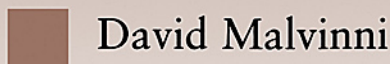
The Gypsy Caravan

From Real Roma to Imaginary Gypsies in Western Music and Film



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David Malvinni

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Preface

Whether in the clichés of the Hungarian restaurant with its cloying violinist, scenes from Bizet's *Carmen,* or Hollywood's *Golden Earrings* with Marlene Dietrich, the connection made between Gypsies and music seems almost like a reflex. Yet when we try to figure out in either a musical, social, or historical sense how to frame this discussion, we find ourselves stranded between fact and fiction.

The phenomenon known as "Gypsy music" has been viewed both as a treasure (Liszt) and a contaminant (Bartók). Despite recent work on the subject its power, nature, and historicity remain unclear. My thesis is that Gypsy music, as understood by Liszt and others in the nineteenth century, is not simply a musical style, nor another exoticism (the German-centric view), but a consciousness of the communicative essence of music; differently put, it is the power of musical performance to convey a "passionate" impression on the listener. Yet because Gypsy music appears stuck between reality and the imaginary—what Gypsies or "Roma" might play versus creative appropriations by composers—I propose the mystique of "Gypsiness" to theorize it. Gypsiness articulates the collection of ideas about the Gypsies or "Roma," whose musical expression reduces to the mock equation, I+V=E: the player experiences and impresses upon the audience immediate, spontaneous emotions (E) through the rhapsodic perception of improvisation (I) combined with an evocative, erotic, and fantastic virtuosity (V).

The confusion over the identity of Gypsies was present from the start, in many instances with the Roma's encouragement. Originally from North India, Roma groups entered Western Europe roughly 600 years ago; to protect themselves from persecution they promoted the idea that they were pilgrims from "Little Egypt." The extent to which they mixed with indigenous nomadic groups along the route to and in Europe is not known, and perhaps impossible to determine. In Europe, Christianity seems to have been adopted quite early by many Roma. Music was among the professions cultivated by the nomadic Roma, and brought them early fame in the West. Because the Roma refused to assimilate, keeping their rituals and lifestyle basically intact, outsider status has remained with them, leaving profound marks on their culture.

Gypsy music became a Western subject of reflection during the last half of the nineteenth century, at a time when nationalism, exoticism, and Romanticism combined to exert a re-evaluative influence on the way music was conceived. Franz Liszt was the first to consider Gypsy music as a European topic of discourse in his book *The Gypsy in Music.* For Liszt, Gypsy music represented the holy grail of what Western composers had sought for centuries: the achievement of a pure musicality, combined with a depth of emotion (the natural expression of the Gypsies' misfortune). When the Gypsy fiddler improvised on a tune, according to Liszt, he was able to produce a kind of music that synthesized the rational and the irrational, technical competence and depth of feeling. Furthermore, that Central European composers had contact with Gypsy musicians makes for a different kind of exoticism than that of *Scheherazade* or *The Mikado:* unlike portrayals of the Orient as an "exoticism-from-outside," Gypsy music was experienced as an "exoticism-from-inside."

Rebelling against this exotic Romanticism, many have sought to combat the stereotype of the Gypsy virtuoso. In the twentieth century there have been violent reactions to Gypsy music, especially in the case of Hungarian scholarship; Bartók devoted much energy to distinguishing urban or popular Gypsy song (which for Bartók was really Hungarian in origin) from "peasant" or village Hungarian musics, while essentially bypassing the role of Roma instrumental musicians in this ideally contained Hungarian village.

In spite of this, Gypsiness with its Romantic, extravagant, and exaggerated imagery appears to be impervious to empirical revelations. And this locates precisely the excitement of a study of Gypsiness in music: to determine how an irrational construction can somehow prove more persuasive than scientific discourse. In short, audiences connect directly and immediately to Gypsiness in music; it is this communicative ability that helps to explain compositional interest in appropriating models and gestures of Gypsiness, even in the case of a resisting Bartók.

Romantic ideas about Gypsiness remain stunningly present in the marketing of music as Gypsy. In order to package something as Gypsy music, producers rely on the age-old stereotypes of Gypsiness. Commercialism draws its basic image of the Gypsy from the one formalized by Liszt. And if there exists a desire for cultural escape in European society, musical Gypsiness certainly fulfills such a need.

Any book purporting to deal with Gypsy music cannot neglect the politics of studying Roma. Indeed, my attempt to reevaluate Gypsiness is possible only through the recent surfacing of political issues in the last decades. For example, Tony Gatlif's film *Latcho drom* (*Safe Journey,* 1993) not only summarizes the current diasporic understanding of Gypsy music—Gypsy as world music—but makes a strong political statement about the continuing oppression of Roma communities. It has also brought to wider public attention the devastation of the Holocaust on the Roma—one of *Latcho's* scenes a Gypsy survivor is shown outside of Auschwitz singing about life in the concentration camp. As Holocaust

victims the Gypsies have also been the subject of recent studies (it is estimated that 600,000 perished under the Nazis).

Indeed, it has become increasingly clear that any treatment of "Gypsiness," of "Gypsy music," of "Roma music," must respond in some way to the political climate encompassing Roma marginalization. In other words, it is no longer possible to think about Gypsy music without considering the Roma-rights movement. A Roma intellectual could charge this book as yet another attempt by the *Gadje* (non-Gypsy) to rip off the Gypsies, to build a career from Gypsy music, at a time when urgent political action is needed. This adds a level of complication to the study, in that a political position is inscribed, automatically, into any treatment of Gypsy music.

Thus I will discuss music's appropriation by the Roma-rights movement. The movement is actively creating a Romani self-awareness, one that is trying to unite the diverse communities of Roma. Music plays an important role both in solidifying identity, as in the adoption of the Romani anthem, "Jelem, Jelem," ("I went, I went"), and more broadly in symbolizing the Gypsy contribution to world culture—jazz guitarist Django Reinhardt has emerged as a leading poster image of Roma culture. However, a problem remains in this process of creating a transnational identity: despite the plea for representation in local and national governments, much of the Roma community remains separatist and distrustful of outsiders, actively shrouding itself in mystery. Exemplifying this musically, Roma musicians will sometimes revert to being eerily complicit in embodying Gypsiness, a stereotype that politically speaking should be rejected.

Because this book attempts to engage with Gypsiness on a deconstructive level, it became increasingly necessary for me to cite the continental heritage, from Kant to Derrida. This may serve to annoy some musicologists. Yet the philosophical context not only serves as serious and rigorous underpinning for the unfolding of the topic, but is intended as a deepening and in some cases radicalizing of the tendency for deconstructive counterpoint in recent musicology. (As the pendulum of the discipline appears to have swung decisively against the New Musicology, my move may appear to some as risky and untimely.)

Finally, my book will propose that the contemporary "imagined community" of the Roma relies on Gypsiness in music as a marker of identity. Insofar as Gypsiness resists reason, so too does national discourse. The symbolic power of Gypsiness is its ability to reach across various genres, from nineteenth-and twentieth-century art-music to folk and folkloristic styles, and now global (world) pop and, increasingly, fusion genres. Bringing these together under one roof is not as difficult as even ten years ago—one major factor which makes such a wide-ranging study possible is the Internet. Yet the sheer variety of information available makes studying Gypsiness complicated, in that each of these categories has its own specific disciplinary context and understanding, however, it also situates Gypsiness as a compelling arena for testing the limits of interdisciplinarity in music studies.

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My first contact with a discourse on Roma was through the e-mail list group, “Romnet,” moderated by Ian F.Hancock; I thank Professor Hancock for allowing me onto to the list. All of those who participated in Romnet had a decisive influence on my formative thinking on Roma issues.

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Chapter One
The Relative Neglect of Gypsy Music: Nationalism, Interest, and Advocacy in Musicology

> We pose the question: How is the spiritual shape of Europe to be characterized? Thus we refer to Europe not as it is understood geographically, as on a map, as if thereby the group of people who live together in this territory would define European humanity. In the spiritual sense the English Dominions, the United States, etc., clearly belong to Europe, whereas the Eskimos or Indians presented at curiosities at fairs, or the Gypsies, who constantly wander about Europe, do not.
>
> Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences,* 273

Gypsy musicians and performers have been legendary in Europe for centuries. With a nod here or there, still, the musicological community has never fully recognized the Gypsies' influence on and interrelation with artistic traditions. But what is surprising is that Gypsy music continues to suffer this lack of engaged investigation by the developing matrix of ethnomusicology and New Musicology.[1] Despite some recent smaller studies on the topic, the basic parameters for discourse remain those set up by Liszt in the mid-nineteenth century. For reasons we shall explore further on, if scholarship is hindered by an inability or unwillingness to think outside of traditional boundaries, the same cannot be said of the concert hall, where Gypsy music remains almost a programmatic requirement for every major orchestra or opera house. Here imaginative attempts have been staged to promote Gypsy music in its progression from a "folk" or popular music to an appropriated style in art music.[2] Nor film for that matter, as we shall see.

Although Gypsy music both as appropriator and as appropriated has begun to be recognized, this book's goal is to expand and to widen considerably the range of what is understood by the phenomenon.

For, there has also been a dramatic shift in studying and writing about Gypsies as both a cultural and an ethnic group. Symbolic of this paradigm shift is the linguistic turn away from the word "Gypsy," eschewed for the term "Rom" (plural "Roma"). This latter word can mean "man" or "person" in the Gypsy language, which itself is called "Romani." The first worldwide indication of this

linguistic rethinking of identity began with the movement for what has become "Roma rights." The movement began in the mid-1960s, and its effect on shaping Roma identity has been profound. Indeed, many Roma as well as Roma scholars now consider it offensive to use the term "Gypsy" (see Chapter Eleven).

To a certain extent musicologists have acknowledged the paradigm shift in Roma studies, while neither wishing to explore the full implications of this shift, nor even to question the work in Roma studies, carried out by a politically aware group whom we will dub "Romanologists." At the broadest level, the historical factors behind this musicological neglect are nationalism and advocacy. In short, there is no clear *stake,* national or otherwise, involved in the promotion of Gypsy music as a musicological topic of discourse. And this is somewhat paradoxical when we realize that the phenomenon of Gypsy music now reaches the widest audience of its history, through the marketing channels of classical-music promotion, the world-music industry, and film producers.

Hence this book's thesis is that the category of Gypsy music represents one of the great populist aesthetic intrusions into European nineteenth-and twentieth-century art music, while conceptually remaining a blurry, hidden, and marginalized topic. The historical and political reasons for this marginalization run deep, and cross disciplinary lines. Further, the mirage of investigating Gypsy music is that unlike some other ethnically marginalized musics, the identity of Gypsies is not so clearly known. Indeed for some, like the philosopher Husserl said, the Gypsies do not figure into the "spiritual shape of Europe"!

However, as an initial framework to understand why statements like this have occurred, we begin by analyzing nationalism, which has in fact been problematized in musicology for at least the last two decades. It is only by seeing that many of the narrative stories of Western music have implicit and sometimes massive nationalist implications that we can begin to appreciate why Gypsy music has escaped the purview of sustained musicological discourse.

NATIONALISM

The study of nationalism is now a hotly pursued area in musicology.[3] In a latest article for *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians,* second edition, Richard Taruskin criticizes, ironically, the nationalist basis for Willi Apel's formulation of nationalism for an edition of his *Harvard Dictionary of Music* in the late 1960s, where national schools are viewed negatively as a "reaction to the supremacy of German music." Taruskin writes:

> Musical nationalism is hence cast willy-nilly as a degenerate tendency that represents [Taruskin here is quoting Apel] "a contradiction of what was previously considered one of the chief prerogatives of music, i.e., its universal or international character, which meant that the works of the great masters appealed equally to any audience." And consequently, "by about 1930 the nationalist movement had lost its impact nearly everywhere in the

> world." One of the principal achievements of recent musical scholarship [read: New Musicology] has been to discredit this definition and all its corollaries, themselves the product of nationalist agenda.[4]

Though we agree with Taruskin's verdict, still, we might ask: what writing is *not* the product of "nationalist agenda?" Who escapes the tendency to protect a national heritage?[5]

In any case, the disinterest in writing about Gypsy music is inscribed within the larger context of nationalism and national schools. If national schools like the Hungarian or the Czech are marginalized,[6] still, at the very least they have their defenders and adherents. By contrast there are no national adherents to defend or to advocate Gypsy music *as* Gypsy. And beginning in the twentieth century other national schools, especially the Hungarian, sought to downgrade the importance of Gypsy music (analogically, the same way German-music adherents like Adorno downgraded so-called folkloristic music of the Eastern European schools).

However, this negative marking by nationalism, unequivocal in denying Gypsies their place within Europe, simultaneously drives a fascination toward finding, and after Derrida, losing, the culture and music of the Gypsies.[7] In Heidegger's terms, the Event *(Ereignis)* institutes the space for meditating on Gypsy music, which again, can only be accessed through what constructs and deconstructs it, national discourses.[8] In other words, the discourse on Gypsy music is always already within the national dimension. At the same time, we have to be attentive to what Derrida has called the "obliterating" effects of the proper, where the attempt to sign at the same time is responsible for destroying an identity, through the logic of expropriation. For this book this translates into the idea that all operations of creating identity are suspect. Take the following example, the signing of the legal document. With the death of the one who signs, the signature becomes the property of other entities—the state, the family, the legal system itself—through the process of expropriation beyond the mastery and control of any of these entities, including the one who signs.

For music historiography, ideas of the proper are articulated in the debates over so-called program music and nationalism. Indeed, the idea of a national school itself contradicts the notion that music *as* music, so-called "absolute music," has any meaning outside of concrete ethnic, social, and historical interests.[9] In writing the history of composition, one may decide who and what belongs to national school based on geography: a birthplace is usually enough to establish whether a composer is Polish, Hungarian, or Czech. As in Chopin, Liszt, and Dvořák, respectfully; the first two émigrés who paradoxically wrote nearly all of their significant works on foreign soil, Dvořák writing important works while he was residing in the United States. Of course this is a simplification of the structure of national identity, but the point is, the attachment of a proper and ethnic noun to these proper names seems undeniably tied to a notion of music that affirms while denying national identity.[10] Yet no

one denies that a national school becomes complicated when writing history—are Dvořák's "American" works American, or are they Czech? Or, on the contrary, one might maintain that nationality is only a secondary factor, not a question that matters *vis-à-vis* the substance of "music itself."

Unlike phenomena within national schools, Gypsy music in its generality deals with more than any single nation—it is the essence of a *transnational* musical phenomenon. And Roma do not have any aspirations for a homeland, for a historic/utopian resting place; call it "Romestan" for lack of a better word. Thus the investigation of Gypsy music is burdened already with the relationship of Gypsies to their host countries. Do the Gypsies simply function as performer/entertainers in a client-service economic exchange? And do they have their "own" music (both in terms of identity and more concretely, as intellectual property in the marketplace), apart from these transactions? Furthermore, is there anything that unites and gathers Gypsy music *as* Gypsy, as a film like *Latcho drom* seems to suggest? Or what happens when we investigate these various musics together—Hungarian-Gypsy, Spanish-Gitano, French-Manouche, or German-Sinti—as *Latcho* in fact does?[11]

Thus one major area for exploring the idea of Gypsy music is the very notion that there is a set of identifying characteristics that distinguish Gypsy music from any other, no matter what the host country might be. If we accept the statement that aspects of Gypsy music could be found in nearly every national music of the European tradition (this is what is at stake in studying appropriation), are we essentializing or reducing Gypsy music to a set of identifying traits that are fictional? On the one hand, a nationalist would consider Gypsy music embodying the "Gypsy" as a parasite tradition, one that does not add anything to the musical repository of the nation; whereas on the other, those interested in Gypsy music *per se* might argue that it adds everything. These complications are nowhere more urgent than in the case of Central/Eastern Europe and Russia, where today the majority of the worlds Roma live. In fact, it is in large part because of this that this book's focus covers this geographic terrain.

INTEREST AND ADVOCACY: DECONSTRUCTING NATIONALISM

Scholars in the countries of the former Soviet bloc might harbor no small resentment, however, toward those from the West pursuing the study of Gypsy music in their respective traditions.[12] In addition to bias against the Gypsies, these scholars feel suspicious that the Western interest in Gypsy music might have more to do with the fact that Gypsy music paints a romantic image that is readily and easily marketable. Indeed, many of the CDs and other productions that have come out in the last decade seem to bear this out.

Although this might be true to some extent, the topic of interest as it intersects with national questions is more complicated than a simple postulating of capitalist endeavor. In a philosophical sense, what would be an interest, for

example, that is purely devoted to music *as* music, beyond any strategy of marketing? Why are we interested? Why study, investigate, analyze music—what motivates such projects? Can there be interest in music that is disinterested, a claim some music theorists might make for their analytical investigations? This surely recalls Kant's famous and paradoxically dictum in his aesthetics, that in principle, the liking or the disliking in the beautiful should be disinterested.[13]

In any case, to conjure up the discourse practice of Marxism, do we not detect an interest, a class one, a *national* one, perhaps a personal one, behind every discourse on music?[14] Can musicologists be compared with advocates in the legal sense, or political lobbyists when aesthetically evaluating music?

To continue with the legal analogy: perhaps the goal of musicology has been really to build an airtight case for a given musical style, piece, or culture, one that goes beyond the available evidence to establish the argument for aesthetic validity beyond any reasonable doubt. In terms of advocacy, if we detect an interest, even in what sets itself up as the purest, most theoretical, and abstract discourse of the "great" Germanic work, this interest increases exponentially when dealing with so-called national schools. Here, the advocate must construct a massive case from a small number of historical facts. This idea of a limit to the facts, of circumscribing, should not be overlooked, because a national school must be predicated on the tangible, on something that is definable; whereas in the "universal" stream of music (German music), the music is simply powerful, sublime, beautiful, beyond interest; one does not necessarily need to define or to limit the aesthetic experience. In the twentieth-century distillation of national schools, usually only one or two great composer per generation can be admitted, so that the lines of filiations can be drawn. Namely, the father passes as a model for the son, as in "couples" Smetana and Dvořák, Glinka and Musorgsky, and Rimsky-Korsakov and Stravinsky. Though models like these are used to show influences within a national school, it might also apply to the German lines of transmission, as in the couples Haydn and Mozart (a double relation, where Mozart serves as both son and later father, Haydn learning from him), Beethoven and Mendelssohn (with the ghosts of Handel and Bach haunting them both), Schumann and Brahms, and in the twentieth century, Schoenberg and his sons, the "brothers" Berg and Webern. It is impossible to deny the huge patriarchal implications of these fatherly and fraternal relations. Yet what separates the national couples from the German ones is that the national composers are measured against their respective peer in the Austro-Germanic world.

THE VIENNESE DISRUPTION[15]

Yet even in the case of the German music, the idea of its purity is always already disrupted by the land to the South, especially the Imperial city of Vienna. "South" here denotes both direction and place matters, as a particular historical determination, qualified through privations—less intellect, less seriousness, less work, less interest; lazy, perhaps even trivial.[16] In quick and schematic terms:

Austria is marked by impurity, as a site of crossing and intransigence, where Romans settled and Italians (Fux being the notable exception to this Southern influx) served emperors as court composers through Joseph II; a place the Ottoman forces tried to capture, where Hungarian refugees would find security during these Muslim invasions; where Gypsies were to settle since at least the early eighteenth century. Mozart and Haydn, two composers steeped in what we will propose as "Austrianness," perhaps knew the music of both the Turks and the Gypsy verbunkos bands quite well.[17]

But before looking at Gypsies, to return to the larger historical problematic that situates the context for Gypsy and other so-called "peripheral" (see Taruskin) musical narratives, how can we think German music (the hegemonic music in the Western art-music tradition) without this Austrian disruption, a disruption that not only complicates what we think of as German, but also seems to define German music itself? Vienna: site of what has come to be globally marketed as Classic music in its most essential form, witnessed by a three-century march of composers, from Haydn to Mozart to Beethoven to Schubert to (skipping a generation) to Bruckner to Brahms to Mahler to Schoenberg to Webern to Berg. What begs to be situated: how does this Southern atmosphere change the course of German music? That German music was always already (or, from the start) contaminated by Southern influence is shown by Vivaldi and Corelli's influence on J.S.Bach, the greatest representative of the so-called Lutheran, Northern, and Saxon Baroque. Here we should never forget this Lutheran moment, the Reformation as a Northern reaction against Southern laziness, corruption, and Catholicism. The cultural and intellectual repercussions from of the Reformation are also at the essence of the origin of the discourse of German music—especially in the latter's moral, rational, and Christian specificity.

As is well known, because musicology was codified and systematized as a scientific endeavor in the late nineteenth century by German scholars, as *Musikwissenschaft,* its early heroes from Bach to Handel to Mozart tended to be German-speaking composers. Now, so the standard narrative goes, these composers became the inspiration for art-music movements in smaller, less powerful, and nascent states. However, and here is where the plot thickens, just as composers of the late nineteenth century were trying to reproduce the axiomatic of German music, they at the same time became mesmerized by the hypnotic force of awakening national sentiment. Nationalism as a movement requires at least two things: 1) an ethnic group, an ethnicity that is linguistically unified through the mother tongue; and 2) that the ethnic/tribal group occupies and inhabits a quasi-defined geographical location, a place that is either a sovereign state or on its way to becoming one. This latter aspect is a claim; as a prepared dwelling, the nation with a claim to statehood inaugurates a kind of thinking that is tied to the history of the oath, contract, and promise (sovereign nations exist through a complex legal phenomenon of the right of the national border, a right that is conferred through the promise inherent in the legal contract). This factor has been emphasized in studies of nationalism: without it,

without the aspiration to sovereignty, nationalism stands powerless.[18] Sovereignty: the right to make war, to decide on the exception,[19] to produce treaties and pacts, and an aspect usually overlooked, to produce the decision that is the basis for art. Composers responded to nationalism (again, this is the traditional narrative) by creating a music that was national, grounded in the nation and the people, in the production of a national essence. Yet, we can add, the "national" composer seeks sovereignty outside of music itself (music itself as the territory claimed and occupied by universal or "German" music). In particular, the national composer did this by turning to the national essence, which sovereignty sanctions as national property: in musical terms, folk music, the unwritten music of the people.

Indeed, it is from this standpoint, from folk and oral music, that it first becomes possible to think about Gypsy music. Gypsy music is usually unwritten, and when appropriated by composers, this unwritten aspect survives in the notion of a "Gypsy performance style," one heavily laden with emotion. Though Gypsy music is entangled with the interest in folk music, what distinguishes the two is precisely the performance style. In Bartók's terms, folk music is performed "naturally" without emotion, without virtuosity, and without any flourish, while Gypsy music includes all of these traits by definition. Yet if to think about Gypsy music entails a tentative reformulation of what folk music is, we are also led to what motivates the opening of this difference, namely, the national interest. To reconstitute this essential difference, of national interest versus Gypsy music, is a contradictory and perhaps endless task, especially as new political and national configurations continue to re-align our understanding of who a Gypsy or Roma is.

Thus although the topic of advocacy in musicology remains somewhat a *terra incognita,* requiring a discourse unto itself, still, the relevance for Gypsy music is quite clear: that without some advocacy, the residue of nineteenth-century Gypsy music in art music will remain hidden, forever banished to the realm of what Carl Dahlhaus has called "trivial music."[20] Risk is involved in any advocacy to some extent, though less so in the case of an already canonized composer or aesthetic movement; for us, the risk of advocacy is that Gypsy music will turn out to be a vague generality, a superimposed category, or an exoticism among exoticisms. Specifying what is individual, interesting, and singular about Gypsy music thus becomes the goal of advocacy, while simultaneously, this advocacy of Gypsy music must consider its relationship to the hegemonic German-centered vision of music, a construct whose unity we will have to challenge endlessly.

THE QUESTION: WHAT IS GYPSY MUSIC?

What is Gypsy music? What is Gypsy as a predicate? This announcing would mark the beginning of a discourse on Gypsy music, of a way out of the neglect, yet at the same time, introduces a linguistic violence. As we have already

indicated, political and Romani-rights advocates (again, the question of advocacy) vigorously denounce the word "Gypsy."[21] Their argument presupposes the primacy of linguistic phenomenon over conceptuality. Restated, the assumption is that the material signifier dictates the concept. Thus a concept of Gypsy already prejudices, because the word itself recalls racist semantics, as in the resonance with "to gyp," with its vicious connotations of dishonesty, lying, falsehood, thievery, and untruth. For Roma-rights advocates, the investigation that starts from the question "What is Gypsy music" may be already biased and biasing, it judges without knowing its prejudgment.[22]

Yet against this, as an eruptive event within music history, we can still try to pose a series of questions beginning with question, "what is Gypsy music?" Not as a statement against the worldwide process for political rights of an oppressed ethnicity, but rather as a question of music history. For example, how had composers experienced, understood, interpreted, and finally appropriated Gypsy music? Was Gypsy music just another exotic music language among others? Or was it more powerful, since composers had direct access to Gypsy performers (whereas Japanese, Indian, or Native performance might be harder to come by)? How do we engage with a music that exists as written and yet seems more essential in its unwritten, performative form? To seek a possible path to answering to these and other questions, and as part of our own advocacy for Gypsy music, we shall first follow a strategy that privileges the discourse on Gypsy music in order to build the case for the importance of this music. We start by setting up a basic dialectic, one between Franz Liszt and Béla Bartók.

LISZT'S *THE GYPSY IN MUSIC*

The discourse of Gypsy music proper begins with Liszt's book *The Gypsy in Music*.[23] It could also be the inaugural moment of the reception history of Gypsy music: that is, Liszt's effort to come to terms with what he hypothesized was a new force poised to enter the Western art-music tradition, as executed in his *Hungarian Rhapsodies*. Here we will list some motifs found in Liszt's "book" on the Gypsy, while reserving another kind of analysis of Liszt for Chapter Five: 1) animality, nature, and children; 2) contrast with the Jew; 3) avoidance of work; 4) cruelty and suffering from persecution and wandering; 5) virtuosity in a masculine, virile form; 5) the "racial affinity" between Magyar and Gypsy[24]; 6) the origins of Hungarian music; 7) rhapsody as the Bohemian/Gypsy epic; and 8) Bihary and Czermak. Each of these motifs demands careful treatment, especially as each continues to mark an area of relevance for the contemporary situation and context for Gypsy music.

Still, as an indication of Lisztean sentiment, we will cite a long passage that contains the ideas that instigated the debate about the origins of Gypsy music that continues to this day:

> We do not disguise from ourselves that the theory of Hungarian *national* songs being purely of Bohemian [Gypsy] origin is much more hazardous than that of the Zingani [Gypsies] being the *authors* of their own dance music. It is one instantly encountering difficulties scarcely to be attacked or even turned aside; being in flagrant contradiction with the ideas generally received in our country [France] on this subject. Certainly we must admit that it does not rest upon any document, and is based upon deductions which some may regard as vague. But these deductions are nevertheless of such strength as to range us upon the side of those who hold even the most *ancient national* songs of Hungary—those therefore upon which modern art has not the faintest claim have been originally borrowed *[abgelauscht]* from the Bohemians; deliberately borrowed by those who fitted them Hungarian words… Before all, let it be observed that the melodies now called *national* were not composed by the nation, but by *individuals*. Their popularity is determined and maintained by the resemblance between the inspiration from which they sprang and the *national feeling;* and it is this union which has imprinted upon them a *national character*.[25]

This is a passage about authorship (and we will hold off on discussing the question of authorship of this book) and musical property that raises the issue of how a melody comes to belong to a nation. The melodies in question are the ones found in Hungary, which Liszt thinks are really Gypsy in origin. The Hungarians borrowed these melodies, fitting them out with Hungarian words. Furthermore, showing that he remains above all a composer, in Liszt's view the author of a melody is always an individual or single person. The nation appropriates the song of the individual if the song fits the "national character," the atmosphere and "feeling" of the nation.

But Liszt confesses his own nervousness at the boldness of his thesis concerning the Bohemian origins of Hungarian music: "certainly we must admit that it does not rest upon any document, and is based upon deductions which some may regard as vague." Namely, there is no proof for his view, and his reservation is that his argumentation remains obscure. What bothers Liszt is that there is no external data—nor can there be, by definition—that connects what he *believes* to be true, through a kind of knowledge that only a musician can have access to.

Yet what is really at stake in Liszt's view? Why the interest in Gypsy music? The answer is to be found, perhaps, not merely in Hungarian or Gypsy musics, rather in the genesis of Liszt's own music. That is, Liszt as an individual—the cosmopolitan, wandering virtuoso and aspiring composer—likely wanted to find a way to justify aesthetically and conceptually the validity of his own music. His description of Gypsy music reads like an analysis of his own brilliant music, especially his conception of music as rhapsody. And his relationship to Hungary, his place of birth, was complicated by the failure of the 1848 revolution for

Hungarian independence. Liszt is related to Hungary in an analogous fashion to the way that, in his opinion, might be compared to the way that the Gypsy is related to Hungary: belonging without belonging, outside while inside, and responsible for Hungarian national music while not being Hungarian. For Liszt, the Hungarians' national character and sentiment feels a special affinity and fascination for Gypsy music, which it in turn makes its own, fits out with Hungarian words; by a similar process, the Hungarian will find his own nationally essence, musically, in the *Rhapsodies.*

GYPSY MUSIC AND THE MOCK EQUATION OF GYPSINESS (I+V=E)

As a way of thinking about Gypsy music, and also to avoid essentializing it, we propose the concept of Gypsiness, which denotes a conceptual way of engaging with Gypsy music as a performative and communicative phenomenon. I first began to work with the idea in Michael Beckerman's doctoral seminar on Gypsy music.[26]

The basic idea is this: in order to conceptualize the topic immediately, we represent Gypsiness by an equation: I+V=E. "I" means improvisation, an activity which implies freedom and the ability to choose the formal design based on the moment. "V" indicates virtuosity, a realm that unites physical prowess and mental precision; with virtuosity, any technical obstacle can be overcome. But hardly noticed about virtuosity is that it cannot be copied—in its pure concept, the virtuoso is the one whose knowledge is utterly unique and singular. The virtuoso adds his or her life to the music, as it were. Added together, I and V create E, emotion (expression), a condition of feeling the music inwardly. Audiences might perceive the inwardness of music performance as the product of a passionate engagement with the emotional turmoil and joy of life—that the artist has first-hand experience of the emotional content. The concept of an audience is itself a convenient abbreviation employed by musicologists to provide the necessary background for the reception of music in a given era. Yet it also compounds some difficult contextual problems—in addition to the non-universality/unity of any audience, what do we really know about the structures of belief, especially those below or on the brink of consciousness, of an "audience," especially a historically situated one? And the idea of an "equation" for Gypsiness has its risks, too, especially in a philosophically oriented discourse, grounded in the Humanities—it might be perceived as pseudo-scientific, put forth in bad faith. But for me, the idea of Gypsiness as an equation, I+V=E, comes down to a meditation on how the performer tries to charge the raw listening atmosphere with added energy. In this sense it is less about the audience, but is the search for the way to impress something on the listener, to grab the listener's attention toward the music. Negatively, the act of impression can be interpreted as manipulation; in the best sense, impression is the coming-together in ecstatic union. Thus, if the passive listener remains unmoved,

unaffected by the performance under Gypsiness, at any moment the performer has the right, so to speak, to demand the full attention of the listener—and this, we are arguing, is usually accomplished through a combination of I and V. I and V are not arbitrary signs, but historically are the musical conventions for generating sonic excitement, here and now.

The originality of the idea of Gypsiness is startling, especially when we consider some of its implications. What has traditionally been experienced as the "mystique" of Gypsy music, its specific and definite, yet equivocal power, is captured by the movement of Gypsiness. For, the equation denotes the purest expression of what we can call the communicative essence of music, the relationship to the tympanum (the inner ear). If the discourse on Gypsy music is about anything, it comes down to the search for the significance of this relationship. Indeed, the question of Gypsy music might turn on the question of the meaning of music itself—namely, what is the ultimate purpose of music-making?

BARTÓK'S CRITIQUE OF LISZT

Bartók opposed Liszt's assimilation of Gypsy-Hungarian music, especially its priority granted to the Gypsy, attempting to reverse Liszt's thesis. Bartók's argument is a two-part one, based on his ethnomusicological excursions to the Transylvanian countryside: 1) the real, authentic Hungarian music is peasant music, and not the urban music of the Budapest cafés or the aristocrat's Gypsy bands that Liszt thought; and 2) the music played by Gypsies—what Bartók will call popular art songs—does not belong to the Gypsies, but is rather music composed by Hungarian noblemen (a group that Bartók was hostile toward). Again, as in the case of Liszt, Bartók's writings stand in need of careful and close scrutiny, here we will only give some indications of the criteria for a music to be authentically of the people, which for Bartók means peasant in origin and spirit: a) the music is anonymous; b) the music originates as "the outcome of changes wrought by a natural force whose operation is unconscious in men not influenced by urban culture"; c) the peasants or group must inhabit a given geographical region over a relatively long period of time; d) the tune must be sung by a majority; e) aesthetically, the folk tune exhibits "an expressive power devoid of all sentimentality," a "conciseness of form," and a "simple" quality.

Though Bartók's criteria are aimed at peasant music, they are simultaneously a critique of Gypsy music. For Bartók, Gypsy music does not stand up to any of these criteria. Still, we may ask, what is Bartók's motivation for his interest in peasant music, and why is he so interested? Though we can perhaps discover profound biographical reasons as to why Bartók wants to unearth what he considers real and authentic Hungarian music (especially his relationships to his parents), the relevant point for us here is that Bartók's own Modernistic art music cannot be understood apart from these ethnomusicological studies.[27] Bartók's aesthetic evaluation that peasant music is a treasure, on the same level as the

highest art music (Beethoven), and that it possesses an "an expressive power devoid of all sentimentality" is a characteristic and generous description of his own music. And again, nationalistic discourse is implicated in Bartók's devaluation of Gypsy music: Hungarian music is pure, authentic, and simple, whereas Gypsies are cheap performers of the worst kind of Hungarian popular music.[28]

THE CURRENT STATE OF RESEARCH ON GYPSY MUSIC

If Gypsy music has been unfairly neglected by musicology (and perhaps ethnomusicology and anthropology), the causes seem to coalesce around nationalistic debates, especially in the case of Hungary, the site that we will be privileging in the discourse of Gypsy music. In both the pro (Liszt) and the contra (Bartók) positions, aesthetic and personal (compositional) biases seem hopelessly entangled in the viewpoints put forward.

To get a broader perspective on the Hungarian debate, it might at this point be worth to look at the current state of research concerning Gypsies as a people. Who are the Gypsies, as understood by contemporary scholarship?

Angus Fraser's book *The Gypsies,* itself part of a series titled "The Peoples of Europe," is the best general book to date on Gypsies as a people.[29] Fraser quotes the linguist Alexandre Paspati when he writes that *"la véritable histoire de la race Tchingianée est dans l'étude de leur idiome"* ("the true history of the Gypsy race is in the study of their language").[30] The language of the Gypsies, called Romani, is used as the basis for nearly every claim made on the historical origins of the Roma. What seems most likely is that the Roma originated in Northern India, leaving there around the tenth century, traveling through Persia, Armenia, and finally Turkey and Greece before entering European-Balkan territory probably by the thirteenth century. Linguists know this from careful study of Romani, a language related to Sanskrit, peeling away the historical layers (loan words) in archeological fashion. Beyond this, there survives little documentation to prove anything: "how far that [the language] can be equated with the origin and evolution of Romani-speakers is a more speculative matter, and the equivalence cannot be taken for granted."[31] Matters of speculation include: why the Roma left India, which nomadic tribes actually makeup the Roma, and if and how the present-day Roma in Europe including Turkey (a population estimated at twelve million) are related to groups remaining in countries south of Turkey such as Syria. Though scholarship continues to offer hypotheses to answer these questions, the reasoning is not based on surviving documents, but again, on archeological-style claims, such as the similarity of rituals and pollution laws between European and Indian groups, and the survival of vocabularies.[32] Yet through artistic means, especially films (we will analyze in considerable detail *Latcho drom* in Chapter Ten), connections are proposed that cannot be supported through surviving documents.

Because the Roma originate outside of Europe, the most recent approach to studying Roma is to consider their music as a world music.[33] This is done by ethnomusicologists and anthropologists who argue that the best way to understand music is locally, through a cultural context with somewhat definite geographic boundaries. This receives a formulation through the notion of a music culture, which can be studied in either "etic" (internal) or "emic" (external) fashion. Whether and how such a distinction is possible, the goal of fieldwork consists in constructing an etic understanding, and one that honors the dignity of the subject who is under the microscope.

In the model developed under recent fieldwork, one analyzes Roma music according to national divisions. However, in the process the signifier "Roma" becomes split and fragmented, with a violent cutting that never quite separates it from a transnational sense of "Gypsy." Roma in different countries and even within the same countries are defined as locally grounded communities, yet somehow related. Thus although localness might remain the ideal, still, the reality of transnational, large-scale constructs still manages to reassert its dominion over these smaller communities. Ethnomusicologists might successfully delimit various Gypsy spheres—flamenco, musique manouche, Sinti or hot jazz, various Balkan wedding and funeral traditional musics, and most recently rock and popular Roma bands.[34] Yet our argument, here, is that studies and recordings of these musics occur always already happen within a large-scale, worldwide marketing of Roma music, a market of Gypsiness that is aimed largely at non-Roma. In any case, in terms of the question of advocacy, it seems clear that the ethnomusicological approach can lead to an advocacy and privileging of Roma music, as a phenomenon worthy of study.

Now, for Western music historiography, the status of Gypsy music is not nearly so vast and "worldwide." To date there have been two strategies proposed, mostly focusing on the nineteenth century, and with much overlap. The first is found in Jonathan Bellman's excellent book *The Style Hongrois in the Music of Western Europe,*[35] which represents a cogent introduction to the way in which Gypsy music (as the *style hongrois,* note that Gypsy music is already entangled with Hungarian in his presentation) is quoted and "spoken" by Western composers, including Weber, Schubert, Liszt, and Brahms. Bellman proposes that with Brahms, the *style hongrois* reaches its historical apogee: "it is somewhat ironic that Brahms, who did not have a personal agenda with his use of this music [the *style hongrois*], would bring it to its further development."[36] After Brahms, Bellman feels it is all "decline and disappearance." Bellman seems interested not in Gypsy music per se, but rather in trying to understand how the dialect of the *style hongrois* figures in the music of the aforementioned composers.

The ethnomusicologist Max Peter Baumann wrote an article that neatly tries to summarize how Roma music is "reflected" (a word that is in the title of the article) in Western art music and opera. Baumann goes beyond Bellman in trying to accommodate and to enlarge the concept of Gypsy music in Western music.

Baumann's agenda is more centered on the Roma than Bellman's, and his political bias is stated at the conclusion:

> In these closing years of the twentieth century the question of Gypsy music arises in a completely new connection in view of the interpretation constructions that have become shaky on the one hand and the "transformed" reality of Roma and Sinti on the other in the context of the civil rights movement and minority research.[37]

What Baumann refers to here is the Romani-rights movement, a movement generating power through the interconnection of Roma in various countries, especially through the existence of online and Web-based (e-mail) activities.

A second strategy in understanding Gypsy music is that of Bálint Sárosi, a Hungarian ethnomusicologist who has continued the work laid down by Bartók and Kodály. Sárosi has written the only book that bears the general title *Gypsy Music*.[38] However, after an initial attempt at a general survey, the book's focus reverts to a consideration of the Liszt-Bartók polemic, again, Hungarian versus Gypsy music, and the issue of musical-intellectual property. Sárosi writes in the tradition of Bartók-Kodály: "they [the Gypsies] do not play or sing Gypsy music but always *the music of the area concerned*."[39] Sárosi's thesis is that Gypsies appropriate the music of the host country. Differently put, we could say that the Gypsies performers play the music of the host country, as paid entertainers.

CONCLUSION: THE ADVOCACY OF GYPSY MUSIC

This chapter has tried to situate the reception of the neglect of Gypsy music in terms of its historic, aesthetic, and scholarly determination *vis-à-vis* nationalism and its discontents. As such, we have proposed that Gypsy musics neglect is relative. In other words, there does exist a tradition of a discourse of Gypsy music beginning in the nineteenth century with Liszt; and Liszt's positive evaluation has its legacy in the contemporary worldwide marketing of Gypsy CDs and films. The negative rebuttal to Liszt has occurred primarily in Hungarian circles, themselves perhaps resentful of German chauvinism against Hungarian music.

In terms of national schools, a treatment of Gypsy music allows us to pose questions about the writing of music history. Proponents of a given national school, including the German, must argue a case for the importance and significance of a given musical tradition. Historiographically, nationalism infects and contaminates every discussion of music—one thinks of early German scholarship of Bach and Handel. Furthermore, because there is no Romestan, if Gypsy "nationalism" continues to grow, it is free from the demand for sovereignty, unattached to any agenda trying to buttress the glory of the state. Thus Gypsy music could turn out to be one of the only types of music to exist in the West without any kind of state or national advocacy.

The international Roma-rights movement (led by Ian F.Hancock among others) of the last couple of decades has tried to promote an understanding of the Roma that would reconstitute the Gypsy contribution to culture and the arts.[40] However, this type of advocacy has relied heavily on the historiography of European scholars. Furthermore, the difficulty of building a case for the significance of Gypsy music lies in the disparateness of the historical material. In a certain sense, the significance of the *style hongrois* could only be perceived after the fall of Communism when Gypsy bands from behind the Iron Curtain came to worldwide attention.

Although the interpretation of Gypsy music is based on works and a popular style (the Budapest café style, or the *style hongrois*) that are well known in music history, still, the unfolding of this phenomenon remains static in interpretative studies. That is, advocates have not articulated the need for urgency in thinking about Gypsy music. But the urgency presents itself through the Roma-rights movement. Racism against Roma thrives in the countries where the majority of Roma live. Some writers have even begun to ring the alarm of a possible pre-genocidal situation in countries where ethnic cleansing is not unimaginable. Police actions, civil unrest, and civil war (though the distinctions between all three seem blurry) caused by economic and legal breakdowns in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet states are producing an atmosphere that is at the very least hostile and dangerous to numerous Roma. And yet in the West, we are able to attend concert events and festivals featuring Gypsy musicians with full awareness of the human-rights violations against the Roma community. The marketing of this music by concert promoters has begun to consider the political and economic plight of the Gypsies, but perhaps only in the name of how the suffering and persecution of Gypsies has deepened their capacity for emotional performance.

Thus the connection between music and politics revolves around the idea of music-making in the face of suffering, persecution, and cruelty. Even Liszt was aware of what he called the “cruel” treatment of Gypsies by outsiders. And yet, how can we make sense of this connection between art and reality? Does their music depend on political understanding? Is the music of the Gypsy fiddler conditioned by the suffering (a concept that is perhaps impossible to define), and if so, how?