven, Chausson, and Bartók. The third recital was performed on April 26, 1990 and included works by Schoenberg, Dvořák, and Schubert.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My sincere thanks to my parents and to Ann Nicholson for  
their support and assistance

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North Texas State University  
School of Music

**CHAMBER MUSIC RECITAL**

John Thomson, Violin  
Greg Ritchey, Piano  
Richard Thomas, Cello

Monday, April 18, 1988                      5:00 p.m.                      Recital Hall

Piano Trio No. 1 in c minor, op. 8 . . . . . Shostakovich

Piano Trio in a minor, op. 50. . . . . Tchaikovsky

I Pezzo Elegiaco - Moderato assai

II Tema con Variazioni

Tema	Andante con moto
Variation 1	Andante con moto
Variation 2	Più mosso
Variation 3	Allegro moderato
Variation 4	L'istesso tempo
Variation 5	L'istesso tempo
Variation 6	Tempo di Valse
Variation 7	Allegro moderato
Variation 8	Fuga (omitted)
Variation 9	Andante flebile, ma non tanto
Variation 10	Tempo di Mazurka
Variation 11	Moderato
Variazione Finale e Coda -	
Allegro risoluto e con fuoco	

Presented in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for John Thomson's degree  
of Doctor of Musical Arts

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS  
*School of Music*

presents

JOHN THOMSON, VIOLIN  
SOOME YOUNG, PIANO

Sonata, Op. 30, No. 2 in c minor L. van Beethoven

Allegro con brio  
Adagio cantabile  
Scherzo, Allegro  
Finale, Allegro

Poème, Op. 25

E. Chausson

Rhapsody No. 1 (Folk Dances) 1928

B. Bartók

Prima parte (Lassú)  
Seconda parte (Friss)

Presented in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the  
degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

Monday, March 6, 1989  
5:00 p.m.  
Recital Hall

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS  
*College of Music*

presents

Graduate Recital

JOHN THOMSON, violin  
GREG RITCHEY, piano

Thursday, April 26, 1990      5:00 p.m.      Recital Hall

PROGRAM

Phantasy, Op. 47	Schoenberg
Romance, Op. 11	Dvořák
Fantasie, D. 934, Op. post. 159	Schubert

Presented in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Musical Arts



UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS  
*College of Music*

presents

A Lecture Recital

JOHN THOMSON, violin

assisted by:  
GREG RITCHEY, piano

Monday, October 29, 1990 5:00 p.m. Concert Hall

"THE GYPSY IN VIOLIN MUSIC"

- La Gitana* ..... Fritz Kreisler  
(1875-1962)
- Zigeunerweisen, Op. 20* ..... Pablo Sarasate  
(1844-1908)
- Tzigane* ..... Maurice Ravel  
(1875-1937)

Presented in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Musical Arts





## THE GYPSY IN VIOLIN MUSIC

There is a Gypsy legend concerning the origin of the violin:

In Transylvania, there lived a beautiful young Gypsy girl called Mara. She was in love with a handsome *gadjo*<sup>1</sup> who failed to return her love. In desperation, Mara prayed to the Devil who promised to help her on condition that she sold her parents and four brothers to him. She agreed, and the Devil fashioned a violin from the father, four strings from the four brothers, and a bow from the mother and her white hair. When Mara played the violin to her beloved, he was immediately bewitched, and he returned the girl's love. However, the Devil reappeared and snatched up the couple saying, "You have listened to the Devil's music, so now you must both come with me to Hell." Only the violin and the bow remained on the ground where a traveling Gypsy found them. He caressed the violin and set out on his travels, bringing laughter and tears to all he visited.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*gadjo*; pl. *gadje*: *Romani* or Gypsy language for a non-Gypsy. Siegmund A. Wolf, Großes Wörterbuch der Zigeunersprache (Mannheim: Bibliographisches Institut AG., 1960).

<sup>2</sup>For the source of this story see Jean-Paul Clébert, The Gypsies, trans. Charles Duff (London: Penguin, 1967), 147; Walter Starkie, Raggle-Taggle. Adventures with A Fiddle in Hungary and Roumania (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1933), 5-6; and Diane Tong, Gypsy Folk Tales (New York:

### The Origin of the Gypsies

To the best of present knowledge the Gypsies originated in India. The English name Gypsy first appeared in 1514 as Gipcy, and derives from the word Egyptian.<sup>3</sup> For some time, Europeans believed the Gypsies were of Egyptian origin, and the Gypsies themselves contributed to this myth. They referred to themselves as dispossessed royalty of a kingdom known as Little Egypt. Biblical passages (notably Ezekiel 29:12) tell of the Egyptians being scattered over the world. This biblical association engendered for the Gypsies a certain amount of sympathy with their European hosts. As "visiting royalty," parts of Europe granted them considerable privileges, including Papal safe-conduct passes and the right to expect alms and hospitality. Local citizens could be imprisoned for refusing to give such assistance.

In 1530, King James V of Scotland even went as far as pledging military aid to recover Little Egypt for the Gypsies.<sup>4</sup> It is possible that old German maps that marked Asia Minor as *Klein-Egypten* (Little Egypt) added further to the

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Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989), 45-47.

<sup>3</sup>James A.H. Murray, et al., editor Oxford English Dictionary, 20 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), VI, 173.

<sup>4</sup>Bertha B. Quintana and Lois Gray Floyd, ¡Qué Gitano! Gypsies of Southern Spain (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), 14.

inaccurate theory of the Gypsies' place of origin.<sup>5</sup> Even in modern times, Andalusian Gypsy entertainers call themselves by such names as *La Faraona* (Pharaoh's daughter).<sup>6</sup> Another theory in which some fifteenth-century Europeans believed was that the Gypsies were penitents condemned to wander the Earth for seven years in order to atone for their fathers' sins.

The following table shows the dates, based on analysis of archives, when the first recorded appearance of the Gypsies was noted in various regions. It is probable that the Gypsies were in these various regions a short time before the dates in the actual written records.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Region</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Region</u>
1322	Crete	1417	Transylvania
1378	Peloponnesus	1420	Denmark
1348	Serbia	1422	Rome and Bologna
1378	Zagreb	1427	Paris
1397	Bohemia	1430	Wales
1414	Basle	1447	Barcelona
1416	Meissen	1492	Scotland <sup>7</sup>

When their nomadic wanderings showed no signs of terminating, the sympathy turned to hostility and harassment. The nomads were associated with any theft or crime that occurred while they were in the regions, and in

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<sup>5</sup>Clébert, op. cit., 27-28.

<sup>6</sup>Quintana, op. cit., 15.

<sup>7</sup>Clébert, op. cit., 52-55.

many cases, they were guilty. Spain banished the Gypsies in 1492, and in 1498, the Freiburg parliament outlawed them. England consequently exiled the Gypsies in 1531, and many other Western European states followed suit.

The people of some Eastern European states showed the Gypsies greater tolerance, so many of the nomads returned to the Balkans. After a period of time, a large number of Gypsies were enslaved in Rumania. This occurred between the fourteenth and nineteenth centuries. The second great Gypsy influx of Western Europe coincided with the emancipation of these Rumanian Gypsies in the middle of the nineteenth century. Bálint Sárosi, writing about 1970, estimates the number of Gypsies living in Europe at about one million, and suggests that there are several million living in Asia, North Africa, and America.<sup>8</sup> In 1961, Clébert approximates the total Gypsy population at about "some five or six million."<sup>9</sup> After the emancipation of the Rumanian Gypsies, some came to America where today it is estimated that there are between 50,000 and 1 million Gypsies, depending upon which census is being consulted.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Bálint Sárosi, Gypsy Music, trans. Fred Macnicol (Budapest: Franklin, 1978), 22.

<sup>9</sup>Clébert, op. cit., 15.

<sup>10</sup>John B. McLaughlin, Gypsy Lifestyles (Lexington: D.C. Heath, 1980), 12.

The language of the Gypsies is called *Romani*. István Vályi, a Hungarian novice priest studying in Holland about 1760, pointed out similarities between *Romani* and the language of Malabar Indians. He published his discovery in 1776 in Vienna.<sup>11</sup> Heinrich Grellman pioneered linguistic studies tracing many *Romani* words to Sanskrit, and he concluded that *Romani* resembles the dialects spoken in northwestern India.<sup>12</sup> The following words show some similarities:

<u>Romani</u>	<u>Hindi</u>	<u>English</u>
yakh	akh	eye
yag	ag	fine
kalo	kala	black
ker	kar	to do, to make
khil	ghi	butter
kin	kin	to long
amaro	amara	our <sup>13</sup>

More recently, anthropologists have detected physical similarities between the Gypsies and the people of northwestern India. Writing of the Gypsies' origin, Frederick Hulse states,

The idea that their original homeland was India is supported by analysis of blood group frequencies as well as by

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<sup>11</sup>Sárosi, op. cit., 12.

<sup>12</sup>Heinrich Grellman, Dissertation on the Gypsies: With an Historical Enquiry Concerning Their Origin and First Appearance in Europe (London: William Ballintine, 1807), 11-14.

<sup>13</sup>Clébert, op. cit., 235-236.

observation of their external physical features. In both they resemble certain lower caste groups of northwestern India rather than the Europeans among whom they dwell.<sup>14</sup>

The Hungarians refer to the Gypsy as *Cigány*, which is thought to derive from the Greek *Athinganoi* (untouchable). This can be seen even more completely in the Turkish name, *Atzigan*, versions of which are still used in the Balkans and Rumania, and in the French name for Gypsy, *Tzigane*, which derives from the same source. *Athinganoi* possibly refers to the lowest members of the Indian caste system, the pariahs, from whom the Gypsies may be descended.<sup>15</sup> Why they left India is not known. Some of the theories include poverty and starvation, religious persecution, and the invasion by barbarians.

Some Gypsiologists believe that the Persian poet Firdusi (935-1020 A.D.) describes the origin of the Gypsies in his book *Shah Nameh* (Book of Kings). Firdusi states that Bahram Gur, who was a king of Persia, brought ten thousand *luris* (musicians and dancers) from India in the fifth century A.D. Because the *luris* did not cultivate the land assigned to

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<sup>14</sup>Frederick S. Hulse, The Human Species (New York: Random House, 1963), 386-387.

<sup>15</sup>Sárosi, op. cit., 11.

them, the king evicted them, commanding that they should roam the country and earn a living by singing.<sup>16</sup>

The Gypsies group themselves into tribes, some of which are associated with a particular trade. For instance, the *Lovari* are horse-traders, the *Tschurari* are known as knife-sharpeners, the *Kalderashi* are tinkers, and the *Sinti* are musicians. There is still a tribe today known as *Luris*, who are not, however, associated with any particular trade.

Some of the tribes consider certain other tribes to be of a different class and to be less genuinely *Rom*, as the Gypsies call themselves. Therefore, intermarriage is acceptable only with certain tribes and not others. For instance, the *Lovari* do not consider the *Sinti* as an equal class of *Rom*.<sup>17</sup>

Another branch of Gypsies are the *Gitanos* of Andalusia who probably arrived in the south of the Iberian peninsula after travels through North Africa. The Gypsies, who arrived at Barcelona about 1447, bore papal letters and are therefore considered "European" Gypsies rather than *Gitanos*. It is believed that the *Gitanos* came to Andalusia as early as the eighth century, following the invading Moslem forces.

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<sup>16</sup>Clébert, op. cit., 40.

<sup>17</sup>Jan Yoors, The Gypsies (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967), 133.

This could explain why they have assimilated the local customs to a greater extent than other Gypsies.<sup>18</sup>

*Gitanos* differ physically from other Gypsies. You can also hear a difference in the dialects. The *Gitano* dialect *Caló* is based on *Romani*, but it is significantly different than other Gypsy dialects and almost incomprehensible to other Gypsies. As the Gypsies traveled, the *Romani* language adopted words from the languages of the host countries. In contrast to the northern dialect of *Romani*, *Caló* does not have a single word of Germanic origin.

It is interesting to note that not only has *Romani* acquired words from other languages, but it has also given some words to those languages. For example, English slang has inherited such terms as *pal* (from *phral*, brother), and *cosh* (from *krash*, stick). Perhaps Shakespeare knew that Caliban was similar to the *Romani* word for darkness or blackness - *kaliben* - when he so named his creature of darkness in The Tempest.<sup>19</sup>

You can classify Gypsies into three groups according to their lifestyle: nomadic, semi-sedentary, and sedentary. Recently, to assert a better control on the population, Eastern European laws have forced the Gypsies to become

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<sup>18</sup>D.E. Pohren, The Art of Flamenco (Madrid: Society of Spanish Studies, 1962), 39.

<sup>19</sup>Clébert, op. cit., 239.



sedentary--a further example of the racial harassment with which the Gypsies have lived for centuries, and which perhaps culminated with the Nazi regime murdering nearly one-half million Gypsies between 1939 and 1945.<sup>20</sup>

### Gypsy Music

The average *gadjo* (non-Gypsy) carries many misconceptions about Gypsy music. In his otherwise informative book, The Gypsies, Clébert states, "Whatever his occupation may be, the Gypsy knows how to play the violin, and cannot live without this instrument."<sup>21</sup> In contrast to this statement, Jan Yoors writes, "The songs were accompanied only by hand-clapping. Musical instruments were reserved for entertaining the Gadje."<sup>22</sup> John B. McLaughlin describes Gypsy music accurately:

A common misconception is that Hungarian gypsies play "gypsy music." Although gypsies do have their own music, it is never played in public. What the gypsy violinist actually plays is Hungarian folk music, but in a distinctively gypsy style. Although some gypsies do perform as dancers (they are usually Gitanos) or violinists, they are few in number. To earn money as a performer, one must work for the gadje, a practice that is contrary to Romani.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Yoors, op. cit., 254.

<sup>21</sup>Clébert, op. cit., 146-147.

<sup>22</sup>Yoors, op. cit., 147.

<sup>23</sup>McLaughlin, op. cit., 48.

It is important to note that the description "gypsy music" suggests two meanings: the first is the authentic and original music repertoire of Gypsies, and the second is the music that Gypsy entertainers perform for *gadje* as a livelihood. The popular misconception of the *gadje*, including great musicians such as Liszt and Brahms, is that the latter is a genuine product of the Gypsy. In reality, it comes from popular composers of the region and is made well known through the performances of Gypsy musicians. Béla Bartók wrote in 1931,

I should like to state that what people (including Hungarians) call "gypsy music" is not gypsy music but Hungarian music; it is not old folk music but a fairly recent type of popular art music composed, practically without exception, by Hungarians of the upper middle class.<sup>24</sup>

Endre de Spur suggests that the major cause for the misconception of what is actually Hungarian music as being Gypsy music is Liszt's famous book The Gipsy in Music, which first appeared in French in 1859 and was designed to help readers understand his Hungarian Rhapsodies.<sup>25</sup> (Much of the book was, in fact, written by Princess Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein, but Liszt endorsed all of it with his

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<sup>24</sup>Béla Bartók, *Gypsy Music or Hungarian Music?*, The Musical Quarterly XXXIII/2 (April 1947), 240-241.

<sup>25</sup>Endre de Spur, *What About Gypsy Music?*, The Music Journal XVI/3 (March 1958), 80 and 106.

name.)<sup>26</sup> Liszt incorrectly credits the Gypsies as having created the Hungarian musical idiom, which we will discuss later. Bartók encourages Gypsiologists to conduct authoritative research in order to establish what is genuinely Gypsy folk music. He ends his article quoted above with a challenge to Gypsiologists.

Gypsy music has a legion of admirers, but they have so far failed to produce a scholarly work dealing with the subject. It is high time for them to give us a work in which the gypsies, their music, and their art of performance are treated with scholarly detachment. The day has come when uninformed and incorrect publications ... should give way to responsible and representative scholarship. We, the champions and exponents of peasant music, have done our stint and discharged our obligations towards folk music. I should like to invite the champions of this so-called gypsy music to do likewise.<sup>27</sup>

#### Music Originating from the Gypsies

Bálint Sárosi has carried out some of the finest recent research on Gypsy music, and most of the following information is drawn from his book entitled Gypsy Music. Hungary has conducted far more research on Gypsy music than any other country, and so to understand what some authentic Gypsy music is, we will examine examples of the Wallachian Gypsies. Wallachia is a region in Rumania where many of the inhabitants speak Hungarian. The stylistic features of this

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<sup>26</sup>Sárosi, op. cit., 141.

<sup>27</sup>Bartók, op. cit., 253.

music will not be applicable to all Gypsy music because there is no authentic Gypsy music comparable to the *Romani* language in that it is accepted by Gypsies universally. However, this will help to contrast real Gypsy music with "popular" Gypsy music.

Sárosi dismisses most of the music of the Gypsies in Eastern Europe as not originating from the Gypsies. The Wallachian Gypsies, however, do possess a repertoire of genuinely original songs, and these provide a representative example of authentic Gypsy folk music.

Two different styles characterize the Wallachian songs: the slow songs and the dance songs, known in *Romani* as *loki d'ili* and *khelimaske d'ili* respectively. The melodic contour of both song types characteristically descends, and they employ major and minor scales combined with Mixolydian or Aeolian modes. You can see the modal elements in the raised and lowered seventh degree. The seventh degree is usually lowered when it is above the final note and raised when it is below. The dance songs are occasionally pentatonic.

The stylistic features of the slow songs include four melodic lines sung in a very free rhythmic style, the second line ending on a drawn-out note a fifth above the final tonic note. This corresponds to the main cadence of the piece. Usually, a long note on the second scale degree precedes the last tonic note, and it is followed by a short rest and a quick note of anticipation. A note on the

supertonic or leading tone sometimes substitutes for the note of anticipation. The final note is sung very softly or even omitted altogether.

The dance songs, as the name implies, can be sung to accompany dance. Often the second half of the dance song repeats the first half at the interval of a fifth lower--a feature also found in older style Hungarian folk songs. The manner of performance for these dance songs is interesting in that the voices often replace the text with meaningless syllables while imitating instruments. This technique is called *pergetés*.

The melody is often sung by women using the *pergetés* technique. Hand-clapping to mark the beats accompanies the melody, and men also accompany the melody in a style known in Hungarian as *szájbögzés*, which literally means "mouth bass-playing." Shrill trumpet-like sounds, which the *szájbögzés* technique produces, mark the off-beats.

Improvisation characterizes Gypsies' performance of music. Each time a Gypsy singer performs a song, he may vary it according to his mood. The singer may even change lines of a text in subsequent performances.<sup>28</sup> The *Lovari* in Western Europe have songs that are identical in style to the music of the Wallachian Gypsies, but it must be remembered that the *Lovari* formerly lived in this region of Eastern

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<sup>28</sup>Sárosi, *op. cit.*, 25-31. Examples of these song styles can be seen on pages 28-30 of Sárosi's book.

Europe, so their music probably derives from the same source.

Older Gypsy folk music of this sort is in decline. The Csenki brothers pointed out that, even in 1941, the younger Gypsies considered this music antiquated and were not preserving it. The Western tendency to harmonize in thirds has recently been noted in the singing of the Gypsies.<sup>29</sup>

To conclude, we can identify three important Gypsy musical features of this repertoire: the improvisational character, the second and fourth lines of the slow songs ending at the interval of a fifth apart, and the manner of performing the dance songs.

Two points have to be stressed with regard to this music. Instruments have no part in this repertoire, and the so-called "Gypsy scale" containing two augmented seconds is not utilized.



Gypsy Scale

While it is true that Gypsy performers use the scale very liberally while playing professionally, this scale is never used in authentic Gypsy music. The augmented second

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<sup>29</sup>Sárosi, Ibid., 32.

is found in popular Hungarian styles such as the *verbunkos* and the *csárdás*, but Bartók asserts that the Gypsies imported this interval into the region. He complains of their performances debasing Hungarian peasant music.

...they deformed the *parlando-rubato* melodies, with excessive *rubato* and with florid, superimposed embellishments, until they made them unrecognizable. They made use of the *rubato* in a special way in melodies with strict rhythm: certain small melodic portions of equal length (for instance, each couple of measures) remain equally long temporally, while inside these measures the value of the quarter-notes, for example, is variable. As for melodic line, the gypsies adopted the augmented second, absolutely unknown in Hungarian music properly so called; they had to import this peculiarity from the Balkans or still further away. As to the dance melodies in *tempo giusto* rhythm, they overloaded them with strange embellishments which recall certain ornamented passages of Western music.<sup>30</sup>

Flamenco music contains a similar sort of scale that consists of a Phrygian mode with raised third and seventh degrees.



Flamenco Scale

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<sup>30</sup>B. Suchoff, editor, Belá Bartók's Essays (London: Faber and Faber, 1976), 70.

This scale is known in Arabic as *hidjaz* and betrays the Moorish influence in the Flamenco style.<sup>31</sup> While Flamenco music is considered to be a hybrid product of Spanish, Moslem, Jewish, and Gypsy influences, it is the *Gitanos* (or Andalusian Gypsies) who have perpetuated the style. In particular, it is the *cante jondo* (or deep song) with which the *Gitanos* are associated. Walter Starkie credits the *Gitanos* with bringing a sense of simple sadness and tragedy into the *cante jondo*, which separates it from the lighter and more sophisticated Flamenco style.<sup>32</sup>

The songs make use of quarter tones and third tones, slides and embellishments, and a harsh, nasal tone that is cultivated by the singer in preference to a normal, sweeter sound.

The *cante jondo* is usually melancholy and improvisatory, and generally begins with a drawn-out "Ay." Traditionally the singer was unaccompanied, but now a guitar is often used to play a prelude, some interludes, and a postlude, as well as to provide harmonic support. Because the *Gitanos* of Andalusia are sedentary and have assimilated much of the local culture, it is incorrect to think of this as authentic Gypsy music. It would be more correct to think of this as

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<sup>31</sup>Sárosi, op. cit., 44.

<sup>32</sup>Walter Starkie, Spain. A Musician's Journey through Time and Space, 2 vols. (Geneva: Edisli, 1958), II, 103.



popular music, which the *Gitanos* may have assisted in creating. The *Gitanos* have played an unquestioned role in its preservation and performance. Many used to live in the mountain caves at Sacro Monte, and contributed a colorful element to the society.

The characteristic instrument used in Flamenco style is a guitar that has been specially designed to sound nasal and metallic. Most *Gitano* guitars are made from cypress, and the guitarist uses a *cejuela* (or clamp) that diminishes the string length and provides a more brilliant tone.<sup>33</sup> The Gypsy feature of using the guitar in Flamenco music is imitated in violin music. Grange Woolley identifies guitar-like imitations in Pablo de Sarasate's use of left-hand pizzicato, and springing-bow technique that he frequently uses in his Spanish dances. An example of this occurs in the Malagueña, opus 21, which imitates Flamenco style.<sup>34</sup> Likewise, the violin parts in Joaquin Rodrigo's music use ricochet bowings that sound like the guitar strumming technique known as *rasgueado*.

#### Popular Gypsy Music

It is the "popular" Gypsy music played in Hungary that identifies the violin as the most important instrument.

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<sup>33</sup>Walter Starkie, In Sara's Tents (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1953), 99.

<sup>34</sup>Grange Woolley, *Pablo de Sarasate: His Historical Significance*, Music and Letters XXXVI/3 (July 1955), 237-252.

Liszt writes, "The regal instrument in Bohemian music is the violin; the second in importance is the cymbalo [sic]." <sup>35</sup>

Although many writers have suggested that the Gypsies have provided music in Hungary for many centuries, in truth it took considerable time for the Gypsies to assimilate the local musical style and to develop the popular Gypsy bands. Bartók explains, "only later, beginning about 200 years ago, musicianship passed into the hands of the gipsies..." <sup>36</sup> Before the mid-eighteenth century, the most usual profession of the Hungarian Gypsies was that of the blacksmith, but following this time, performing music became an important Gypsy occupation. This may have been encouraged by the local attitude that considered music-making, and especially violin-playing, as scandalous and amoral. <sup>37</sup>

### Musical Genres

The rise of the Hungarian Gypsy musician coincided with the development of an important Hungarian musical style, the *verbunkos*. The characteristics of this style became the hallmarks of Gypsy performers, and you can see elements of it to this day in the performances of Gypsies.


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<sup>35</sup>Franz Liszt, The Gipsy in Music, 2 vols., trans. Edwin Evans (London: William Reeves, 1925), II, 332. By 'Bohemian,' Liszt is referring to 'Gypsy'.

<sup>36</sup>B. Suchoff, op. cit., 75.

<sup>37</sup>Sárosi, op. cit., 60.

*Verbunkos* music was originally known as the "Magyar," and it was to Hungary what the Allemande was to Germany or the Polonaise to Poland. The music came to be used for the recruiting of young men to serve in the army, and this continued until 1849 when the Austrians introduced conscription. The name *verbunkos* derives from the German *Werbung* meaning recruiting.<sup>38</sup>

Men would dance the *verbunkos*, which was accompanied by music that was based on melodies recognizable to the audience. The violinist would play the *verbunkos* as impressively as possible in order to inspire potential recruits. "The marked rhythmic vitality of the dance derives from the syncopations, triplets, and dotted patterns that inform the brilliant performing style of the Gypsy violinists."<sup>39</sup> The short-long rhythm () which is sometimes referred to as the Scotch Snap, is characteristic of this music because the Hungarian (or Magyar) language places a heavy accent on the first syllable of most words. Hungarian music copies this emphasis so consistently that the snapped rhythm is often identified as the Magyar rhythm. The Intermezzo of Kodály's Háry János provides an excellent modern example of this rhythm and *verbunkos* style.

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<sup>38</sup>John S. Weissman, *Verbunkos*, The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 20 vols., ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 1980), XIX, 629-630.

<sup>39</sup>Weissman, Ibid., 630

Usually, the *verbunkos* consists of a slow introductory section called the *lassú*, followed by a quick section called the *friss*. The performing Gypsy violinists would adapt well known songs and make them suitable for instrumental dance accompaniment. They would make the melodic line more elaborate and also alter it by including the augmented second, a striking feature. It is from this that the so-called "Gypsy scale" became identified with the Gypsies.

The *verbunkos* became less popular about 1840 and was succeeded by the *csárdás*. The name derives from the Hungarian *csárda* (roadside inn), and this name reflects the fact that the music was a bawdy, deliberate contrast to an older, slow noble dance called the *palotás*. *Palotás*, in turn, derives from the Hungarian *palota* (palace).<sup>40</sup> In musical style, the *csárdás* is related to the *friss* section of the *verbunkos*. It is in fast, simple, duple time and was originally structured in binary form. The *csárdás* later acquired a multi-partite pattern and a slow introduction. It was very popular between 1850 and 1880.

In the *csárdás* you can find many *verbunkos* idioms, notably the snapped (Magyar) rhythm and syncopation. The Gypsy musicians became identified as performers of this genre because they played the *csárdás* everywhere they performed.

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<sup>40</sup>Sárosi, op. cit., 90.

Their style was imitated by Western composers such as Liszt in his Hungarian Rhapsodies and Brahms in his Hungarian Dances. There is a version of the Liszt Hungarian Rhapsody Number Twelve for violin and piano jointly arranged by Liszt and Joachim for violinists who wish to play one of these works. Joachim also arranged the Brahms Hungarian Dances for violin and piano.

Concerning the Brahms Hungarian Dances, it is interesting to learn that Béla Kéler (1820-1882) sued Brahms for plagiarism. Kéler, a Hungarian composer, accused Brahms of using his melodies in some of the Hungarian Dances. For instance, the famous Hungarian Dance Number Five is based on Kéler's *csárdás*, Bartfai-Emlék. Brahms claimed that he had heard peasants sing this song and he had assumed it was a folk melody.<sup>41</sup> The Hungarian violinist, Edo Remenyi (1830-1898), likewise claimed that some of the dance melodies originated from his own efforts.<sup>42</sup> It is possible that Brahms used some of Remenyi's melodies with which he had become familiar when they had performed together early in their careers. In fact, the melodies for Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsodies and Brahms' Hungarian Dances nearly all derive from relatively unimportant contemporary popular music

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<sup>41</sup>Louis P. Lochner, Kreisler (New York: Macmillan, 1950), 306-307.

<sup>42</sup>Leopold Auer, My Long Life in Music (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1923), 170-171.

composers. Composers such as Liszt and Brahms possibly heard Gypsy musicians perform these melodies, and they incorrectly assumed that the performers were also the creators.

The *verbunkos* and the *csárdás* emphasize the brilliance and bravura of the Gypsy performer. Another style of music played by the Gypsy bands in the nineteenth century came from the Hungarian popular song or *nóta* mainly written by amateurs. In the *nóta*, the Gypsy violinist shows the other side of his musical temperament; that of tender, heartfelt emotions.

Sárosi considers the three most important representative composers of the *nóta* to be Kalman Simonffy (1831-1889), Elemér Szentirmay (1836-1908) (whose real name was János Nemeth), and Pista Danko (1858-1903), who was actually of Gypsy origin.<sup>43</sup> Zoltán Kodály describes a *nóta* composer as "a transitional type of man, who had already outgrown folk culture, but had not yet reached a higher cultural level."<sup>44</sup> A good example of the *nóta* is Szentirmay's *Csak egy szép lány van a világon* composed in 1873. This song exists in Hungary in many different folk imitations and Sarasate used it in his *Zigeunerweisen*, opus 20.

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<sup>43</sup>Sárosi, op. cit., 176.

<sup>44</sup>Zoltán Kodály, Folk Music of Hungary (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1960), 14.



Csak egy szép lány van a vi-lá-gon, Az én ked- ves ró-zsám ga-lam-bom.

A jo Is - ten be na-gyon sze-ret,--- Hogy én né- kem a-dott té-ge- det.

The prose translation is as follows:

There is only one such beautiful girl in the world, and that is you my little rose. Oh, how the Good Lord must have loved me, to have given you to me.

The *verbunkos*, *csárdás*, and the *nóta* are the most characteristic genres performed by Gypsy musicians, but Gypsies also play a variety of other popular styles that are not specifically Hungarian, such as polkas, waltzes, opera medleys, and, in the twentieth century, even jazz. In fact, as they try to please their audience, the Gypsies play the music that they think each specific audience will enjoy.

### Gypsy Performers

As was mentioned earlier, the coming of the Gypsy musician into prominence began about the mid-eighteenth century and coincided with the development of the *verbunkos* music. The Gypsy band developed into a group of at least four instruments usually consisting of a lead violin called the *prímás*, another violin (or sometimes viola) known as the *kontra*, which played an accompaniment, along with a bass and a cimbalom.

Starkie describes having seen *kontra* players simultaneously encompass multiple stops by using an outward curving bowstick with very slack hair.<sup>45</sup> Sárosi describes violas with specially flattened bridges playing the *kontra* part, and this allows the same possibilities for multiple stopping.<sup>46</sup>

The cimbalom is a large, hammered dulcimer whose strings stretch over a trapezoidal sound box. The strings are usually struck with two hard or wooden hammers, producing a percussive and resonant sound. The cimbalom is immensely popular in Hungary.<sup>47</sup> Gypsy bands can include more instruments as well as other sorts of instruments, such as a clarinet or another type of wind instrument.

A Gypsy woman named Panna Czinka (?-1772) led the first famous ensemble of this kind. She played the *prímás* violin part, her husband played the bass, and her in-laws played the *kontra* and cimbalom. A wealthy landowner called János Lanyis educated Panna Czinka as a child. She received much

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<sup>45</sup>Starkie, Raggle-Taggle, op. cit., 190.

<sup>46</sup>Sárosi, op. cit., 226.

<sup>47</sup>Composers such as Bartók and Kodály have used the cimbalom very effectively in symphonic works. Igor Stravinsky was so taken with the instrument that he learned to play it. He used the cimbalom in three works: Renard (1914), Les Noces (1917 and 1919 versions), and Ragtime (1919). See Stephen Walsh, The Music of Stravinsky (London: Routledge, 1988), 72. It is said that Stravinsky regretfully abandoned composing for the cimbalom because he was unable to find competent players who could read music.



acclaim for her playing and appeared at many aristocratic functions. Her patron gave her a house, and while it is true that she enjoyed sleeping out of doors with her family in a tent during the summer, the popular stories that she annually joined nomadic bands of Gypsies are unfounded.<sup>48</sup>

The most famous Gypsy violinist of all time was János Bihari (1764-1827). Saltzman suggests that every Gypsy *prímás* "does his best to emulate the uncanny wizardry of János Bihari, greatest *prímás* of them all, the man who carried Tzigan virtuosity to a pinnacle of artistic and emotional perfection."<sup>49</sup> Liszt speaks of Bihari's power to move emotions. "Not one has ever been able to chant this sadness -- to weep with it -- to sob with it -- as did Bihary upon his violin."<sup>50</sup>

Bihari traveled extensively and was popular with the nobility and commoners alike. He was in many ways a romantic virtuoso. Dashing virtuosity characterized his playing, and he presented himself and his band in glamorous costume. His success was such that the Emperor offered to ennoble him, but this chance was lost when Bihari requested that the same honor be accorded to the other members of his band. Although illiterate, he composed many *verbunkos*-style

<sup>48</sup>Sárosi, op. cit., 72.

<sup>49</sup>Pauline Saltzman, *Riddle of the Gypsy Fiddle*, Counterpoint XVII (November 1952), 24.

<sup>50</sup>Liszt, op. cit., 355.

pieces that were notated by others. There is a traditional story that Beethoven used one of Bihari's melodies as the opening of his King Stephen Overture.<sup>51</sup>

The names of violinists Antal Csermák (ca. 1774-1822) and János Lavotta (1764-1820) are often mentioned in connection with Bihari. Neither Csermák nor Lavotta were Gypsies, although they modeled their performing and composing styles after those of Bihari. The works of these three violinists identified the *verbunkos* style as the characteristic music of Hungary.

#### Western Music Written in the Gypsy Style

Gypsy music has fascinated many composers. There are two famous rondos by Haydn with the direction *al Ongarese*: the finale of the Piano Concerto in D Major and the finale of the famous G Major Piano Trio number 39. The sources of these themes are folk songs, which Haydn quite possibly heard Gypsy musicians perform.<sup>52</sup> Many composers since that time have written works showing Gypsy influence.

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<sup>51</sup>Saltzman, op. cit., 25. Another fascinating instance of Beethoven using music of Gypsy performers is discussed by Starkie in In Sara's Tents, op. cit., 136-137. Starkie shows that the opening theme of the Pastoral Symphony is a Croatian folk song.

<sup>52</sup>H.C. Robbins Landon, Haydn: Chronicle and Works, Volume II: Haydn at Eszterháza 1766-1790 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 281. For the source of the piano concerto theme, see William H. Hadow, Notes Toward the Study of Joseph Haydn, A Croatia Composer (Freeport: Books for Libraries Press, 1972), 52-55.

When writing in a "Gypsy" style, composers usually try to imitate the hallmarks of Gypsy performers, such as the following:

- o The use of the augmented second interval in melodies
- o The breaking up of song melody by inserting idiomatic instrumental interjections between phrases
- o The characteristic opening, beginning with chords that imitate a cimbalom, followed by a short, rushing figure from the violin, or *primás*
- o The use of figures, such as grace notes, trills, dotted (or Magyar) rhythms, portamenti, rubati, and chromatic runs between melodic notes
- o The use of *estam* rhythm in the accompaniment, which is the marking of the beats in the bass and the offbeats in the treble
- o The frequent use of the diminished seventh chord for dramatic effect
- o The repeating of a note, like a slow tremolo, in the manner of a Jewish cantor or the Baroque *trillo*

### Three Violin Works Inspired by Gypsies

Fritz Kreisler (1875-1962) wrote La Gitana probably about 1900 when he was very active composing his miniature pieces. La Gitana is subtitled Arabo-Spanish Gypsy Song of the 18th Century and has the note "Revised and as played by the composer." Because it is listed as one of his original compositions, we may assume that it is one of his own creations, just as the works "in the style of" obscure composers such as Francoeur, Pugnani, and Porpora, are in reality Kreisler originals.

The piece begins and ends with ornate cadenza-like flourishes played by the violin, making much use of the augmented second interval. The central section has two parts--a D minor section in common time followed by a D major section in a lilting 6/8 meter. La Gitana is an effective character piece, which, perhaps, is more successful at painting the picture of a passionate Andalusian Gypsy woman, rather than actually imitating a Gypsy style of performance.

Pablo de Sarasate wrote Zigeunerweisen (Gypsy Airs), opus 20 in 1878, and Carl Flesch describes it as "probably the most popular and most grateful virtuoso piece of all time."<sup>53</sup> Flesch goes on to describe an interesting account of Sarasate's opinion of real Gypsies' playing.

Elisabeth, Queen of Rumania, wanted to give him a surprise during his stay in Bucharest, and to acquaint the author of the Hungarian *Gipsy Melodies* with Rumanian gipsy music. For this purpose she arranged for the finest gipsy band to play in the castle, and beside the guest of honour invited a large company. Sarasate turned up unsuspecting, the beaming Queen informed him of the surprise she had prepared for him, and led him to the winter garden, where the orchestra was waiting. I was curious to hear his opinion, and attached myself to them. He listened to the Rumanian national music for a few minutes, and when the Queen asked him his impressions

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<sup>53</sup>Carl Flesch, Memoirs, trans. Hans Keller (New York: Macmillan, 1958), 41.

he answered quite drily: 'Mais, c'est mauvais ça!' (It's pretty bad!)<sup>54</sup>

Zigeunerweisen is set in the form of the Hungarian *csárdás*. An extended slow introduction in the style of Gypsy performers opens the work, with the solo violin playing the part of the virtuoso Gypsy *prímás*. Runs, arpeggios, G-string passages, and pizzicati characterize the introduction. The augmented second and the so-called Gypsy scale are also conspicuous.

Starkie gives some interesting information, which at first seems too fantastic to be true. He states that the opening melody is taken from a lament composed by János Bihari for the death of his son. The lament is said to be based on the Funeral March second movement of Beethoven's Eroica Symphony. Bihari sometimes parodied the melodies of classical composers, and if the two examples are compared, you can observe a similarity.<sup>55</sup>

BEETHOVEN  
Marcia Funebre



SARASATE  
Moderato



<sup>54</sup>Flesch, Ibid., 42-43.

<sup>55</sup>Starkie, In Sara's Tents, op. cit., 142.

Sarasate includes Elemér Szentirmay's popular song Csak egy szép lány van a világon, which was composed in 1873. Kodály explains that Sarasate originally believed this to be an unclaimed folk song that he saw in the 1878 Paris World Exposition Album. When Szentirmay informed him of its true authorship, Sarasate wrote back from St. Petersburg saying that due credit would be given in future publications.<sup>56</sup> In early publications of Zigeunerweisen, this section was identified as "Composed by Szentirmay Elemér." The publishers eventually dropped this credit.<sup>57</sup> Many people today believe that this melody is actually the product of Sarasate, as you can see on the program notes of a recent recording stating that this melody is "Sarasate's most famous creation."<sup>58</sup>

Following this melody comes the fast part of the *csárdás*, featuring many virtuoso effects accompanied by the characteristic *estam* rhythm. In bars 114-125 of the Allegro molto vivace, you can hear another of Bihari's melodies, taken from his composition Debreceni emlék.<sup>59</sup> In

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<sup>56</sup>Richard Johnston, editor, Kodály and Education III (Ontario: Avondale, 1985), 55.

<sup>57</sup>Lochner, op. cit., 306.

<sup>58</sup>Bryan Crimp, Notes for EMI (CDC 7473182, 1984).

<sup>59</sup>László Lajtha, Instrumental Music from Western Hungary, ed. Bálint Sárosi (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1988), 244-245.

Zigeunerweisen, Sarasate is very successful in imitating the style of Gypsy bands.

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937) completed his Tzigane in 1924, having first conceived the idea of composing it two years earlier. Arbie Orenstein writes that when Ravel was in London during 1922, he met the Hungarian violinist Jelly d'Aranyi.

Late in the evening, Ravel asked the Hungarian violinist to play some gypsy melodies. After Mlle. d'Aranyi obliged, the composer asked for one more melody, and then another. The gypsy melodies continued until about 5 a.m., with everyone exhausted except the violinist and the composer. That evening was to mark the initial gestation of Tzigane.<sup>60</sup>

D'Aranyi received the violin part only three and a half days before the première on the twenty-sixth of April, 1924. The work makes use of many virtuoso effects and Gypsy idioms. At the very beginning, Ravel uses the Magyar rhythm often. Throughout the work you can find not only the Magyar rhythm, but also the inevitable Gypsy scale and augmented second. The ending is like the fast section of the *csárdás*, again using the *estam* rhythm, and the suggestions of sudden, unexpected modulations between rehearsal numbers 25 and 31 fit Starkie's description, "There seems to be no attempt to modulate, for the Tzigan likes to spring suddenly to a

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<sup>60</sup>Arbie Orenstein, Ravel: Man and Musician (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 85-87.

remote key just as in his conversation he leaps from one question to its direct opposite."<sup>61</sup>

Ravel originally wrote Tzigane for violin and piano, later orchestrating the piano part. The piano accompaniment states that it may be played by piano or *lutheál*, and this has led to some confusion. Joseph McLeod writes,

...some authors of books on Ravel say that Tzigane was originally written for violin and *lutheál*, an organ-like attachment to the piano. Jelly however states for certain that it was scored for ordinary piano. 'Later,' she says 'in the orchestral version there was a little instrument of the kind, but you could hardly hear it.'<sup>62</sup>

Zino Francescatti performed Tzigane with Ravel many times, and he states,

"He wanted it played without excess and rhapsodic license. He did not see it as a wild, 'gypsy' exercise, in spite of its title. He considered it a French work in spirit, as well as in the nationality of its composer.

"I suggested that he write a concerto for the violin, but he would have no part of it. 'I worked so hard to compose this *Tzigane*,' he said, 'and it was so difficult for me, that a concerto is out of the question. I could have written at least two symphonies and three quartets in the time it took me to compose the *Tzigane*. The violin poses

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<sup>61</sup>Starkie, Raggle-Taggle, op. cit., 76.

<sup>62</sup>Joseph Macleod, The Sisters d'Aranyi (Boston: Crescendo, 1969), 146.



many special problems that are especially time-consuming to solve.<sup>63</sup>

These three Gypsy-inspired works show qualities associated with the Gypsy temperament: wild, volatile bravura; harsh or lamenting expressions of the pain experienced over centuries of homeless wanderings; a romantic, tender yearning; and an impression of rhapsodic improvisation.

When applied to performance, the word 'Gypsy' has come to suggest these qualities. Classically trained musicians are especially envious of this improvisatory style. Therefore, it is fitting that although Ravel dedicated Tzigane to its first performer, Jelly d'Aranyi, in reality he intended Tzigane to be "a tribute to the gypsy in all fiddlers."<sup>64</sup>

If Gypsies have given us relatively little music of their own, they have certainly taught us much with their exciting and engaging performing style. It is up to each of us to find the Gypsy inside ourself when we play works requiring the flair and panache that is so characteristic of the Gypsy style.

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<sup>63</sup>Samuel and Sada Applebaum, Zino Francescatti, The Way They Play, Book 6, (Neptune, New Jersey: Paganiniana, 1978), 164-166.

<sup>64</sup>Edward Cole, Columbia Notes on M.S. 6617 (Library of Congress Catalog Card Number R64 1249).

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