

Music of the Romani

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Around 1,500 years ago, a group of Hindi people migrated from northern India into the Balkan region. They began to migrate through this region about 900 years ago and in the 1100s they began arriving in medieval Europe (13). These people now reside on every single continent, with the largest percentages living in the countries of: Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria, Spain and Russia (16). This group of people have been referred to as many things: Gitanos, Kale, Manush, Gitan, Travelers, and, most commonly, gypsies (13).

Finding the term “gypsies” offensive, they prefer the term Romani or Roma. Throughout history the Romani people have faced persecution, slavery, and execution in numerous countries including: England, Romania, Switzerland, Denmark, the Soviet Union, Italy, Portugal, and, most notably, Germany. However, despite this massive amount of persecution, not only did the Romani’s survive, but their culture, specifically their music, has thrived and influenced other forms of music such as: jazz, bolero, flamenco and even classical music (13).

Spain – Saraste, Manjón, Albéniz

The Romani people of Spain, known as Gitanos, were essential to the formation of one of Spain’s most characteristic and well-known native styles of music: flamenco. As the Roma migrated into Spain, their culture fused with that of the Sephardic Jews and the Moors in a region known as Andalusia. It was this mixing of cultures that resulted in the creation of the unique style of music known as Flamenco.

Pablo de Saraste was born in Pamplona, Spain, and excelled on the violin from a young age, giving his first concert at the age of eight and receiving an annual allowance of 2,000

Spanish reales from the Countess Espoz y Mina (7). “Zieunerweisen,” although still based on the themes of the Roma people, reflects the Roma people of Hungary rather than those of Spain. Sarasate composed the piece to show off his own technique and skill on the violin. The piece, although one movement, can be divided into four main sections based mostly on tempi: Moderato, Lento, Un poco più lento, and Allegro molto vivace. The Moderato is a slow virtuosic introduction of the violin with soft energetic accentuation from the orchestra. The Lento is meant to sound improvisational, using difficult techniques such as: flying spiccato, ricochet bowing, and difficult runs. The Un poco più lento features a disconsolate muted solo using a sixteenth plus dotted eighth rhythm. The final section, the Allegro molto vivace, is an extremely fast tempo and is based on the rhythms of the Csárdas, which is a Hungarian dance rhythm. This section also features spiccato runs, double stops, artificial harmonics and left hand pizzicato (6).

Antonio Jiménez Manjón was a blind virtuosic guitarist that was born in Villacarrillo, Spain. He played both the eleven-string guitar and the six-string guitar, however, most of his published works are for the six-string guitar (3). He was a pupil of Dionisio Aguado, a renowned Spanish guitarist, an inspiration for Miguel Llorbet, and a contemporary of Isaac Albéniz. By the age of twelve he was a famed guitarist and spent the majority of his life touring Europe and later South America (1). His music, like many contemporaries of his, combines elements of both Flamenco and Latin American music (5).

A piano prodigy by the age of four, Isaac Albéniz, a native of Camprodón, Spain, was known for both his virtuosic piano playing and his characteristically Spanish compositions (8). “Asturias” is most commonly performed on the guitar despite being originally written for piano; The piece uses rolled chords to imitate the strumming of a guitar, which is why it makes sense that the piece is so often played on guitar. The piece was composed to reflect the image of the

Alhambra, a massive Moorish fortress located in Granada, Spain. Asturias is the name of a northern region of Spain, however, the music contains strong characteristics of flamenco music which originated in Andalusia, the southernmost region of Spain (17).

Hungary – Hubay, Bihari

Jenő Hubay was born in Budapest, Hungary, and first studied violin with his father, Karoly Huber, who was both the conductor of the orchestra at the National Theatre and the violin professor at the National Conservatorium. A violin virtuoso, pedagogue, and composer, Hubay was taught by Joseph Joachim and later Henri Vieuxtemps. In 1919, he became the Director of the Budapest Academy of Music and created one of the world's most renowned violin schools which went on to turn out Stefi Geyer, Ferenc Vecsey, József Szigeti, Emil Telmányi, Eddy Brown, and many more renowned violinists (15). Hubay's fourteen *Scenes de la Csárda* were composed during the period from 1879-1920 and were meant to be used by Hubay in concert and in the classroom. They were originally written for piano and violin, however, Hubay later decided to orchestrate some of them. "Hejre Kati" is the most popular piece from the collection and is based on three Hungarian melodies: "The Yellow Stallion", "The Love of a Young Baron," and a Hungarian folk tune which Brahms also used in his "Hungarian Dance No. 21" (11). *A cremonai hegedűs* is a 2 act Hungarian opera with the libretto written by François Coppée and Henri Beauclair (2).

Jánoš Bihari was born in Nagyabonyi, Hungary in 1764. Despite being a Roma, Bihari was often referred to as a Hungarian composer, even during his lifetime, due to the negative connotation often associated with the Roma. Bihari's band played for the Congress of Vienna, the imperial court, and at the provincial council in Bratislava in 1825. Since Bihari could neither

read nor write music, only a few of his compositions were transcribed by notary musicians of the time. Franz Liszt was an admirer of Bihari writing about him: “The sweet tones drawn from his magic violin fell like drops of nectar on our enchanted ears. (“Die Zigeuner und ihre Musik in Ungarn”).” Liszt also stated that Biharis band played Czech dances, Scottish dances, German dances, and French dances as well as Hungarian dances (10).

Czech – Ernst, Bendl, Novák

Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst was born in what is now Brno, Czech Republic, in 1812. Ernst was the first significant Jewish violin virtuoso and was praised by Berlioz, Joachim, Schumann, Liszt, and Heine. He performed with Mendelssohn, Chopin, Liszt, Wagner, Alkan, Clara Schumann, and Berlioz. His advice was one of the reasons that Schumann decided to become a professional musician and he played an essential role in the professional career of Joachim. Ernst also developed violin techniques in the areas of left-hand pizzicato and artificial harmonics. *Airs Hongrois variés* (Various Hungarian airs) is a piece written for solo violin and orchestra, however, it is commonly performed with just violin and piano. This piece features three themes with variations and was dedicated to Liszt (18).

Karel Bendl was born in 1838 to a poor family. He was a composer, conductor, singer, choirmaster, and teacher who wrote mostly vocal compositions. Not only did Bendl co-found the Czech national men’s choir, Hlahol, but he also was its choirmaster in 1865, conducted in Brussels and Amsterdam, and taught and conducted at the Prague Conservatory. Bendl took Dvořák’s position at the conservatory and was close friends with the renowned composer. Dvořák later decided to dedicate a piece to his friend “Karel Bendl” (12). “Cignaske melodie” (Gypsy melodies) is set to the poetry of Czech poet Adolf Heyduk. Bendl, Novák, and Dvořák

all set pieces to Heyduk's poetry and named them "Gypsy Melodies" or some translation of it. More so than Novák and Dvořák, Bendl uses features of Romani music as structural features of the songs and he also uses more non-Western modal intervals and half steps to further distinguish it as exotic. Novák, on the other hand, kept his composition much more tonally western and in the style of "Romantic" while using Romani embellishments and pushed the Baritone soloist into tenor range, a common technique of composers meant to represent the wild side of the Roma (14). Vítězslav Novák studied under Dvořák at the Prague Conservatory and was heavily influenced by German Romantic music, Claude Debussy and Richard Strauss. However, after visiting Moravia, he began composing music that reflected the folk music of his homeland Kamenice nad Lipou, Bohemia (9).

France - Holmès

Augusta Holmès was born in 1847 in Paris. Both her parents were Irish; her mother passed away when she was young and when her father passed away later in her life she inherited his entire fortune. Having received this fortune and never having married, Holmès was able to finance her own career and publish under her own name. Although famed during her lifetime, Holmès has since become significantly less well known (4). Her piano piece "Reverie tzigane" was inspired by the Romani people from France, also known as the Manush.

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