

## ON THE “HUNGARIAN” IN WORKS OF BRAHMS: A CRITICAL STUDY

ON THE "HUNGARIAN" IN WORKS OF BRAHMS:

A CRITICAL STUDY

by

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the Hungarian influence on the German composer Johannes Brahms (1833—1897). His biographical details are sketched from his first concert tour to his last (Chapter 2). In 1853, he accompanied the Hungarian violinist Ede Reményi, while travelling through Germany and Austria. In 1867 he concertized in Hungary for the first time. Between these tours, Brahms met and even worked with many other musicians, some of whom were Hungarian, and he composed many works which are overtly marked by this influence. The places he visited, the music he heard and the political events of the time are taken into account in weighing the effects of various influences.

Four types of nineteenth-century Hungarian music are defined and the history of each is given. A discussion of Hungarian composers prior to, and contemporary with, Brahms is important in laying the foundation for our understanding of the “Hungarian”. Brahms’s connection with Hungarian folk music and salon music is traced in Chapter III, while Chapter IV outlines two types of gypsy music — gypsy folk music and gypsy band music. Brahms’s usage of all of these is explained. The influence is extrapolated into the realm of Brahms’s more German works, and is discussed in terms of the manner in which the “Hungarian” pervades his style.

“On the ‘Hungarian’ in Works of Brahms” provides a discussion of this strong presence in Brahms’s musical style and offers a deeper understanding of the creative personality of this composer.

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## PROLOGUE

The influence of Hungarian music on composers inside and outside Hungary was not uncommon from the late eighteenth century onward. Examples may be found in the music of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (*Violin Concerto in A Major*, 1775), Franz Joseph Haydn (*Gypsy Rondo Trio*, 1795), Ferenc Liszt (*Heroic March in Hungarian Style*, 1840, *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, 1846—1885, *Csárdás*, 1882—1886, etc.), Pablo de Sarasate (*Zigeunerweisen*, 1879), Léo Delibes (*Coppelia*, 1870), Maurice Ravel (*Tzigane*, 1924) and Béla Bartók (*Hungarian Songs*, 1906—1930, *Hungarian Dances*, 1931, etc.).<sup>1</sup> Few composers display more “Hungarian-ness” in their style of writing than Johannes Brahms. In Brahms’s œuvre, many titles contain overt references either to a Hungarian or to a gypsy style — *Hungarian Dances*, *Gypsy Songs*, *Variations on a Hungarian Song*, “Rondo alla Zingarese” — showing

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1. Bence Szabolcsi, *A Concise History of Hungarian Music*, translated by Sára Karig and Fred Macnicol, edited by Florence Knepler. Second edition. (Budapest: Corvina, 1974), pp. 54—56.



a conscious reference to a cultural neighbour. In numerous other works Brahms used compositional techniques imported from this “other” style, often in direct imitation of gypsy bands. These works include the *Violin Concerto*, *Piano Concerto No. 1*, the *Clarinet Quintet*, *Trio* in C major, op. 87, *Waltzes*, op. 39, *Six Vocal Quartets*, op. 112, *Variations on a Theme by Händel*, *Variations on a Theme of Paganini*, *String Quintet*, op. 111 and the *Double Concerto*.

How did such a style become a part of Brahms’s technique and musical personality? What were the historic events that made him receptive to Hungarian traditions to the extent that they became an important component of his creative thought? The nineteenth century cultivated the notion that the music performed by gypsy bands was Hungarian folk music — the true music of the peasants — simply because it was accessible and heard outside Hungary. The idea was propagated by the best-known Hungarian composer of the day, Ferenc Liszt, in his book *The Gipsy in Music*<sup>2</sup> where he also attributed the authorship of the music played by the gypsies to the wandering gypsy musicians themselves. Twentieth-century research has shown that Hungarian folk music is very different from that which was played by gypsy bands in the mid-nineteenth century; would Brahms have had contact with the “real” Hungary, or would his understanding of the style have been formed uniquely by gypsies, or by gypsy-like musics?

Style will influence composition through contact with a score, or, more pertinently, through contact with performance and performers. In the case of gypsy music, there were no scores available for study so an acquaintance with the style would necessarily come through live performances. Brahms, particularly the young Brahms, would have had ample

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2. Long extracts of this book first appeared in the French journal *La France Musicale* (July and August, 1859). Peter Cornelius translated this text into German (*Die Ziguener und ihre Musik in Ungarn*) which appeared in Budapest, 1861. The final book, by the same German title, was an enlarged version, published by Lina Ramann as part of Liszt’s *Gesammelte Schriften*, volume 6.

opportunity to hear at least some forms of Hungarian music not only from his daily life in Germany but also from his association with the Hungarian violinists Ede<sup>3</sup> Reményi and Joseph Joachim. This thesis will therefore begin with a brief outline of the personalities and places that helped form Brahms's developing musical sensibilities.

What were the types of music that came out of Hungary? Just as it is too broad a sweep to classify any country's music under one umbrella, so the phrase "Hungarian music" is so imprecise a term as to be almost meaningless. Hungary has its own traditions of folk music — traditions that were largely ignored by musicians and musicologists until this century. It also has what we can now, with the perspective of a century and a half, call a "tradition" of salon music and gypsy music. Even this last category is too wide: the gypsies<sup>4</sup> have their own folk music, a music that is different from both that which they are known to play for the public and from their style of performance. Which of these four — folk music, salon music, gypsy band music and gypsy folk music — would Brahms have learned and used as a compositional tool? Which is the "Hungarian" to which popular terminology has referred for two hundred years? Throughout this thesis, the word "Hungarian" will be used to describe music which still conjures up a picture of the exotic gypsy style of performance, that music termed "gypsy band music" in Chapter IV; any other usage will be qualified *in situ* according to the context. This is in accordance with Jonathan Bellman who, in his book *The Style hongrois in the Music of Western Europe*, uses the term *Style hongrois* to describe the same music.<sup>5</sup>

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3. Ede is the Hungarian form of Eduard, Reményi's birth name. (see page 6 for more information on this)

4. A gypsy, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* and accepted in this thesis, is a member of a wandering race (by themselves called *Romany*), of Hindu origin, which first appeared in England about the beginning of the sixteenth century and was then believed to have come from Egypt.

5. Jonathan Bellman, *The Style hongrois in the Music of Western Europe* (Chicago: Northeastern University Press, 1993).

Gypsy techniques, the formulæ for “transforming any folk music that comes to hand”<sup>6</sup>, are best recognized if they are defined, but they can only be defined by recognizing “sounds” typical of the style. This somewhat circular statement underlines the major problem facing the analyst: which techniques *per se* are peculiar to this music; which techniques are only “gypsyisms” when used in complex combinations; and (more subtly) which techniques rely on a certain method of performance, a particular interpretation, to lend an air of “otherness” to the sound? Throughout the third and fourth chapters I will analyze some of Brahms’s works in order to create a framework within which to answer these questions.

It should be understood from the outset that it is not my intention in this thesis to dissect Brahms’s music or to separate the Hungarian nuts from the German bolts in his technique. The intention is rather to follow the threads of “Hungarianisms” from the most obvious to the most subtle. To speculate on how Brahms would have composed had he never been influenced by Hungarian music, is unrealistic. The path will take us from works where Brahms himself set out to be Hungarian, through works where the listener would not normally detect any “other” influence.

The personality of Brahms was certainly much more than just a mixture of the Teutonic and an “other” — the conservative and the progressive. Was Brahms, as Guido Adler writes, “German down to the ground”<sup>7</sup>, or was he only German up to the borders of Hungary?

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6. Charles King, *Men of the Road* (London: Frederick Muller Ltd., 1972), p. 52.

7. Guido Adler, “Johannes Brahms: His achievement, his personality and his position”, *The Musical Quarterly*, XIX, no. 2 (1933), p.123.

## THE EARLY YEARS OF TRAVEL

### ON TOUR

The young Brahms received his most extensive tuition in the traditions of gypsy music through the violinist Ede Reményi. While on tour in 1853, they performed not only Beethoven sonatas and Vieuxtemps concertos, but also gypsy-style rhapsodies for which Brahms improvised accompaniments. This was the music that Reményi felt most deeply. Late at night in the hotel rooms, he would fiddle popular Hungarian melodies of the day for Brahms, later claiming them as his own compositions. According to Reményi himself, some of these tunes were the very ones that Brahms later arranged as piano duets.<sup>1</sup> The short time spent with Reményi affected Brahms deeply. Even in his very last hours of life, he reminisced about their time travelling and playing together some forty-four years earlier.<sup>2</sup>

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1. *Edouard Reményi, Musician, Litterateur, and Man: An Appreciation, with Sketches of His Life and Artistic Career by Friends and Contemporaries*, compiled by Gwendolyn Dunlevy Kelly and George P. Upton (Chicago, 1906), p. 92.

2. Robert Haven Schauffler, *The Unknown Brahms: His Life, Character and Works; Based on New Material* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1961), p. 294.

The tour with Reményi introduced Brahms to the other main influences in his life and on his work. In late April, 1853, they visited Joseph Joachim in Hanover, another Hungarian violinist who became Brahms's lifelong friend. Upon leaving Joachim, the duo travelled to Weimar to stay with the Hungarian composer Ferenc Liszt. Although it would seem that Brahms and Liszt became enemies because of their different ideals concerning music, Brahms did stay with Liszt for at least three weeks, in a house where new compositions were being performed daily. It is possible that some of Liszt's own Hungarianisms (musical characteristics associated with Hungary and used by Liszt in his works) may have influenced the young composer. When Brahms left Liszt's home, he returned to Joachim who decided that he would send the young composer to meet the Schumanns in Düsseldorf.

Just exactly how each of these people influenced Brahms's compositions in terms of Hungarian style must be examined first through study of the individuals and their own works. The various places Brahms visited in his youth would have exposed him to different Hungarian musics which may have influenced his compositions as well. His journeys from 1853 until his first trip to Hungary in 1867 will subsequently be followed and mapped.

### **Eduard Hoffmann, alias Ede Reményi**

Ede Reményi, whose original name was Eduard Hoffmann, was of mixed German-Hungarian blood, born to John [*sic*]<sup>3</sup> and Rosalie Hoffmann on July 17, 1830 in Miskolc (150 kilometres northeast of present Budapest). Native to Hungary, he changed his name as a young man in order to display his devotion to his home country — a common occurrence in

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3. Kelly and Upton, *Edouard Reményi, Musician, Litterateur, and Man*, p. 9. It is unlikely that Reményi's father was referred to as "John" in a German-speaking area.

the mid-nineteenth century. At the age of nine, he studied violin at the Vienna Conservatory where Joseph Joachim was a fellow student. During the Hungarian Revolution in 1848, Reményi fought in the Hungarian army against Austria in the capacity of musical *aide-de-camp* under General Arthur Görgey. In 1849 he was exiled on account of his political activities and obliged to flee Hungary for the U.S.A. He gave his début in New York on January 19, 1850, but stayed only six months, returning to Europe in the spring of 1850.<sup>4</sup>

When Reményi was scheduled to perform in Hamburg in 1852, his accompanist became ill and the name of Johannes Brahms was given as a replacement. Upon hearing Brahms play for the first time, Reményi was surprised at the talent of the young pianist, exclaiming, "My dear Brahms, you are a genius!"<sup>5</sup> He insisted that the musical talents of Brahms would one day be recognized and was determined not to let this newly discovered "genius" go. Reményi invited the young pianist to be his accompanist on a concert tour, a prospect of travel that excited Brahms. He accepted forthwith. Setting out on foot from Hamburg, they began their first concert tour on April 19, 1853.

According to the early twentieth-century Brahms scholar William Murdoch, Reményi was not at all a serious artist, not caring for shape, line or form in Classical music, and giving flashy performances of Hungarian tunes.<sup>6</sup> This quick dismissal of Reményi's musicianship, assumes that the violinist was not earnest about the "Classical" music he played (Beethoven, Vieuxtemps) and that he did not perform these works in the standard and accepted manner,

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4. Here there is some disagreement. Peter Latham states, erroneously, that Brahms met Reményi for the first time in 1850, but the violinist returned to the U.S.A. and did not reappear in Hamburg for nearly two years. Peter Latham, *Brahms* (London: J.M. Dent, 1948), p. 9. Burnett James writes that Reményi went to Hamburg in 1849, along with other Hungarian refugees. Burnett James, *Brahms: A Critical Study* (London: J.M. Dent, 1972), p. 31.

5. Kelly and Upton, *Edouard Reményi, Musician, Litterateur, and Man*, p. 83.

6. William Murdoch, *Brahms: with an Analytical Study of the Complete Pianoforte Works* (London: Rich & Cowan, 1933), p. 29.

but rather carelessly. Other accounts of Reményi's playing claim that he was emotional, impulsive, passionate and altogether temperamental.<sup>7</sup> Latham writes about Reményi as a specialist in the "Zigeuner (gypsy) style" with free rhythms and elaborate decorations.<sup>8</sup>

While on tour, the violinist composed Hungarian melodies at night and played them to Brahms. Wishing to have an impartial judgment on his music, he told Brahms that they were national airs.<sup>9</sup> Brahms was fascinated with Reményi's arrangements and improvisations of these melodies, an influence which apparently lasted a lifetime. The earliest of his *Hungarian Dance* arrangements date from 1853.<sup>10</sup> Fifteen years later, when Reményi saw Brahms's "transcriptions" of *Hungarian Dances* in print, he was enraged, claiming some of them to be his own.<sup>11</sup> Brahms, of course, was acting in good faith when publishing these dances, since Reményi had claimed that they were traditional Hungarian tunes. A review of Reményi's compositions in the *London Examiner*, July 28, 1876, stated:

Another important feature of M. Reményi's style is the national element. He strongly maintains against Liszt the genuineness of Hungarian music, and has shown himself thoroughly imbued with the spirit of that music by writing several "Hungarian melodies", which have been mistaken for popular tunes and actually adopted as such by other composers. The same half-Eastern spirit is observable in the strong rhythmical coloring of M. Reményi's execution, seldom or never attained in its original raciness by artists of Teutonic origin.<sup>12</sup>

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7. Kelly and Upton, *Edouard Reményi, Musician, Litterateur, and Man*, p. 23.

8. Peter Latham, *Brahms* (London: J.M. Dent, 1948), p. 9. More recent sources do not discuss the details of Reményi's style.

9. Kelly and Upton, *Edouard Reményi, Musician, Litterateur, and Man*, p. 92.

10. Murdoch, *Brahms: with an Analytical Study of the Complete Pianoforte Works*, p. 30 and Michael Musgrave, *The Music of Brahms* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), p. 60. This early source is valuable as a contemporary observation of performances.

11. Kelly and Upton, *Edouard Reményi, Musician, Litterateur, and Man*, p. 92.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 215.

## Joseph Joachim: A “Hungarian” Violinist/Composer

The tour of 1853 took Brahms and Reményi to Hanover to visit Reményi’s former classmate of the Vienna Conservatory, Joseph Joachim, who had an excellent reputation in Europe as a violinist. Born in Kitsee, Hungary on June 28, 1831, Joachim and his family moved to Pest two years later. There, at the age of five, Joachim began to learn the violin with Stanislaus Serwaczynski, the Polish concertmaster of the Pest Opera. In 1839 he gave his début with his teacher and received great acclaim. Following this performance, Serwaczynski convinced Joachim’s parents to let him continue his violin studies in Vienna.<sup>13</sup> A very important influence on Joachim was Felix Mendelssohn, who helped him choose works to play and gave much advice on interpretation.<sup>14</sup>

Joachim moved to Weimar where he worked as concertmaster in Ferenc Liszt’s orchestra. He became close friends with Liszt and studied composition with him for a few years beginning in 1850. They composed a *Rhapsodie hongroise* together — a work for violin and piano published in 1854.<sup>15</sup> However, the two musicians had different philosophies of music and after some disagreement, Joachim left Weimar in January 1853.<sup>16</sup> His next post was in Hanover at the court of King George V. Liszt’s compositional influence on Joachim (*New German School* ideals) lasted for many years after he left Weimar and, according to Gary Maas, can be heard in his “Fantasiestück” and “Frühlingsfantasie” from *Drei Stücke*, op. 2 as well as in *Konzert in einem Satz*, op. 3. Also in 1853, Joachim met Robert Schumann, with whom he became steadfast friends.<sup>17</sup>

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13. Barrett Stoll, “Joseph Joachim: Violinist, Pedagogue, and Composer” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 1978), pp. 28–29.

14. Stoll, “Joseph Joachim: Violinist, Pedagogue, and Composer”, p. 37.

15. Gary L. Maas, “The Instrumental Music of Joseph Joachim” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1973), p. 290.

16. Stoll, “Joseph Joachim: Violinist, Pedagogue, and Composer”, pp. 48 and 51.

17. Maas, “The Instrumental Music of Joseph Joachim”, pp. 25–27.



A virtuoso violinist and violist, Joachim's style of playing must have been the antithesis of Reményi's.

Joachim's stage demeanor — classic, serious, calm — surely contrasted with the flamboyance of his countryman and contemporary Eduard Reményi...<sup>18</sup>

According to reviews from the time, Joachim was a very refined musician.

Joachim's tone did not dazzle and flatter the hearer by means of penetrating sensuousness. It was a tone whose limpid beauty had a transcendental quality. His playing spiritualized and etherealized. There was no coquetry, no seeking after effect.<sup>19</sup>

Joachim was clearly not a gypsy violinist. The word "control" was often used to describe his playing, a word that could not be applied to gypsy performers, whose interpretations are essentially free and "uncontrolled".

What fascinates the listener more than anything else in this music [played by the gypsies] is its rhythmic freedom, wealth, variety, and flexibility which are not to be found anywhere else to the same degree. .... From the wildest fury to a lulling sweetness and the tenderest plaintive melancholy. .... They are all characteristic, full of fire, suppleness, impetuosity, and the surging of waves.<sup>20</sup>

His abilities on the violin were well-learned and practised, as opposed to improvised and apparently consisting only of sentimental expressions. Listening to a recording of Joachim

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18. Isabelle Emerson, "Brahms in Budapest: Concerts of 1867 and 1869" in *The Piano Quarterly* (XXXVI, no. 143, 1988), p. 30.

19. Sam Franko, *Chords and Discords: Memoirs and Musings of an American Musician* (New York: Viking Press, 1938), p. 20.

20. Franz Liszt, *The Gipsy in Music*, translated by Edwin Evans (London: William Reeves, 1926), quoted in Martin Block, *Gypsies: Their Life and their Customs*, translated by Barbara Kuczynski and Duncan Taylor (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1939), pp. 221—222.

playing his arrangement of Brahms's *Hungarian Dance No. 1*, one can hear this control, even in the numerous *portamenti* which ornament his style of playing, a typical technique of the outgoing nineteenth century. He uses consecutive slides (*portamenti*) as an expressive device (current performance practice forbids the linking of slides). The bow control displayed by Joachim in this recording is tremendous, giving the impression of whole phrases being played without change of bow direction. The tone is remarkably even with a narrow vibrato, used only for articulation, marking the beginnings, endings or high points of phrases. Joachim's sense of musical line gives to his interpretation of Bach's *Prelude* in G minor characteristics now associated with performance practice of the late-twentieth century.<sup>21</sup>

There is no doubt that Joseph Joachim had a fondness for the music associated with his homeland. According to his biographer Andreas Moser, he heard gypsy music throughout his childhood and his visits to Hungary as an adult strengthened his love for the "characteristic melodies, harmonies, and rhythm of the Magyar folk-songs and dances".<sup>22</sup> Moser claims the Hungarian element to be present in Joachim's compositions for the violin in the "melodious phrases and harmonic combinations".<sup>23</sup> It is, however, displayed in a learned and more structured manner than normally executed by the gypsy performers. It is always apparent when Joachim was inserting a gypsy-style phrase, harmony or rhythm such as the *verbunkos* cadence or a *parlando* rhythm (see pages 43 and 36 respectively for more information). In a letter to Clara Schumann (1855), Joachim mentioned playing Haydn sonatas with Brahms, particularly

...the one with the jolly Hungarian Rondo in G: it is the most characteristic music I have heard for a long time — one can really see the Hungarian

21. Brahms, *Hungarian Dance No. 1*, arranged by Joachim and Bach, *Prelude in G minor* (G&T 047907), recorded 1903.

22. Andreas Moser, *Joseph Joachim: A Biography (1831–1899)*, translated by Lilla Durham (London, 1906), p. 180.

23. *Ibid.*

Hussars twirling their moustaches and the Hungarian girls' long nut-brown plaits getting entangled in the spurs as they dance.<sup>24</sup>

When Joachim and Brahms first met in late May, 1853, Joachim was immediately impressed by both the man and his compositions. The young pianist had brought along his manuscripts of the piano sonatas in C (op. 1) and F $\sharp$  minor (op. 2) as well as *Six Songs* (op. 3), *Scherzo in E $\flat$  minor* (op. 4), a violin and piano sonata, a piano trio and a string quartet (these last three are now lost). Joachim saw originality, power and lyrical beauty in these works. He organized a recital for Brahms and Reményi to take place before King George of Hanover. Not surprisingly, the performance was a success and Joachim wrote a letter of introduction to Ferenc Liszt at the Altenburg in Weimar (he claimed Brahms to be “a young giant”<sup>25</sup>) and sent the duo on their way, quietly advising Brahms to return to him if things should not work out with the temperamental violinist.

I have known Reményi for a long time, and now that I believe I understand you, I cannot think that you will be able to stand his company for very long; should you for any reason part from him, I should be heartily glad to see you in Göttingen, where I propose to spend the summer. I feel a great bond of sympathy in common with you.<sup>26</sup>

This invitation was to be of great importance, for it opened the door to a friendship which was pertinent to the young Brahms's development.

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24. *Letters from and to Joseph Joachim*, translated by Nora Bickley (London: Macmillan, 1914), p. 112.

25. Murdoch, *Brahms: with an Analytical Study of the Complete Pianoforte Works*, p. 50.

26. Moser, *Joseph Joachim: A Biography (1831–1899)*, p. 127.

## Brahms at the Altenburg

The travelling duo arrived in Weimar early in June, 1853. William Mason in his *Memories of a Musical Life* mentions this first meeting, at which he viewed one of Brahms's manuscripts on a table (the *Scherzo*, op. 4). He was amazed at its illegibility and commented that he would first have to make a copy of it were he to study the work.<sup>27</sup>

Born in Raiding, Hungary on October 22, 1811 to Austro-German parents, Ferenc Liszt's name was originally spelled without the 'z', but his father added it so that the Hungarian natives (the Magyars) would not pronounce the name as Lisch. <sup>28</sup> He made his début as a pianist in 1820 and was so successful that he was given money to move with his family to Vienna and study with Carl Czerny. After eighteen months, Czerny ended the lessons because he had nothing more to teach the boy. By this time, Liszt was showing an interest in composition, so he went to Paris where he studied with Antonin Reicha and Ferdinando Paër. As a young teenager, Liszt toured Europe, performing and enchanting audiences wherever he went. By fifteen, he was completely self-supporting and living in Paris.<sup>29</sup>

Ferenc Liszt's life was changed when he heard Nicolò Paganini play the violin in 1832. He vowed to become the "Paganini of the piano" and shortly afterward arranged six of the violinist's *Caprices* for the piano, then wrote the *Twelve Transcendental Etudes* which were even more difficult.<sup>30</sup> After moving to Switzerland with the Countess Marie d'Agoult, the composer wrote a volume of *Années de Pèlerinage* subtitled "Suisse". Two years later, while in Italy, he composed the *Dante Sonata*, which belongs to the second volume of *Années de Pèlerinage*. In 1838, the Danube flooded and Liszt's native Hungary was in trouble. He travelled to Vienna to give a concert in aid of the Hungarian people which brought to his

27. William Mason, *Memories of a Musical Life* (New York: The Century Co., 1901), p. 127.

28. Alan Walker, *Liszt* (London: Faber and Faber, 1971), p. 15.

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 16–26.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 30–31.

attention his need to perform. Within a year, he decided to give a concert tour in order to raise funds for the Beethoven monument in Bonn, Germany. Vienna was first and Hungary was next. He had not been there in sixteen years, but the Magyars considered him to be a national symbol.<sup>31</sup> He visited his birthplace and

...was serenaded by the local gipsies, whose music he tried to capture in his Hungarian Rhapsodies, the first of which he began to write about this time.<sup>32</sup>

In the next few years, Liszt toured Germany, Spain, Portugal, Turkey and even Russia as the world's most celebrated pianist.

Liszt retired from performing in 1847 in order to concentrate on composition. He accepted the position of Kapellmeister to the court of Weimar, and took up residence at the Altenburg. His new love, Princess Carolyne von Sayn-Wittgenstein followed him there.<sup>33</sup> Between the time he settled in Weimar and 1853 when Brahms stayed with him, he had written a number of orchestral works including *Les Préludes*, *Orpheus* and *Prometheus*, as well as many piano pieces, such as the second volume of *Années de Pèlerinage* ("Italie"), two *Ballades*, *Consolations*, *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses*, the famed *Sonata in B minor* and most of the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*. These last works have become some of the most popular and well-known works by Liszt and it is likely that Brahms heard them while visiting at the Altenburg.

Liszt was very popular at the time, not only as a pianist and a composer, but also as a conductor and pedagogue. He was known for his generosity, regularly opening his house to students and colleagues for musical evenings. Brahms was very excited to meet this

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31. Walker, *Liszt*, pp. 49—50.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

33. *Ibid.*, pp. 55—56.

legendary figure, but when it came to the *soirées*, he was shy and humble, refusing to perform his own compositions. Liszt however was interested in Brahms's music and insisted on performing the young composer's works for him. What for Mason was illegible, was for Liszt perfectly clear; he sight-read Brahms's manuscript with spoken comments.<sup>34</sup> It is possible that this performance somehow upset the young man or caused him to feel jealous, though according to Mason, Brahms was amazed and delighted by Liszt's performance.<sup>35</sup> Mason states (erroneously) that the young composer's visit was of short duration. According to him, Brahms only stayed for the one day and Karl Klindworth, also present at the event, gives the following day as the departure time. We now know that it was three weeks later that Brahms left the Altenburg, on July 2, 1853, parting with a gift of a cigar box from Liszt.

## Liszt and His Circle

In these early impressionable years, how wide a spectrum of styles and types of music would Brahms have come into contact with during his stay at the Altenburg? What, besides the *Sonata in B minor*<sup>36</sup>, had Liszt recently composed and likely performed in the company of students and friends at his home? Who else performed, and which pieces would they have played? Liszt's students certainly played their own compositions and expected criticism from the master. Karl Klindworth (1830—1916), Dionys Pruckner (1834—1896), Joachim Raff (1822—1882) and William Mason were regularly present as well as Peter Cornelius (1824—1874), Hans von Bronsart (1830—1913), the organist Alexander Winterberger (1834—1914), Ferdinand Laub (1832—1875; the violinist who replaced

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34. Mason, *Memories of a Musical Life*, p. 129.

35. *Ibid.*

36. The manuscript of the *Sonata in B minor* is dated February 2, 1853.

Joachim in Liszt's orchestra), the cellist Bernhard Cossmann (1822—1910), and Martha von Sabinin (1831—1892). It appears that most of Liszt's pupils and associates were not a fruitful source of Hungarian influence on Brahms.<sup>37</sup> There are a large number of Liszt's own compositions and arrangements that would have probably been played at that time by the composer, including the recently published *Hungarian Rhapsodies*. These pieces are based on melodies made popular by Hungarian gypsy musicians, mostly

...themes by various dilettante Hungarian composers who were quite well known by name, and who were not themselves tzigane [gypsy] — he merely applied to these the tzigane style of ornamentation...<sup>38</sup>

In these arrangements, Liszt successfully imitated the style, colour and instrumentation of gypsy bands on the piano. It is possible that these *Hungarian Rhapsodies* inspired Brahms to write his *Hungarian Dances*, in which he had the same purpose of imitation.

Brahms wrote to Joachim from the Altenburg on June 23, 1853 regarding Reményi and his experiences with Liszt.

...Reményi is leaving Weimar without me. It is *his* wish, for my manner could not have given him the slightest pretext for doing so. I really did not need such another bitter experience; in this respect I had already quite enough material for a poet and composer. ...I cannot return to Hamburg without anything to show, ...I must at least see two or three of my compositions in print, so that I can cheerfully look my parents in the face.<sup>39</sup>

37. See *The New Grove Dictionary*; Walker, *Franz Liszt*, Volume Two: *The Weimar Years, 1848—1861*; Mason, *Memories of a Musical Life*.

38. Humphrey Searle, *The Music of Liszt* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1966), p. 44.

39. Karl Geiringer, *Brahms: His Life and Work* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1948), p. 28. There are many different accounts of Brahms's and Reményi's separation. In Kelly and Upton's *Edouard Reményi, Musician, Litterateur and Man*, the violinist claims to have suggested to Brahms after one week at the Altenburg that he leave and go to Schumann in Düsseldorf. Reményi also says that he himself wrote to Joachim, asking for a letter of introduction for Brahms to Schumann.

From Weimar, Brahms went to Göttingen, accepting Joachim's offer to spend the summer there with him. Ede Reményi stayed close to Ferenc Liszt<sup>40</sup>, even travelling to Leipzig with him and Liszt's followers in December of the same year. Brahms was also in the city and visited Liszt. He was warmly welcomed by the group and was careful not to mention the past to Reményi.<sup>41</sup> There is no account of Brahms and Reményi ever having met again after 1853.

## THE MATURING BRAHMS AND JOACHIM

The summer of 1853 saw the beginning of the long and important friendship between Johannes Brahms and Joseph Joachim. Letters dating from the autumn of 1853 indicate that Brahms and Joachim had begun to exchange compositions, which would have been especially beneficial for Brahms, the younger and, at the time, less experienced composer. It was at this same period that the *F.A.E. Sonata* was written by Robert Schumann, Brahms and Albert Dietrich for Joachim, while the three awaited his visit.<sup>42</sup>

Brahms spent the winter of 1854 with Joachim in Hanover. They regularly worked together on their compositions, criticizing and helping each other. During that time, Brahms wrote many of his chamber works, since he had on hand a group of musicians who were ready

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40. There is an interesting account of Liszt and Reményi meeting again in January 1869 upon Liszt's return to Weimar. Adelheid von Schorn observed them playing together, improvising on Gypsy melodies and wrote that when Reményi played, the whole man danced. "The two Hungarians not only played music, they WERE THEMSELVES the music — in every nerve — down to their fingertips." At the finish of their private performance, Reményi fell at the master's feet and clasped his knees. "One could not tell whether he was laughing or crying from sheer joy." Adelheid von Schorn, *Zwei Menschenalter. Erinnerungen und Briefe* (Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1901), p. 155.

41. Walter Niemann, *Brahms* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1969), p. 53.

42. Written in October 1853, the *F.A.E. Sonata* for violin and piano was based on the initials of Joachim's personal motto, *Frei aber einsam* (Free but lonely). Schubert's composition student, Albert Dietrich wrote the first movement, Robert Schumann wrote the *Intermezzo* and *Finale*, while Brahms composed the *Scherzo*. Clara Schumann played it with Joachim for the first time on October 26, 1853, and the violinist was asked to identify the composer of each movement — which he did.



and willing to sight-read the music. Joachim and the Eyre brothers, along with August Lindner obliged Brahms by performing these newly composed works, including the *Trio* in B major, op. 8, the *Sextet* in B $\flat$  major, op. 18 for strings, the *Quartet* in G minor, op. 25 (see Chapter IV for a discussion of the “Hungarian”) and the *Quartet* in A major, op. 26, both for piano and string trio, the *Quintet* in F minor, op. 34, the *Sextet* in G major, op. 36 and the *Trio* in E $\flat$  major, op. 40.

In these formative years of Brahms’s compositional style, Joachim was crucial to his development. For five years, from 1856 until 1861, Brahms and Joachim exchanged a large number of counterpoint exercises. As can be seen from their correspondence, Brahms was more faithful in doing the exercises than was Joachim. Indeed, the majority of the latter’s compositions display relatively little use of counterpoint. It seems that Joachim was either not particularly talented at contrapuntal writing, or that his style was naturally more vertical than horizontal. Brahms learned the technique of orchestration from Joachim by showing him the orchestral music that he had written and allowing Joachim, as master of the subject, to comment and criticize.<sup>43</sup> In fact, with regard to Brahms’s *Piano Concerto in D minor*, which will be discussed with regard to its “Hungarian-ness” in Chapter IV, Donald F. Tovey wrote,

Joachim helped with advice and criticism at every stage of its growth, from its beginnings as a symphony drafted in an arrangement for two pianofortes, to its final perfection. When it was ready for orchestration, Joachim’s relation to Brahms was practically that of master to pupil. .... But in Joachim he found not only a believer, but a composer whose qualities were exactly fitted to complete his education.<sup>44</sup>

43. Tovey, “Brahms” in *Cyclopædic Survey of Chamber Music*, I, pp. 107–108.

44. Tovey, “Joseph Joachim, Hungarian Concerto for Violin and Orchestra, op. 11”, in *Brahms and His World*, edited by Walter Frisch (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 152.

The extent to which Brahms was influenced by Joachim (and vice versa) can be seen by the many similarities in the piano writing of the two composers. They both concentrate on the darker sounds of the lower and middle registers of the instrument and use octave and tenth doublings in the left-hand voices. Harmonic vocabulary (a feature discussed further in Chapter IV), concern for structural coherence, and hemiola as a rhythmic device are other compositional features Brahms and Joachim have in common.<sup>45</sup>

Joachim had a tremendous influence on Brahms's writing of the *Violin Concerto*, op. 77, with its "Hungarian" finale. As Burnett James states,

The Hungarian finale also brings together several strands of the web of Brahms's creative texture. Nationally, it honours Joseph Joachim, the dear friend, and may tilt back to Reményi, he who set Brahms upon the road to international fame and onto the track of the Hungarian gipsy music also; maybe even a distant nod to the memory of Franz Liszt and the Weimar meeting which, however abortive it had in the end turned out, was a mark and milestone on the road of Brahms's arduous pilgrimage. And then, Hungarian and gipsy music was part of the Romantic addiction and cultivation.<sup>46</sup>

Written while the composer was vacationing in Pörschach, the manuscript was passed back and forth many times, suggestions were made by Joachim for improvement, which Brahms sometimes accepted and used. The work was dedicated to Joachim who gave the première performance on New Year's Day, 1879. In a letter to Joachim six months after this performance, Brahms referred to the dedication: "It is a good thing your name is on the copy; you are more or less responsible for the Solo Violin part."<sup>47</sup>

45. Maas, "The Instrumental Music of Joseph Joachim", p. 274.

46. Burnett James, *Brahms: A Critical Study* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd, 1972), p. 155.

47. Johannes Brahms, *Violin Concerto*, op. 77 (Ernst Eulenburg, 192-), p. v.

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## TRACING BRAHMS'S STEPS THROUGH EUROPE

The young Brahms was influenced not only by the people he met and became acquainted with, but also by the places where he journeyed and his musical surroundings in those places. Brahms's earliest travels, when he was accompanist for Reményi, took him to Winsen, Lüneburg, Celle, Hanover, and ended in Weimar. After summering in Göttingen, he toured the Rhine area, beginning at Mehlem (near Bonn) and finishing in Düsseldorf on September 30, 1853, where he stayed with the Schumanns for a few weeks. Returning to Hanover at the beginning of November, Brahms sent manuscripts to the publisher Härtel in Leipzig, who replied with an enthusiastic invitation to the business city of Germany. His travels for those first months therefore took him not only to the great cities in Austria and Germany, but also to small villages where he would have been exposed to concert music (with Joachim, Liszt, Schumann, etc.) as well as tavern music that was often performed by gypsies (in the hotels and on the streets of the smaller towns).

The New Year (1854) found him back in Hanover with Joachim. Upon hearing about Schumann's suicide attempt in February, he rushed to Düsseldorf to be with the Schumann family. He spent most of his time at the Schumanns' house, taking a boat trip up the Rhine to Mainz in August in the company of Clara.

After spending Christmas 1854 together in Düsseldorf, Brahms and Clara Schumann formed a performing group with Joachim. They began a concert tour in November 1855, travelling through Hamburg, the Altona region, Kiel, Bremen, Leipzig, and lastly Hanover. After Robert Schumann's death in July 1856, Clara moved to Berlin, Joachim returned to Hanover, and Brahms, following a tour in Switzerland, settled in Detmold on October 21.

Here, he wrote many of his early compositions, including the Hungarian influenced *Piano Concerto*, op. 15, the *Variations on a Theme by Händel* (containing passages of "Hungarian" flavour) and the two piano quartets, opp. 25 and 26.

One might naturally suppose that this Rondo [alla Zingarese], and the scarcely less Hungarian *finale* of the sister quartet [op. 26], were the first fruits of Brahms' contact with Vienna and its gypsy-bands.<sup>48</sup>

Brahms' next position after leaving Detmold was as conductor of the Singakademie in Vienna. Upon resignation from this position, he made concert tours in November of 1865. After performing his *Piano Concerto*, op. 15 in Karlsruhe, he gave concerts in Basel, Zürich, and Winterthur, Switzerland, then back to Karlsruhe for the first performance of his *Horn Trio* at the beginning of December. Then he moved his tour northward to Mannheim, Cologne, Oldenburg, and finally Hamburg.

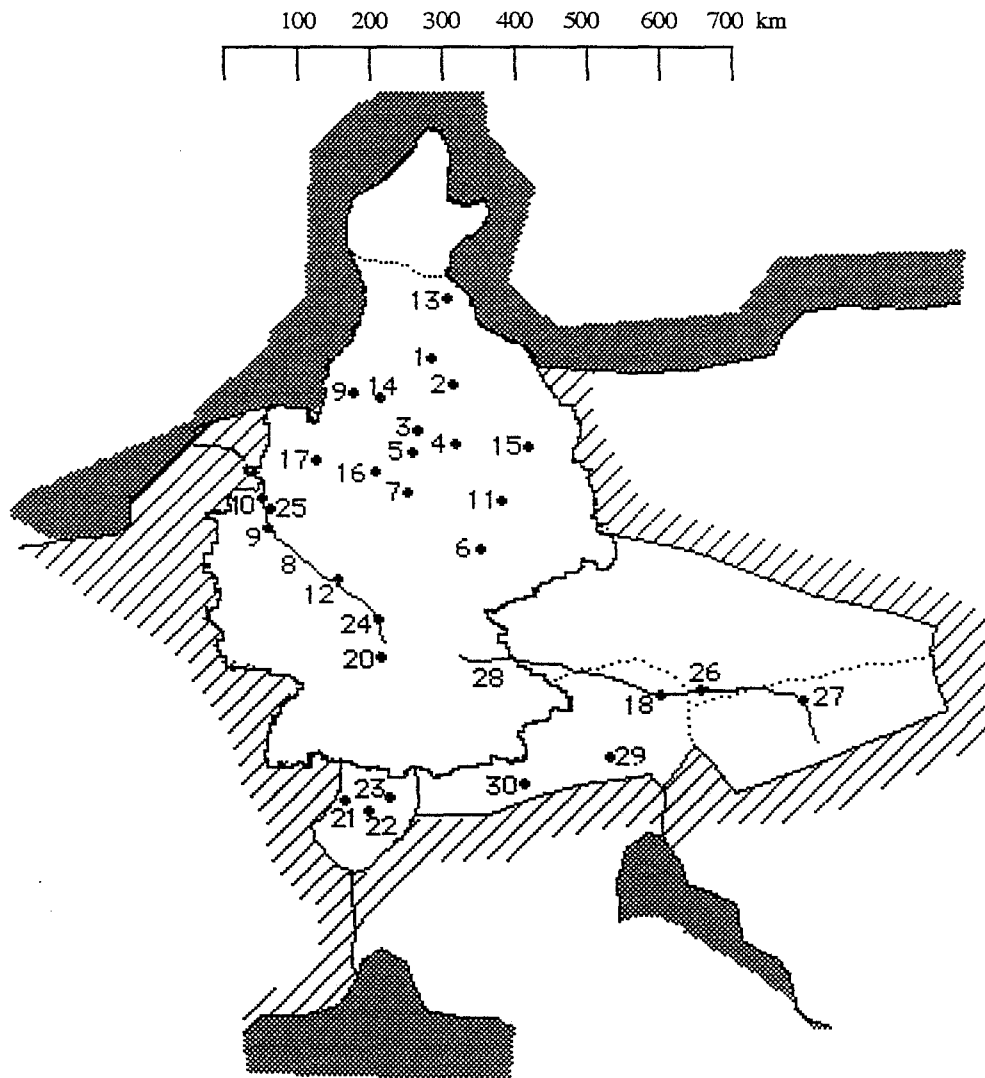
In the spring of 1866 Brahms took up residence in Zürich where he met another lifelong friend, the surgeon Theodor Billroth with whom he played chamber music and to whom he later dedicated his op. 51 quartets. Here he accomplished much in composition, including the creation of a work which was to bring him much success — *The German Requiem*. He returned to Vienna in November 1866 and gave concerts there the following March and April. His next tour, also in 1867, took him to Hungary (Pressburg and Pest) for the first time, giving concerts there on December 7 and 10. This trip was very important to Brahms, for he had longed to hear Hungarian gypsies on Hungarian soil ever since his tour with Reményi in 1853. Isabelle Emerson, in her article "Brahms in Budapest: Concerts of 1867 and 1869" states:

In the fall of 1867 Brahms and Joachim undertook a concert tour that included Vienna, Graz, Klagenfurt, and Pest (Buda and Pest were at this time two cities facing each other across the Danube; in 1873, Buda, Pest, and Obuda merged to become Budapest). .... with the exception of Paganini and Liszt, no other artist arouses such excitement among the [Hungarian] public.<sup>49</sup>

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48. Schauffler, *The Unknown Brahms*, p. 392. While the op. 25 quartet is clearly Hungarian influenced, it is questionable whether the op. 26 is so influenced. Note that Schauffler neglects to mention Reményi and Joachim as possible sources for Brahms' Hungarian style.

49. Emerson, "Brahms in Budapest: Concerts of 1867 and 1869" in *The Piano Quarterly*, p. 30.



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|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Hamburg (1833-53) | 2. Lüneburg (1853)    | 3. Winsen (1853)      | 4. Celle (1853)       |
| 5. Hanover (1853)    | 6. Weimar (1853)      | 7. Göttingen (1853)   | 8. Rhine              |
| 9. Mehlem (1853)     | 10. Düsseldorf (1853) | 11. Leipzig (1853)    | 12. Mainz (1854)      |
| 13. Kiel (1855)      | 14. Bremen (1855)     | 15. Berlin (1856)     | 16. Detmold (1856-59) |
| 17. Münster (1862)   | 18. Vienna (1862)     | 19. Oldenburg (1863)  | 20. Karlsruhe (1863)  |
| 21. Basel (1865)     | 22. Zürich (1865)     | 23. Winterthur (1865) | 24. Mannheim (1865)   |
| 25. Cologne (1865)   | 26. Pressburg (1867)  | 27. Pest (1867)       | 28. Danube            |
| 29. Graz (1867)      | 30. Klagenfurt (1867) |                       |                       |

fig. 1 : Brahms's travels, 1853—67

From January to April 1868 Brahms was back in Hamburg, rehearsing his *Requiem* in Bremen and giving a concert in Oldenburg.<sup>50</sup> Permanently fixed in Vienna from this point, the composer's years of steady travel as a professional musician had come to a close.

## GERMAN, AUSTRIAN, HUNGARIAN POLITICS (1848—1867)

Though Johannes Brahms travelled extensively in the first half of his life, his visits took him almost exclusively to German-speaking territories. Austria was a leading power, with the government situated in Vienna.

In the vast Austrian empire a welter of different races — Italians, Czechs, Magyars, Slavs and many others — found themselves the subject of a German house and its mainly German ministers.<sup>51</sup>

A primary aim of the Germany of the nineteenth century was to gain national unity. In Hungary, Transylvania, Rumania and the Balkans, however, the goal was to win independence from foreign domination.

Yet the general pattern which emerged all over Europe was the hardening of the idea of the nation state — a political system in which the great majority of the citizens were of one race, sharing a common language and living in a geographically unbroken territory.<sup>52</sup>

This was the idea which spurred the 1848 War of Independence in Hungary. Because the Hungarian people wanted to liberate themselves from Hapsburg rule, revolution was

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50. Niemann, *Brahms*, pp. 28—98.

51. "The 19th century: historical background" in *The Larousse Encyclopedia of Music*, edited by Geoffrey Hindley (London: The Hamlyn Publishing Group, 1971), p. 247.

52. *Ibid.*

inevitable. The politician Lajos Kossuth led a new party, beginning in January 1847.

Kossuth demanded a constitution for the Austrian hereditary provinces.

This contributed to the outbreak of the revolution in Vienna, followed two days later by Pest.<sup>53</sup>

For a few months the laws were changed and Hungarians were able to own land as well as to vote. In September, 1848, the hope of Kossuth and his followers for an independent state was thwarted by the Austrian government. Baron Jelacic marched on Hungary and appointed military commissioners to administer the country. For ten months Hungary fought its War of Independence, believing it had won in April 1849 by declaring independence. However, Tsar Nicholas I of Russia intervened on the side of Austria and the balance of power was no longer equal. Kossuth handed over his authority to General Arthur Görgey and the General surrendered to the Austrian army. Hungary was broken into provinces and integrated with the Austrian Empire until the Compromise of 1867. In this Compromise, which took effect in May of that year, Hungary had to

...recognize the existence of the Empire as a primary objective, the upholding of rights of the sovereign and giving up some of the sovereignty Hungary had won in 1848.<sup>54</sup>

For anyone involved with revolutionary activities, the years between 1849 and 1867 meant exile from Hungary (recall Reményi). Many gypsies fled the area as well and travelled through Austria and Germany on their way to a safer place. Since gypsy musicians were among those leaving Hungary, it is quite likely that during this time they could be heard in the streets of many towns and cities, especially Vienna.

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53. Gábor Pajkossy, “‘Liberty and Democracy for My Country’ — Lajos Kossuth” in *The New Hungarian Quarterly* (Spring 1994), p. 142.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 146.

After being defeated by Prussia in 1867, Austria had to relinquish some of its control over its neighbour and Emperor Franz Josef was crowned King of Hungary. The birth of the Austro-Hungarian empire marked the beginning of the Hungarian people's fight to rule their own country.<sup>55</sup> With the subsequent pairing of Vienna and Pest as dual capitals, the cities shared much in common, not only politically, but also musically and culturally. Brahms's experience of "Hungarian" music would have increased tremendously once he had moved permanently to Vienna. Since the cities are fairly close to each other, the gypsy musicians would have wandered freely between the cities, entertaining and making money wherever they went. It is well known that Brahms ate in restaurants daily, and it is likely that some of these restaurants employed gypsy bands to entertain their customers. The composer would have been surrounded by the characteristic music so closely associated with Hungary.

## SUMMING UP THE INFLUENCES

It is clear that of possible Hungarian influences, Reményi and Joachim left the greatest mark on Brahms in his early years. Reményi played to the young composer's passionate nature, helping him to realize and express the "Hungarian" within himself. Joachim affected Brahms's conservative and academic side, teaching him, collaborating with him, and yet giving advice for "Hungarianisms".

Liszt may also have had a role in this aspect of Brahms's compositional style, since he was a prominent figure in the musical world and Brahms was an impressionable young man at the time that they met. Brahms probably heard some of Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsodies* and even though they are very different from Brahms's *Hungarian Dances*, the idea of imitating Hungarian gypsy bands on the piano was common to both composers. The other composers

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55. Hindley, *The Larousse Encyclopedia of Music*, p. 247.



whom Brahms met at the Altenburg probably had a lesser effect on him since they were students and did not incorporate this favourite Hungarian idiom of their teacher.

Since Johannes Brahms did not spend much time in Hungary, it is unlikely that he heard either Hungarian peasant music or even the gypsies in their chosen environment. In fact, he expressed to Clara Schumann in a letter (February 26, 1856) that he longed to experience the Hungarian gypsies.

I was delighted with your letter which I received today and to learn that you heard the gypsies playing. I have often wanted to hear them. .... There is plenty of work to be done there, [*Hungarian Dances*] remembering and jotting down the melodies. I am longing to know what you think of the gypsies and the Hungarians and to hear your comments on them. They are a very strange race but I was never able to learn very much about them from Reményi. He is such a dreadful liar.<sup>56</sup>

But the political events of the day, and the dispersion of the gypsies through most European countries, enabled Brahms to hear gypsy bands in Germany, Austria, and perhaps even Switzerland.<sup>57</sup> To what extent he had contact with their music has not been recorded, but judging by the style of imitation in his *Hungarian Dances*, he must have had at least some experience of these musicians and their performances.

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56. Marguerite and Jean Alley, *A Passionate Friendship: Clara Schumann and Brahms*, translated by M. Savill (London: Staples, 1956), p. 53.

57. John B. McLaughlin, *Gypsy Lifestyles* (Lexington, Massachusetts: D.C. Heath and Company, 1980), p. 3.

## FROM FOLK MUSIC TO SALON MUSIC...

Fascination with the styles and characteristics of Hungarian music was not limited to one or two composers of well-established reputation. In searching for parallels and precedents for Brahms's stylistic Hungarianisms, a more comprehensive picture should emerge as we investigate the general trend toward the combination of German and Hungarian musical characteristics — a trend that was prevalent in the work of many minor German and Hungarian composers throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. It should be reiterated however, that there is not one single Hungarian music, but rather several distinct musics from diverse sources. These include: folk music, salon music and two styles of gypsy music. The distinctions were, and often still are, rather ambiguous.

Paul Edson, in his dissertation, "Folk Music Styles in East Central Europe" (1974), begins with a broad history of what is generally thought of, in classical music, as "Hungarian" style. For him, Joseph Haydn's "Rondo all' ungarese" from the *Trio in G*, Hob. XV: 25,

written in 1795, marks the beginning of this history.

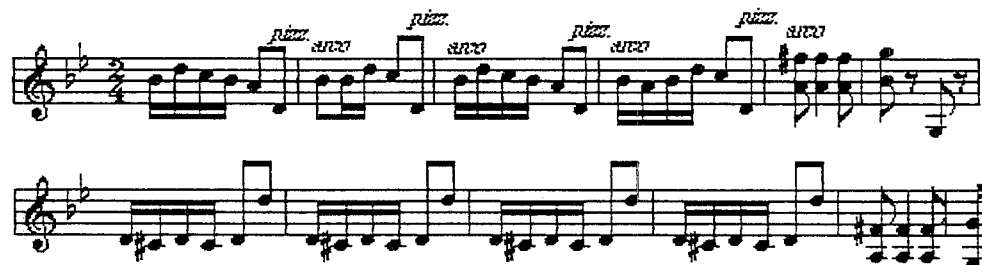


fig. 1 : Haydn, *Trio in G*, “Rondo all’ ongarese”

The final movement of this trio contains many characteristics associated with “Hungarian” music, such as syncopations, pyrotechnical displays on the violin and idiomatic figures from the gypsy scale (raised fourth in the minor key). These features will be discussed in Chapter IV.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century only two of the four Hungarian music categories were recognized as incorporating elements of Hungarian music: dance and popular “art” music. This latter category includes “all the melodies written for the leisured classes”<sup>1</sup> and matches the terminology of other musicologists, notably Béla Bartók. According to Edson, “art music” had two aspects: a local influence and an international influence.<sup>2</sup> For composers like Haydn, the international style was the basis of compositional technique which needed “flashes of exotica” for variety, an occasional splash of local colour and form. Eighteenth-century composers invented standard formulæ for use in composition to suggest distant lands, far-away places such as Turkey, Spain, Hungary, Persia, America or China. Depending on one’s perspective, music with such an influence was considered either exotic by foreigners, or popular art music by the natives.

1. Paul Douglas Edson, “Folk Music Styles in East Central Europe” (Ph.D. dissertation. Indiana University, 1974), p. 20.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

Around the turn of the nineteenth century, Hungarian folk music penetrated the popular “art” music of the day. To village folk dances were added the new national dances, such as the *csárdás*, which dates from about 1830. Even before then,

Not only did the Gypsies lead the way in great processions and other celebrations, but they were even invited to lead armies into battle, violins in front. At the end of the 18th century they made a speciality of playing the *verbunkos*, the famous dance of the recruiting-sergeants [see page 43] with which these sergeants embellished their delicate undertaking.<sup>3</sup>

The gypsy musicians therefore contributed to the spread of this new music, performing first in the towns and eventually in the countryside as well. The rise of gypsy bands affected the popularity of instrumental folk music more than folksong, which remained intact until about 1875, when a new style of folksong (as described by Bartók) was developed.<sup>4</sup>

In giving an account of the history of Hungarian music, Ferenc Liszt must not be neglected, even though it has long since been recognized that he made grave errors in his book *Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en hongrie* (1859). Liszt assumed not only that the gypsies played authentic Hungarian music but also that they composed it, not realizing that what was sung and played by the peasants outside the cities was something quite different, a music with a longer tradition and one of greater national authenticity. He also ascribed the melodies that the gypsy musicians borrowed from “popular” composers of the day to the performers themselves. In Liszt’s defence, however, it should be added that he was not alone in this assumption.

What other experience had he had in this connection? He knew that the Hungarian nobility everywhere was catered for musically only by gipsies,

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3. Jean-Paul Clébert, *The Gypsies*, translated by Charles Duff (London: Vista Books, 1963), p. 110.

4. Edson, “Folk Music Styles in East Central Europe”, p. 23.

who moreover showed surprising musical ability. The things in their programmes that were of art music origin were probably not in print; thus, as far as these were concerned, he had no material evidence or could only have obtained such data by means of exhaustive research.<sup>5</sup>

As Bartók points out, Liszt should be admired for writing and publishing a book which he knew might offend some of his own people.<sup>6</sup> Real folk music was rarely known more widely than its area of origin, whereas the gypsies collected ideas for their music from diverse sources (including folk music) and performed them wherever they travelled.<sup>7</sup>

## FOLK MUSIC

Early in the twentieth century, Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály explored Hungarian folk music — research that is still respected in the field of musicology, even with the hindsight of half a century. Folk music, then, as defined by Bartók,

...in its wider sense, contains melodies — those popular both now and in the past among the peasantry inhabiting a given geographical region — which are a spontaneous expression of the people's musical instinct. In its more restricted sense, folk music is a separate type of melodic creativity which, by reason of its being a part of the peasant environment, reflects a certain uniform emotional pattern and has its own specific style.<sup>8</sup>

By peasants, Bartók means the people who produce prime requisites and materials,

...whose need for expression — physical and mental — is more or less satisfied either with forms of expression corresponding to [their] own

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5. Béla Bartók, *Béla Bartók Essays*, edited by Benjamin Suchoff (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976), p. 507.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 508.

7. Searle, *The Music of Liszt*, p. 44.

8. Bartók, *Béla Bartók Essays*, p. 3.

tradition or with those which — although originating in another culture — have been instinctively altered to suit [their] own outlook and disposition.<sup>9</sup>

This perspective on folk music in general applies also to peasant music as a branch of folk music. Folk-style melodies composed by urban musicians can be considered another sub-division in the class of folk music

...if these are sung not by individuals but by the peasant majority for a more or less extended period of time. As a result of their dissemination in both time and space, these melodies undergo various changes and begin to branch out in variations. If the modifications, remaining under the influence of foreign elements, follow a uniform pattern and direction and prove to be long-lasting, then they give rise to series of melodies which already represent a certain uniformity of style; in other words, there is born in this way music having clean-cut characteristics of folk creativity.<sup>10</sup>

By this definition, the semi-learned tunes composed by amateur musicians are not pure enough to be valuable as genuine folk music, and “...true folk music is always distinguished by absolute purity of style.”<sup>11</sup> This rather subjective analysis is difficult to accept since we have no measurement of “purity of style”? Bartók is philosophical on this point, expressing the idea that folk music in its truest form is of the highest order because it is honest in its brevity of form and simplicity of means, untainted by academically learned musical patterns or structures.

Although Bartók’s approach to folk music has a tendency toward cultural purism and “a degree of scorn for acculturated material”<sup>12</sup>, Bruno Nettl considers Bartók to be “the leader of a school of Hungarian and other eastern European folk music scholars”.<sup>13</sup>

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9. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

10. Bartók, *Béla Bartók Essays*, p. 3.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

12. Bruno Nettl, *Theory and Method in Ethnomusicology* (London: Collier-Macmillan Limited), 1964, p. 41.

13. *Ibid.*

## History of Hungarian Folk Music

Folk music in Hungary can be traced back to the ninth century or earlier, before people made permanent settlements in the area south of the Danube River. The Hungarians came from the east and had contacts with many different groups, including the Turks, and their musical traditions are therefore partly based on relations with Middle-Eastern peoples. Later these Hungarians were influenced by Christian traditions (1000 A.D.) which also had a great effect on their musical development. Previous to the nineteenth century, very little had been written about Hungarian folksong. There exist several printed collections of religious hymns from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, some Hungarian, some of other, diverse origins as well as some folksongs notated by students in the late eighteenth century. The earliest collection of Hungarian folk tunes, consisting of 450 songs, dates from 1813 and was compiled by Pálóczi Horvath. This collection included popular Hungarian songs from the period, some of his own compositions, as well as many songs from the previous centuries.<sup>14</sup>

The nineteenth century saw an upsurge of interest in the collection and printing of Hungarian folksongs. The results of this new-found interest were various. Károly Szini's *A magyar nép dalai és dallamai* ('Songs and tunes of the Hungarian folk') of 1865 is a valuable source because the two hundred melodies are written as they were sung — in a monophonic style, with no accompaniment, although only the pitch is accurately notated. The notation probably only estimates the way in which these songs were sung with regard to rhythm and there is little indication as to articulation or expression.

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14. Bálint Sárosi, "Hungary, II. Folk music" in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, edited by Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 1980), VIII, p. 803.

fig. 2 : “Kes szekeres...” from *A magyar nép dalai és dallamai*

In the twenty-three years between 1873 and 1896, István Bartalus published *Magyar népdalok: egyetemes gyűjtemény* (‘Hungarian folksongs: a universal collection’), seven volumes containing Hungarian songs of various origin. The largest collection from that period, it consists of 730 melodies, peasant tunes and popular songs by known composers of the day, with an added piano accompaniment. Based in Pest, Bartalus travelled into rural areas of Hungary, collecting songs from many different sources.<sup>15</sup> His contact with the Magyars (Hungarian natives) gave him access to a more genuine experience of Hungarian folksong, an opportunity which would not have been available to Johannes Brahms. Although the majority were “popular” songs, some 400 were real folksongs. Béla Vikár, the next major contributor to Hungarian music research, used the newly-invented recording equipment for his projects. He worked from 1898 to 1910, spurring Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály to follow his example of recording and transcribing. Although post-dating Brahms’s first contact with Hungarian music by more than half a century, this work remains an invaluable source of informed research on one aspect of Hungarian music.

15. Sárosi, “Hungary, II. Folk music” in *The New Grove Dictionary*, VIII, p. 803.




## Tonality, Rhythm and Form in Hungarian Folk Music

A general outline of the tonality of vocal music shows that the simple forms (children's songs and some ritual songs) are based on a hexachord with two-note, three-note, tetrachordal and pentatonic melodies as other common findings, although the latter are not used in children's songs<sup>16</sup>:



fig. 3 : Hungarian children's song based on three notes

(the cross note-heads denote speech inflections rather than exact pitches)

The rhythm of Hungarian folksong is most often based on natural speech inflections, especially , which is reminiscent of many words which start on a short, accented syllable. Most commonly the metre is 2/4 and the motifs are repeated and varied according to the actions of the song. The *lament*, a mourning song performed by adult females, is the only improvised Hungarian folksong.<sup>17</sup> This song is executed in a recitative manner, spanning an interval of a ninth or tenth:

16. *Ibid.*, p. 804.

17. Sárosi, "Hungary, II. Folk music" in *The New Grove Dictionary*, VIII, p. 804.



fig. 4 : lament, “Az hol én elmegyék” (‘Where I pass’)

Pentatonicism has affected the development of *laments*, causing even modal melodies to contain pentatonic sentences (the second line of figure 4 shows pentatonic characteristics).<sup>18</sup>

Other Hungarian folksongs tend to be in strophic form, mostly with four-line stanzas. Traditionally these peasant songs are all monophonic and are sung with a somewhat harsh voice in a high register.

Bartók distinguished two main styles of Hungarian folksong, the ‘old’ and the ‘new’. These are distinguished according to formal criteria...<sup>19</sup>

In the ‘old style’, the most distinctive features are the anhemitonic (without semitones) pentatonic scale and a descending melodic structure. Usually the second half of this melody is a repetition of the first half transposed a fifth lower<sup>20</sup>:

18. *Ibid.*

19. Sárosi, “Hungary, II. Folk music” in *The New Grove Dictionary*, VIII, p. 805.

20. *Ibid.*

*parlando*

Fe- ke- te föld ter- mi a jó bu- zát,

Sü- rü er- dö ne- ve- li a bé- tyárt,

Sü- rü er- dö du- vad- nak la- ká- sa,

Szép csár- das né gon- dot vi- sel rá- ja.

fig. 5 : 'old style' folksong

Although ornamentation is uncommon in this style, a *parlando* rhythm (♩ ♩. — derived from a typical metric feature of the Hungarian language; see page 34) with a steady tempo is a constant feature<sup>21</sup>:

*parlando*

Huzd rá ci- gány, huzd rá A te mu- zsi- ká- dat,

Arany nyal, e- züsttel, Mindennel szol- gá- lok.

fig. 6 : *parlando* rhythms in a Hungarian folksong

21. Bartók, *The Hungarian Folk Song*, edited by Benjamin Suchoff, translated by M.D. Calvocoressi (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), p. 14.

The structure based on the transposition by a fifth has its roots in the early history of Hungarian folksong. According to Du Yaxiong, this structure can be traced to Asian origins.<sup>22</sup> Hungary was in direct contact with oriental ethnic communities and bears this musical connection to the East.

The *magyar-nóta*, or ‘popular art song’, played an important role in the evolution of the ‘new-style’ folksong. This type of song was based on the major-minor system, and had great impact on the folk music of Hungary from the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>23</sup> These popular art songs were written by composers of salon music and will be discussed later.

Instrumental music of the folk genre in nineteenth-century Hungary was mostly used for dancing, but unlike the folk music of many other countries, was based on vocal melodies. Monophony was the usual texture, the only other pitch content being a drone accompaniment, if one was used at all.<sup>24</sup> Hungarian dance forms must be outlined in order to follow the development of the musical structures.

The *kanásztánc* (swineherd) dance was the first-known national dance:



fig. 7 : typical swineherd dance

Its rhythmic formula goes back to the sixteenth century and was considered to have originated

22. Du Yaxiong, “The Ancient Quint-construction in Hungarian Folksongs”, *Chinese Music*, XV (1992), 24—33.

23. Sárosi, “Hungary, II. Folk music” in *The New Grove Dictionary*, VIII, p. 807.

24. *Ibid.*

with the shepherds. The *Hajdú* dance was a type of swineherd dance, using the same music and was named for the Hungarian soldiers (*hajdús*) of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries who were recruited into the Hungarian militia from shepherds and other peasant boys. It was a fast, whirling dance in which the dancer crouched down, legs together, then leaped up, flinging his legs wide. The *Hajdú* was often danced with two sticks crossed on the ground and later with swords, axes or hammers. The *botoló* (stick dance) is a derivative of the *Hajdú* and was performed in the upper Tisza region of Hungary in a duelling manner.<sup>25</sup> These dances were the predecessors of the *verbunkos* and the *csárdás* (see page 43), the music of which was the basis for many pieces in Johannes Brahms's "Hungarian" style.

Brahms made use of Hungarian folksong characteristics, possibly without recognizing them as such. His *Variations on a Hungarian Song*, op. 21, no. 2 contains a theme of Hungarian folk origin.



fig. 8 : Brahms, *Variations on a Hungarian Song*; theme

The theme was first sent to Joseph Joachim by Brahms in 1853 along with two other Hungarian tunes as piano settings. These three melodies had been obtained from Reményi whose name also appeared on the manuscript.<sup>26</sup> Compare the *Hungarian Song* used as the theme in Brahms's op. 21, no. 2 to the Hungarian folksong "Sárga csikó" ('Yellow foal').<sup>27</sup>

25. Sárosi, *Folk Music: Hungarian Musical Idiom* (Budapest: Corvina, 1986), pp. 158—159.

26. Malcolm MacDonald, *Brahms* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1990), p. 80.

27. Bartók, *The Hungarian Folk Song*, #319, p. 304.



fig. 9 : Hungarian folksong "Sárga csikó"

Similarities include the harmonic structure, the rhythmic motif, and above all, the melodic contour. Perhaps Brahms employed this particular folksong in these *Variations*. He left no indication of the origin or title of his source.

The lengthy final variation of op. 21, no. 2 has some subtle folk influence in the D minor section beginning at measure 124. The rhythmic figure in measures 126/7 and 130/1 is reminiscent of the *parlando* rhythm present in many folksongs in the Magyar language:

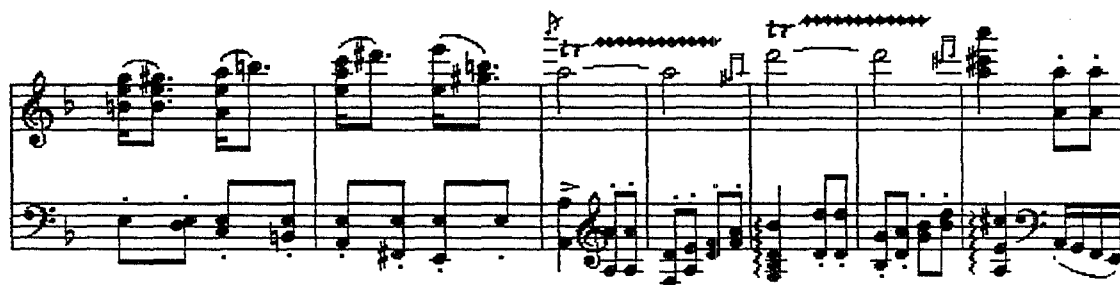


fig. 10 : *Variations on a Hungarian Song*; final variation, mm. 130—136

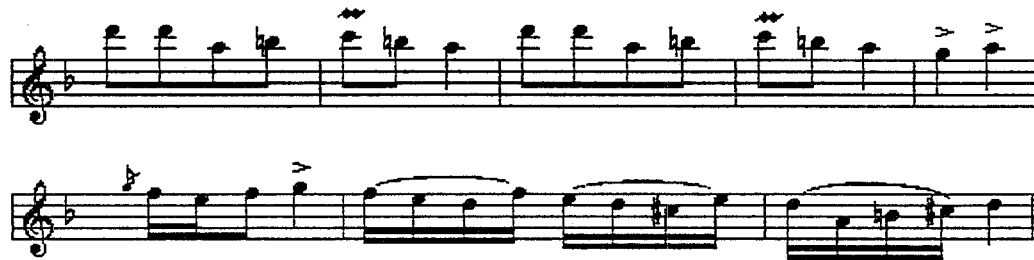
Brahms's arrangements entitled *Hungarian Dances*, though largely based on salon music in the gypsy style, are not free from the influence of folk music. The second theme of No. 10 is a folksong called "Még as este jó voltál" ('You were good and sweet at night'). Brahms embellished this song with features common to gypsy band music, such as grace notes, off-beat accents, repeated notes and a *verbunkos* cadence (the last measure of figure 12; this cadence, which came to be recognized as "Hungarian" is derived from Hungary's "national dance", the *verbunkos*. See page 43 for further explanation).



fig. 11 : “Még as este jó voltál”

fig. 12 : Brahms, *Hungarian Dance* No. 10; first section

This melody was used by other composers in their “popular” songs; for example József Riszner (1824—1891) employed the tune in his *Tolnai Lakadalmas* (‘Bridal Dance of Tolna’)<sup>28</sup>:


fig. 13 : Riszner, *Tolnai Lakadalmas*

*Hungarian Dance* No. 5 contains a theme which exists in Hungary’s folk music tradition as well. The main theme of this dance has for many years been accepted as being based on a melody by Béla Kéler (see Appendix), but according to Katalin Szerző, that view is no longer accepted by musicologists. Recent studies have shown that the piece may have been composed by Ede Reményi. However, the *Vivace* section is derived from a folksong called “Uczu bizon megéreit a káka” (‘My love is not blonde or brunette’) which was

28. Katalin Szerző, *Johannes Brahms: Ungarische Tänze für Klavier zu vier Händen — source publication and commentaries*, edited by Gábor Kovács (Budapest: Editio Musica Budapest, 1990), p. IX.


collected by Ignác Bognár in 1858<sup>29</sup>:

*Frissen*




Uc zu bi zon me gé re it a ká- ka, a sze re tőm ha nem szö ke bar- na

*holkabban* *Frissen*



csip- ke bo- kor ga- la- go- nya vad bo- kor,


*holkabban* *Frissen*




nem is le- ány, ha a ha- ja nem bo- dor.

fig. 14 : Hungarian folksong, “Uczu bizon megéreit a káka”

*Vivace*



*poco rit.* *in tempo*



*poco rit.* *in tempo*




fig. 15 : Brahms, *Hungarian Dance No. 5*; middle section

Johannes Brahms's *Piano Quartet* in G minor, op. 25, which, as we will examine in Chapter IV, shows the influence of Hungarian gypsy bands in its mordents, trills and grace

29. Szerző, Johannes Brahms: *Ungarische Tänze für Klavier zu vier Händen* — source publication and commentaries, edited by Gábor Kovács, p. VIII. It also exists in the folk repertoire as “Párta, pártá, feneette pártá” (‘Wreath, wreath, accursed wreath’) in a slightly altered version.



notes, and also has elements of Hungarian folksong in its finale, “Rondo alla Zingarese”. The sixteenth-dotted eighth rhythm, a *parlando* rhythm, is often heard in Hungarian folksong.



fig. 16 : Brahms, *Piano Quartet*, op. 25; finale, *Meno Presto*

The same feature of Hungarian folksong is found in Brahms's *Trio* in C major, op. 87. The *Andante con moto* is a set of five variations on a simple theme in A minor. This theme is based on *parlando* rhythm. According to Malcolm MacDonald, this is “probably intended to suggest Hungarian ‘gypsy’ music”<sup>30</sup>, but the rhythm was originally found in Hungarian folksong.



fig. 17 : Brahms, *Trio*, op. 87; *Andante con moto*

30. MacDonald, *Brahms*, p. 283.

## *Verbunkos and Csárdás*

Replacing the sixteenth and seventeenth-century swineherd dances, the *verbunkos* developed into the Hungarian national dance in the late eighteenth century. At first these melodies were based on the swineherd songs and later incorporated material composed specifically as *verbunkos* music. Originally this dance music was called *Magyar*, but by the end of the eighteenth century, at the same time that gypsy bands were forming, it had become known by its present name. The *verbunkos* is defined by John Weissmann in the *New Grove* as

A Hungarian dance deriving from the method of enlisting recruits during the imperial wars of the 18th century. The most important part of the proceedings was the dance, consisting of slow figures alternating with quick ones, performed by about a dozen hussars led by their sergeant. The musicians, mostly gypsies, tried to render the accompanying music (usually simple vocal folk-tunes) as impressively as possible, the improvised instrumental accompaniment corresponding to the virtuosity of the recruiter's dance. The ceremony died out after 1849 when the Austrian administration imposed conscription, but the dance still survives.<sup>31</sup>

The word is derived from the German *Werbung*, meaning recruiting, because the army consisted of German-speaking soldiers. The popularity of these improvised pieces was such that composers of salon music began to include elements of them in their own works, embellishing their melodies in the style of the gypsy musicians. By the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the *verbunkos* had become a characteristic musical idiom and gained fame as a Hungarian national style. This was largely due to the three violinists János Bihari, Antal György Csermák and János Lavotta, who developed the form and often performed such pieces.<sup>32</sup>

31. John S. Weissmann, "Verbunkos" in *The New Grove Dictionary*, XIX, p. 629.

32. *Ibid.*

Even though the music was often not written down, it followed a popular and standard form. The early *verbunkos* were binary in form with two almost symmetrical phrases and complementary cadences. Later the form was broadened into a ternary or *da capo* model. Usually there was a slow introduction called the *lassu* which alternated with a fast section called the *friss*, ending with an ornamented coda, the *figura*. In the middle there was often a trio-like section, the *disz*, and sometimes even a second, similar section. Characteristic of *verbunkos* music was the rhythmic figuration, displayed in dotted and triplet patterns along with syncopations, grace notes and trills.<sup>33</sup>

One of the most distinctive features of the *verbunkos* was a striking cadential pattern which embellished the tonic note, delaying the final resolution:



fig. 18 : *verbunkos* cadential pattern

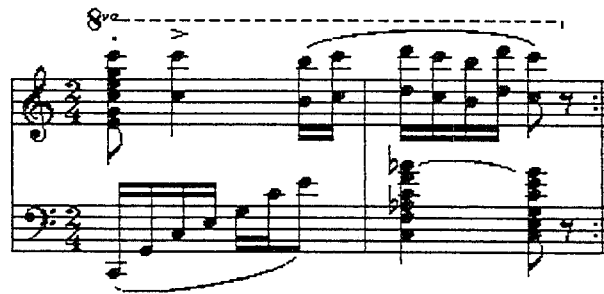
This cadence was usually performed in a more complex manner with either one or two anacrucial notes (figure 19a) or, very commonly, with a grace note interposed between the groups of sixteenth notes (figure 19b). Rhythmically, the second group of sixteenth notes was often comprised of a dotted couplet (figure 19c):



fig. 19a : added anacrusis    fig. 19b : added grace note    fig. 19c : dotted couplet

Brahms used several variants of this *verbunkos* cadence in many of his works, especially in his *Hungarian Dances*.

33. John S. Weissmann, "Verbunkos" in *The New Grove Dictionary*, XIX, p. 630.

fig. 20 : Brahms, *Hungarian Dance* No. 8; cadence in the middle sectionfig. 21 : Brahms, *Hungarian Dance* No. 5; cadence mm. 45–48

This cadence was such a nationalistic Hungarian fingerprint that to use it in a non-Hungarian work (one with no obvious “Hungarianisms”), would seem out of place since the listener, upon hearing it, would make the association with the *verbunkos*. Of course it could be the composer’s intention to recontextualize the cadence, a deliberate insertion of the Hungarian element into another style of composition.<sup>34</sup> It is surprising that Brahms inserts the *verbunkos* cadence in the *Waltzes*, op. 39, No. 11.

34. Apparently, Ferenc Liszt once absent-mindedly changed an ending in Beethoven’s *Kreutzer Sonata* to the “gypsy” cadence, suddenly inserting a taste of Hungary. Mason, *Memories of a Musical Life*, p. 94.



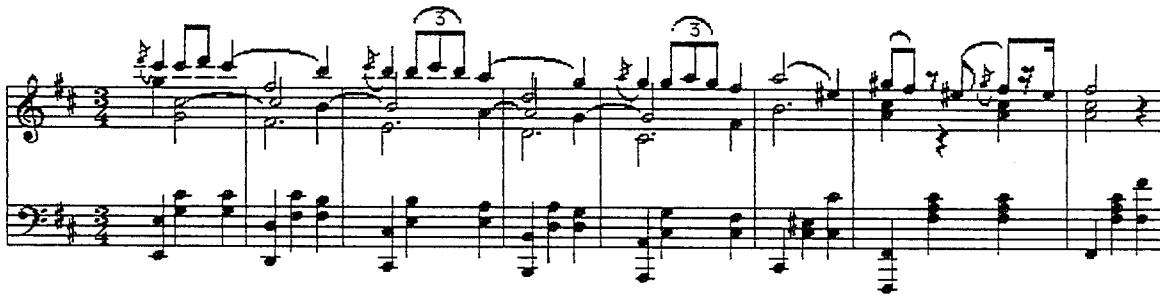


fig. 22 : Brahms, *Waltzes*, op. 39, No. 11

*Verbunkos* melodies were typically very simple and rhythmic tunes, eminently suitable for dancing with plenty of opportunity for improvisation and embellishment. The cadential formula at the end of each phrase in this melody is a *verbunkos* cadence (recall figure 19b). There is also use of a *parlando* rhythm (♩ ♩.) throughout:



fig. 23 : typical *verbunkos* melody from early 19th century<sup>35</sup>

35. Sárosi, *Folk Music: Hungarian Musical Idiom*, pp. 161—162. This sort of music was also used for the *csárdás* dance.

The *csárdás* grew out of the *verbunkos* in the middle of the nineteenth century and employs a very similar musical form. It was, like the *verbunkos*, used originally for the purpose of recruiting. The *csárdás*, from the Hungarian word *csárda* (tavern) is

...characterized by simple duple time, frequent syncopations and typical cadential formulæ, it is related to the quick (*friss*) part of the mature, late-period *verbunkos*. The *csárdás* retained its binary pattern at first, but later became multipartite and eventually acquired a slow introduction. During the 1850s its pace was considerably quickened, giving rise to fast (*sebes*) and slow (*lassu*) variants of the dance.<sup>36</sup>

The *csárdás* became the national “couple dance” in Hungary over a period of about thirty years up to the War of Independence (1848—49). This dance played an important role in the national independence movement during the early part of the nineteenth century. During its development, it had many different names including: *friss magyar* (fast Hungarian), *bokor tánc* (bush dance), *lakodalmás* (wedding dance), *szabálytalan magyar* (irregular Hungarian) and *rögtönzött magyar* (improvised Hungarian). By 1844 it was widely known by its present name but was not accepted by everyone until after the War of Independence.<sup>37</sup> Brahms gives us an excellent original example of a *csárdás*-style melody in the nineteenth *Hungarian Dance*: The melodic and harmonic contour, particularly in the third and fourth measures (figure 24), is typical of the *csárdás*.



fig. 24 : Brahms, *Hungarian Dance* No. 19; Allegretto

36. Weissmann, “Csárdás” in *New Grove Dictionary*, IV, p. 82.

37. Sárosi, *Folk Music: Hungarian Musical Idiom*, pp. 161—163.

## SALON MUSIC

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines salon music as “light music for the drawing room”.<sup>38</sup> This music, considered to be “popular” by most people, was composed in the second half of the nineteenth century by Hungarian upper-class dilettante writers, city dwellers for whom the local “country music” was beneath notice. Reciprocally, salon music was virtually unknown to the peasants of the countryside. It usually consisted of monophonic melodies in strophic form, melodies which were subjected to many changes in performance because although published, few people ever consulted the score. Since accompaniments were improvised, a large degree of variability in performance resulted.<sup>39</sup> Bálint Sárosi explains the ambiguity between Hungarian folk, salon and gypsy band musics.

[Folk music] is generally distinguished from the stratum of melody created in the nineteenth century (mainly in the second half of the century) by amateur composers which also spread largely in unwritten form: in contemporary collections these songs were also called folksongs. The modern specialist term for them is *népies dal* (‘popular art song’) or *magyarnóta* (‘Hungarian melody’). As gypsy bands led the way in popularizing them, they are also referred to as *cigányzene* (‘gypsy music’).<sup>40</sup>

These “amateur composers” made tremendous use of the *verbunkos* and *csárdás* in their pieces, contributing to the distinctive national style. The greatest difference between salon music and folk music is perhaps the authorship (known composers wrote salon music whereas folk music emerged anonymously through the peasants), but salon music displays elements of Western European art music, often in the harmonic structure, as well as features of folk music, such as *parlando* rhythm:

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38. *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

39. Bartók, *Essays*, p. 5.

40. Sárosi, “Hungary, II. Folk music” in *The New Grove Dictionary*, VIII, p. 803.







fig. 26 : Csermák, Slow Magyar from *Magyar nóták veszprém vármegyéből*; 1826

There are interesting stylistic parallels between Csermák's music and Brahms's *Hungarian Dances*. Both composers employ grace notes, trills, turns and strong accents; both composers employ the *verbunkos* cadence and elements of the gypsy scale — the occidental harmonic minor with a raised fourth. Beginning as a lament, Brahms's seventeenth *Hungarian Dance* has an augmented second in its mournful melody, an interval imported by the gypsies and commonly associated with "Hungarian" music. It is embellished with many grace notes, mordents and turns.

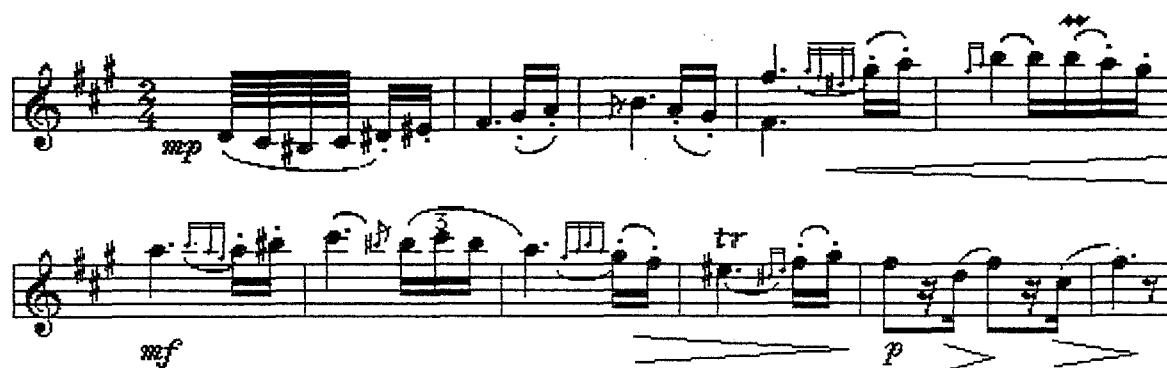
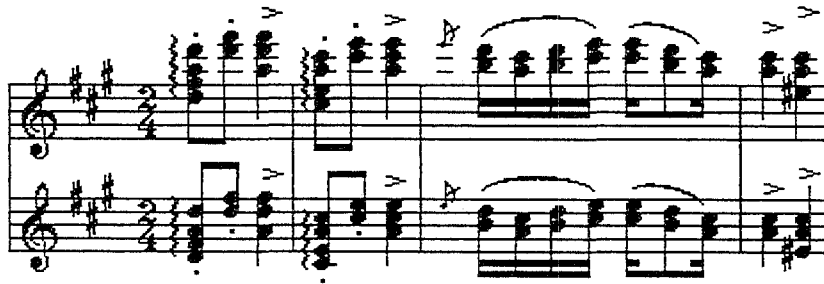


fig. 27 : Brahms, *Hungarian Dance* No. 17; Andantino

Immediately Brahms takes us into the *Vivace non troppo* section in the same key, representative of the *lassu* and *friss* sections of the *csárdás*. It is loud and rhythmic with sudden *piano* passages. There are rolled chords, grace notes, syncopations and at the end, repeated notes in the lower part. Many of these techniques were shared with Hungarian composers like Csermák.

fig. 28 : Brahms, *Hungarian Dance No. 17*; Vivace

The slower, more lyrical *grazioso* section has a beautiful, lilting melody that is structured around the *parlando* rhythm (recall Hungarian folk music).

József Kossovits (1750—1819) was a Hungarian composer and cellist identified in the *Weiner allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* as “an inexhaustible composer of Hungarian dances”<sup>43</sup>. He served as a musician at the court of Menyhért Szulyovszky in Rákóczi until 1794. His employer was arrested for participating in the Jacobin uprising in Hungary, an event which inspired Kossovits to compose his *Slow Hungarian Dance*, the last of his 12 *danses hongroises pour le clavecin ou pianoforte* which were published in Vienna at the turn of the nineteenth century. This publication became one of the best-known dance works of the *verbunkos* period.

fig. 29 : Kossovits, *Slow Hungarian Dance*

The melody of Kossovits’s *Slow Hungarian Dance* shows an interesting cross-reference with standard German musical ideas. The antecedent/consequent phrase

43. Bónis, “Kossovits, József” in *The New Grove Dictionary*, X, p. 215.

structure has a common half-close on the dominant, but substitutes a *verbunkos* cadence for the final full-close. The first cadence gives the melody a largely “non-Hungarian” sound up to its final measure. It could equally well originate in Germany, Poland or France. Brahms likewise, in his *Hungarian Dance* No. 18 begins with a typical occidental melody and does not show the “Hungarian” until the end of the second section. Here there is a “semi-*verbunkos*” cadence, containing a simplification of the full *verbunkos* features with similar contour and rhythm, preceded by a tritone in the tune.



fig. 30 : Brahms, *Hungarian Dance* No. 18; opening

This German musical influence was not exclusive to Kossovits. Many minor composers of salon music attempted the marriage of *verbunkos* and Teutonic elements. József Ruzitska (1775—1823?) wrote Hungaro-Germanic opera and György Ruzitska (1789—1869) was prolific both in a German style of composition and in a more Hungarian salon-style.<sup>44</sup>

Márk Rózsavölgyi (1789—1848) created another bridge in the diverse structures of Hungarian music, moving from a salon style in his earlier work to a more pronounced gypsy element in later compositions. In 1808, the young violinist moved from Prague to Pest, where he gave a recital including some of his own Hungarian-style works. Between 1824 and 1831, eighteen *verbunkos* by Rózsavölgyi appeared in the *Magyar nóták Veszprém*

44. These two composers who share the family name “Ruzitska” were in fact not related.

*vármegyéből* ('Hungarian tunes from County Beszprém'), published by the Music Society of the County of Beszprém in Balatonalmádi. Rózsavolgyi formed his own gypsy band which played for Liszt on May 6, 1846. Liszt acquired material for his *Hungarian Rhapsodies* from this performance, using Rózsavolgyi's melodies in Nos. 8, 12, and 13.<sup>45</sup>

Rózsavolgyi became known as the last master of the *verbunkos* and the first master of the new *csárdás*, the most popular genre of nineteenth-century music in Hungary. After 1830, the composer dedicated *csárdás* to every great political occasion. He also became known for his drawing-room and social dances and a cyclical, repetitive dance.<sup>46</sup>



fig. 31 : Rózsavolgyi, "Dreamy Dance" from the "First Hungarian Society Dance"

Rózsavolgyi was one of the first *csárdás* composers to make explicit use of parallel-line melodies. This technique consists of two virtually identical voices moving in constant similar motion. Neither of the parts dominates the other. This much more romantic, lyrical form of musical expression was eminently suited to Brahms's developing harmonic style and must have made an immediate appeal to him. He used comparable methods of filling out themes in many of the *Hungarian Dances*. For example, the first dance in the second set (No. 11), a slow lament-like piece, is based on a simple harmonic pattern (I-IV-V) with many embellishments — accents, mordents and grace notes. Of particular interest is the way that Brahms constructs the whole melody in thirds and sixths, a parallel-line technique:

45. Bónis, "Rózsavolgyi, Márk" in *The New Grove Dictionary*, XVI, p. 289.

46. *Ibid.*

fig. 32 : Brahms, *Hungarian Dance* No. 11; opening melody

The second theme provides an example in which the two voices should be viewed as independent. Seen as harmonic blocks, the beginning of the theme has a repeated cross-relation between C# and C $\flat$ . Seen as independent horizontal lines, the individual parts justify this cross-relation.

fig. 33 : Brahms, *Hungarian Dance* No. 11; middle section

Even the final cadence of this *Hungarian Dance* proceeds in parallel sixths:

fig. 34 : Brahms, *Hungarian Dance* No. 11; final cadence

Brahms lived his youth in a musical climate propitious to the live performance of gypsy compositions. Had this music remained in the realm of aural tradition we would now be constrained to speculation on the techniques and structures that the gypsies employed. However, a few of the minor composers of the period assembled useful collections of the melodies they heard. Ignác Ruzitska (1777—1833) was a friend of the *verbunkos* musicians Bihari and Csermák and often transcribed pieces played by Bihari on the violin, including the Rákóczy March.<sup>47</sup> Perhaps his greatest contribution to the development of the style was the compilation of the

47. Ignác is not related to József Ruzitska and György Ruzitska.

*Magyar nóták Veszprém vármegyéből* ('Hungarian tunes from County Veszprém'), a collection of 135 Hungarian dances for piano by contemporary composers (including Ruzitska himself). This was the most important catalogue of *verbunkos* music in the early nineteenth century.



fig. 35 : Ruzitska, Farewell and Quick Magyar from *Magyar Nóták Veszprém Vármegyéből*

Of more specific significance to the music of Brahms was the Hungarian conductor and composer Béla Kéler (1820—1882), whose original name was Albrecht Pál. In 1845 Kéler moved to Vienna and in 1854 he conducted an orchestra in Berlin. However, most of his successful works were composed while he conducted in Wiesbaden, 1863—1870. Béla Kéler wrote fourteen *csárdás*, including *Bártfai emlék*, op. 31, published in 1887 (see Appendix). The melody is well-known from Brahms's fifth *Hungarian Dance*.<sup>48</sup>



fig. 36 : Brahms, *Hungarian Dance* No. 5; opening melody

Ede Reményi wrote three books of Hungarian melodies and *csárdás* for piano, a violin concerto and many transcriptions for violin.<sup>49</sup> Although he was not a gypsy, many people considered him to be one. In an interview, the violinist discussed Brahms's *Hungarian Dances*, claiming that he was the composer of the seventh dance as well as the first part of the third dance.<sup>50</sup>

48. Andrew Lamb, "Kéler, Béla" in *The New Grove Dictionary*, IX, p. 850.

49. E. Heron-Allen, "Reményi, Ede" in *The New Grove Dictionary*, XV, p. 734.

50. Kelly and Upton, *Edouard Reményi: Musician, Littérateur, and Man*, pp. 92—94. Reményi also wrote *Trois Morceaux hongrois*, *Nagy hallgató magyar* (a *hallgató* is a "popular-style song for listening to"), and *Rákóczy-induló zongorára*.

The following table gives a complete list of sources for Brahms's *Hungarian Dances*.<sup>51</sup>

No. 1 .....	"Isteni Csárdás" .....	Miska Borzó .....	1848/59
No. 2 (main part) .....	"Emma Csárdás" .....	Mór Windt .....	1858
(Vivo) .....	No. 18 of "Fifty Original Folk- and Hungarian Songs" .....	collected by Ignác Bognár (1811—83)	
No. 3 (main part) .....	Ede Reményi (1828—98)		
(Vivace) .....	"Tolnai Lakadalmas" .....	arr. by József Riszner (1824—91)...	1847
No. 4 ( <i>Poco Sostenuto</i> and <i>Vivace</i> ) .....	"Kalocsi Emlék" .....	N. Mértý .....	1865
No. 5 (main part) .....	"Bártfay Emlék Csárdás" .....	Béla Kéler (1820—82)	
(Vivace) .....	No. 18 of "Fifty Original Folk- and Hungarian Songs" .....	collected by Ignác Bognár	
No. 6 (main part) .....	"Rózsa-Bokor Csárdás" .....	trans. by Adolf Nittinger .....	1864
No. 7 .....	Ede Reményi		
No. 8 .....	"Luiza Csárdás" .....	Ignác Frank (1825—?) .....	1856
No. 9 .....	"One Hundred Hungarian Folk Songs" .....	collected by Mihály Füredi (1816—69) and Ignác Bognár .....	1850
No. 10 .....	"Tolnai Lakadalmas" .....	arranged by József Riszner .....	1847
No. 11 .....	Johannes Brahms		
No. 12 (main part) .....	"Az esztergomi dalárdának" .....	János Németh (1836—1908) (alias Elemér Szentimai)	
( <i>Poco meno presto</i> ) .....	"Galgóczi emlék, <i>Friss</i> " .....	János Palotási .....	1862
No. 13 (main part) .....	"Dalok zongora kísérettel" .....	László Zimay (1833—1900) ...	1864
(Vivace) .....	"Magyar Dal-album" .....	József Leszler .....	1880
No. 14 .....	Johannes Brahms		
No. 15 (main part) .....	"Ábránd" .....	Béni Egressy (1814—51)	
No. 16 .....	Johannes Brahms		
No. 17 ( <i>Vivace</i> ) .....	"Hej, az én szeretöm" .....	Kálmán Simonffy (1831—88).....	1854
( <i>Meno presto</i> ) .....	"Négy igen kedves Magyar" .....	József Szerdahelyi. (1804—51)...	1843—44
No. 18 (main part) .....	coll. by Füredi and Bognár		
No. 19 ( <i>Più presto</i> ) .....	"Elfogyott a nota, No. 1" .....	Ferenc Sárközy (1820—97) ....	1853
No. 20 (main part) .....	"Galgóczi emlék, <i>Misterioso</i> zongorára, No. 2" .....	János Palotási .....	1862
(Vivace) .....	"Két honvéd dal és csárdás" .....	publ. by József Treichlinger (1807—77)	
No. 21 ( <i>Più presto</i> ) .....	"Helyre Kati" .....	arranged by Ferenc Herdy .....	1860s

51. Compiled from information in Szerző, *Johannes Brahms: Ungarische Tänze für Klavier zu vier Händen* — source publication and commentaries, edited by Gábor Kovács and in Bartók, *The Hungarian Folk Song*.

Many of Brahms's *Hungarian Dances* were based on these kinds of salon compositions and were not altered much from the originals. Compare, for example, the thirteenth dance by Brahms with the popular art song upon which it was based. This song, "Édes rózsám!", was written by László Zimay (1833—1900), who was a pupil of Mihály Mosonyi and was well-known as a song writer in the mid-nineteenth century.



fig. 37 : Zimay, "Édes rózsám!"; part 2



fig. 38 : Brahms, *Hungarian Dance* No. 13; opening

## Brahms's Hungarian Contemporaries

Although Johannes Brahms probably did not know many Hungarian composers, their style affected his notion of the "Hungarian". In some cases, such as Kálmán Simonffy, the composer himself was the source for Brahms's music, even without Brahms knowing it. The indirect impact of these composers, the general aura of influence that they had upon others in the field of music, is considerable. Liszt often quoted them directly, although Brahms himself made more oblique use of them.

Ferenc Erkel (1810—1893) was an opera composer and an outstanding conductor. From 1822 to 1825 he lived in Pozsony, near Vienna, where he would have heard the popular



Hungarian dance tunes by Bihari and József Ruzitska's *Béla futása* ('Béla's fight') when he attended operas and concerts. In his opera *Hunyadi László*, Hungarian *verbunkos* music served a special function — identifying negative characters and delineating tragic or heroic moments. In the overture to this opera, he used the gypsy scale (occidental harmonic minor with a raised fourth), the choriambic rhythmic pattern (♩ ♩.), and the *verbunkos* cadence.

Erkel attempted to create his own Hungarian musical language, arranging the *Rákóczi* Song and March, using the *verbunkos* as thematic material:



fig. 39 : *Rákóczi* March arranged by Erkel (1840)

Through his *Duo brillant* for violin and piano (1837), his *Adagio* for horn and piano (1838) and his *Variations* for cello and piano (1839), the “Hungarian” national style was heard outside Hungary for the first time. Even though the characteristics considered by Erkel to be in the true Hungarian idiom did not in fact reflect a veritable Hungarian folk tradition, he felt that his music represented his country’s own peculiar style.<sup>52</sup>

The composer regarded as a pioneer of the Hungarian national popular song and *csárdás* in the first half of the nineteenth century was Béni Egressy (1814—51), who died at the early age of thirty-seven, two years before Brahms toured as accompanist with Ede Reményi. Like the music of József Kossovits, József Ruzitska and György Ruzitska, his music was written in the German *Lied* style with influences of the spiritual and secular song traditions of Hungary as well as the Hungarian *verbunkos*. His setting of Vörösmarty’s poem

52. “Erkel, Ferenc” in *The New Grove Dictionary*, VI, pp. 230—33.

*Szózat* was regarded as Hungary's second national anthem and was later used by Liszt, Mosonyi, Erkel, Volkmann, Dohnányi, Kodály and Járdányi, although Brahms himself never transcribed or arranged the melody.



fig. 40 : Egressy's setting of *Szózat*

Many of Egressy's piano pieces are *csárdás*, Hungarian folk tunes and *friss* (fast) dances.<sup>53</sup> His song "Hej, Haj, Magyar Ember" ('Hey, Hey, Hungarian Man') was used both by Liszt in his twelfth *Hungarian Rhapsody* and by Brahms as the opening theme in his fifteenth *Hungarian Dance*:



fig. 41 : Brahms, *Hungarian Dance* No. 15; animato

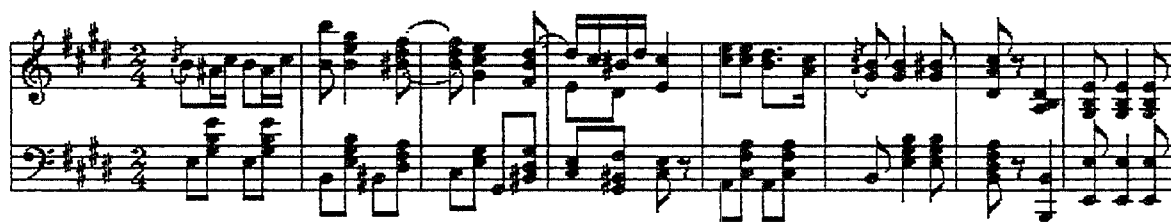


fig. 42 : Egressy, "Hej, Haj, Magyar Ember"

Mihály Mosonyi, whose original name was Michael Brand, was born in Boldogasszonyfalva, Hungary in 1815 and died in Pest in 1870. The finale to his Second

53. Bónis, "Egressy, Béni" in *The New Grove Dictionary*, VI, pp. 69–70.

Symphony provides the first evidence of Hungarian idioms in his music. In 1856, Mosonyi made the personal acquaintance of Liszt who affected him decisively. From about 1859, a decade before Brahms's *Hungarian Dances* were published, Michael Brand wrote in the Hungarian national style. As a tangible expression of his new musical personality, he officially changed his name to Mihály Mosonyi, from the Hungarian county of Moson where he was born. In creating his Hungarian style, he used the already extant melodies of the *verbunkos* and *csárdás* and worked to expand these into larger forms and to keep the musical language consistent. For instance, his *Gyász hangok Széchenyi István halálára* ('Funeral music for Széchenyi') is based on a 'Hungarian ostinato', a collection of notes delineating the characteristic intervals of the gypsy scale based on G:



Successful among Mosonyi's Hungarian-style works were the solo piano pieces in the sets entitled *Magyar gyermekvilág* ('Hungarian Children's World') and *Tanulmányok zongorára, a magyar zene előadásának képzésére* ('Studies for Piano, for Development in the Performance of Hungarian Music'), written in 1859 and 1860 respectively. There are various quotations in these pieces which reflect Mosonyi's obsession with Hungarian national music. In the second and sixteenth pieces, the famous *Rákóczi* melody is stated and in the fifth a "Kossuth" tune from the 1848–49 War of Independence can be heard. Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsodies* are referred to in the sixth piece of this set and in the tenth piece Mosonyi used the *verbunkos* style.<sup>56</sup>

The youngest of the influential composers of nineteenth-century Hungary was Kálmán Simonffy (1831–1888). He was a self-taught musician who began to attract attention in the mid-1850s with his songs for voice and piano. Within ten years he had become the most popular Hungarian song composer. He subsequently founded a national academy of music.

His songs, to poems by Tóth, Sándor Petőfi, Mihály Vörösmarty and others, are rich and many-faceted in their melodic invention and unquestionably represent the highpoint of nineteenth-century Hungarian popular song.<sup>57</sup>

Simonffy's songs became known to the public mostly through performances by choral societies and gypsy bands, eventually becoming so generally known and widely performed that they were thought of as folksongs. Johannes Brahms may indeed have assumed that he had discovered a traditional Hungarian folksong when he first heard (probably through the auspices of Reményi) the song "Hej az én szeretőm" ('Hey, My Sweetheart'). However, Brahms had been misled by Reményi, or at least had made an incorrect assumption about the origin of the song; Simonffy was in fact the composer of this melody, an authorship that has

56. Dezső Legány, CD notes for *Mihály Mosonyi : Piano Works Vol. 1* (Marco Polo, 8.223557), 1994.

57. "Simonffy, Kálmán" in *The New Grove Dictionary*, XVII, p. 327.

been forgotten since Brahms wrote his *Hungarian Dance* No. 17 :



fig. 44 : Brahms, *Hungarian Dance* No. 17; Vivace

Besides writing music, Simonffy wrote numerous essays on Hungarian music, even daring to debate publicly with Liszt on the subject.<sup>58</sup>

The name of Brahms has been nearly absent from these pages. However, these Hungarian composers and their music, which surrounded Brahms, was a major source of his own understanding. Although the names of these composers cannot all be directly associated with Brahms, their compositional *milieu* is of central importance in a discussion of his usage and comprehension of the “Hungarian”. Composers such as Erkel and Mosonyi created a musical field that was extensively reaped, not only by Hungarian musicians, but by musicians of other nationalities as well.

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58. *Ibid.*, p. 328. The public debate was on the subject of Liszt’s book, *Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en hongrie*, which Simonffy found to be unforgivable. He wrote to Liszt and had the letter (as well as Liszt’s private reply) published in the Pest newspaper *Pesti Napló*, stating that he would have nothing further to do with Liszt because his book was “deceptive”. Walker, *Franz Liszt*, Volume Two, pp. 385–387.

## ...ON TO THE GYPSIES

### GYPSIES: THEIR ORIGIN AND HISTORY

Like the Hungarians, there is considerable uncertainty as to the origin of the gypsies. Though they were originally thought to have come from Egypt (the name “gypsy” is derived from the sixteenth-century word *gipcyan*, or “Egyptian”), it is now generally accepted that they originated in Northern India. There is a connection with India through *Romanes*, the language of the gypsies, which is of Aryan origin and is similar to Sanskrit. Because of their language, gypsies are also called Romanies, and indeed call themselves “Roms”,<sup>1</sup> an Indian word which means person or gypsy man.<sup>2</sup>

The various words in many languages used to describe gypsies have interesting derivations. *Cigány* is in general use throughout Europe and is apparently from the Greek expression *Athinganoi*, which means “untouchable”. This word has connections with an

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1. Charles King, *Men of the Road* (London: Frederick Muller, Ltd., 1972), p. 10.

2. Bálint Sárosi, *Gypsy Music*, translated by Fred Macnicol (Budapest: Corvina Press, 1978), p. 11.

ancient religious sect from Asia Minor, the Melchizedekites, who could not be touched by people outside the group. Likewise the poorest class of Indians, the pariahs, from whom the gypsies may have come, were (and still are) untouchable to those of a higher class. From *Athinganoi* comes the name *Atzigan*, the word used in Turkey, the Balkans and in Rumania.<sup>3</sup> The common term for gypsies, “Bohemians”, is from the French *Bohémiens* since the wandering race entered France from Bohemia.<sup>4</sup> Such a background was regarded as highly exotic in the nineteenth century and added to the aura of mystery and romance surrounding the gypsies. To a member of the Western bourgeois like Brahms, their appeal was irresistible.

The Polish researcher Jan Kochanowski discovered evidence that before the gypsies became wanderers, they lived in Northern India as a “unified people” where their main trade was with animals and agriculture.<sup>5</sup> The Diaspora of this race began between the fifth and tenth centuries A.D. and continued for many centuries, with long stays in Persia, Turkey, Greece and later in more northern territories.<sup>6</sup> Along the way, they inherited musical traits from the peoples of each country, integrating them into their own original style of music, but

It was only when they arrived on the Hungarian plains that the Gypsies really achieved their reputation as virtuosi in this field.<sup>7</sup>

According to Bálint Sárosi, the gypsies left their home in the Balkans around the end of the fourteenth century, not as one large group but in several small groups. In 1412, they were in Hamburg; in 1422, Bologna. England first saw the gypsies in 1500, Sweden in 1512 and Paris in 1527. In 1423 Sigismund of Luxembourg, who had succeeded his brother

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3. Sárosi, *Gypsy Music*, p. 11.

4. Clébert, *The Gypsies*, pp. 42—47.

5. Sárosi, *Gypsy Music*, p. 12.

6. Clébert, *The Gypsies*, pp. 26—27.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 109.

Wenceslas as King of Hungary in 1419, assured the gypsies freedom of movement and self-government in that country. Wherever they went, the gypsies attracted mistrust and dislike. All accounts state that the gypsies were “uncouth, black, dirty, barbaric people, primarily excelling in thieving and deception”<sup>8</sup>.

In Hungary, there were many decrees from Maria Theresa (Empress of Austria and Queen of Hungary) and her successor Joseph II, beginning in 1768, which attempted to make the gypsies settle in houses rather than tents, work legitimately, dress themselves and their children in peasant clothing and study religion. They were not to speak the gypsy language or marry unless they could support future children with a solid occupation. Children under the age of five were taken away from their gypsy parents to be brought up “correctly”. These plans failed for two reasons: the gypsies did not want to change their way of life and the peasants did not want to deal with the nomads.<sup>9</sup> In the decree of 1782, it was stated that the gypsies

...should not cover themselves up in large sheets and cloaks, which serve as hiding places for stolen objects [...] they should only practise music and such-like when they have nothing to do in the fields.<sup>10</sup>

Over the centuries different groups of gypsies emerged, each classified with its own name. Hungarian gypsies belonged to one of two groups: the *magyarcigány* (Hungarian gypsy) or the *oláh cigány* (Wallachian gypsy). The musician gypsies came out of the first group, those who lived amongst the *magyars* or peasants. The *magyarcigány* were less troublesome to Joseph II because they lived within the culture of the Hungarians from an early date and were more settled than the other group. Within these large groups, there were (and still are) smaller tribes with their own chiefs. The *oláh cigány* wandered with little regard for

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8. Sárosi, *Gypsy Music*, p. 13.

9. Konrad Bercovici, *The Story of the Gypsies* (New York: Cosmopolitan Book Corporation, 1928), pp. 90—93.

10. Sárosi, *Gypsy Music*, p. 19.



the boundaries of the countries through which they travelled. They also preserved their traditions, including language, much better than the *magyarcigány*.<sup>11</sup>

## GYPSY MUSIC

In Romanes, the language of the gypsies, musicians are called *láutarii*.<sup>12</sup> These professional musicians (meaning that they made their money from performing) played what is generally considered to be “gypsy music”, but which is in fact a combination of salon music written by both lesser-known and internationally-known composers (such as Liszt and Brahms) with the folk musics picked up on their travels. There is real gypsy music of the folk kind just as there is Hungarian peasant music and indeed music of the people in every country. Antal Hermann was the first to investigate Hungarian gypsy folk music at the end of last century, but it was not until 1940 that this research was carried out with success. Imre and Sándor Csenki published ninety-nine songs of the one thousand that they collected over a fifteen-year period. András Hajdú carried on the work of the Csenki brothers, adding four hundred tunes to the collection, as well as analyzing and summarizing the information on these songs.

The melodies sung by gypsies in their own environment were independent from the melodies which surrounded them in the countries through which they travelled. The connection of these songs to India has so far not been proved, and there are differing opinions on the connection between gypsy melodies and Hungarian peasant melodies. Both Antal Hermann and Imre Csenki concluded from their research that gypsy songs were no more than variants of Hungarian songs, but

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11. Sárosi, *Gypsy Music*, pp. 20—21.

12. King, *Men of the Road*, p. 35.

András Hajdú demonstrated that independently of the origin of the elements, the way the loaned elements are used proves that a peculiar Gypsy folk-song culture developed which radically differed from any other.<sup>13</sup>

Some of the characteristics which distinguish these folksongs from the songs of other ethnic groups have been outlined by Hajdú and put forward in Sárosi's book *Gypsy Music*. For the most part, gypsy folksongs were akin to Hungarian peasant songs and are unlike the music played by the gypsy bands for entertaining the public. The essential difference is that the gypsies' own songs were performed without instruments, whereas the music they played for entertaining the public was largely instrumental, using violins, clarinets and cimbalom. The only accompaniment they used for their folksongs was the stamping of feet or the clicking of tongues. A sort of ostinato, performed with syllables and no text, has a partner in Indian music, but no link with Hungarian folk music.<sup>14</sup> Unlike the music commonly associated with the gypsies, real gypsy folk music was relatively unembellished and melodic ornamentation was rare in the music they composed and sang amongst themselves.<sup>15</sup>

A common occurrence in this music was the "rolling" of the words so that they were merely syllables which had no meaning. In this, the gypsies imitated instrumental sounds. The augmented second was a rare interval among the music created by the gypsies, even though it was a standard feature in gypsy band performance.<sup>16</sup>

Hungarian gypsy folk music shares some features with Hungarian folk music. In addressing this issue, Sárosi quotes Hajdú:

In very *fundamental* respects because 'it is under the influence of Hungarian forms that it has become what it is.'<sup>17</sup>

13. József Vekerdi, "Gypsy Folklore" in *The New Hungarian Quarterly*, IX, no. 30 (1968), p. 152.

14. *Ibid.*

15. Sárosi, *Gypsy Music*, pp. 25—26.

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

The strophic structure of the gypsies' melodies, as well as the descending line, is characteristic of Hungarian folksong.<sup>18</sup> Gypsies used words from the Hungarian language in their songs more than in their daily conversation,<sup>19</sup> though the texts of their folksongs were always subordinate to the melodies and rhythms. The texts that they did use were mostly translations of Hungarian folksong texts, which they combined with other texts and varied extensively.<sup>20</sup>

Johannes Brahms gave the impression that he was interested in the folksongs of the gypsies, by writing his *Gypsy Songs*, opp. 103 and 112. It is unlikely that Brahms distinguished between Hungarian folksongs and gypsy folksongs, but more likely that he equated gypsies with Hungarians. The original folksongs were probably not gypsy folksongs, even though the texts discuss gypsy lifestyle and music, since no research of the genre was successfully carried out until 1940. Based on texts from a collection of "Hungarian folksongs", translated by Hugo Conrat, the *Gypsy Songs*, op. 103 were originally written in 1887 for vocal quartet and piano. Two years later, Brahms arranged eight of the eleven songs for solo voice and piano.<sup>21</sup> There is doubt as to the authenticity of folk origin in these songs, and, while Brahms only occasionally looked at the folk melodies, he was determined to use the translated Hungarian texts.<sup>22</sup> This particular type of Hungarian influence on Brahms's compositions is not found anywhere else.<sup>23</sup> He mixed Hungarian texts, albeit in German, with a stylistic marriage of Hungarian and German music, making subtle reference to what he considered to be "Hungarian" (imitations of gypsy band instruments and musical figures) within a German context.

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18. Sárosi, "Gypsy music" in *The New Grove Dictionary*, VII, p. 865.

19. *Ibid.*

20. Vekerdi, "Gypsy Folklore", p. 153.

21. Nos. 1—7 and 11 of the original.

22. MacDonald, *Brahms*, p. 353.

23. In most of Brahms's other songs he was influenced by German folk melody rather than Hungarian.

Some of the songs are about love, but many of them are about gypsies and Hungarian music. The first of op. 103 is translated into English as follows:

Hey, gypsy, sound your strings!  
Play the song of the faithless girl!  
Make those strings sob, lament, grief stricken,  
till scalding tears wet this cheek!

The fifth song speaks of the Hungarian national dance and instruments:

Swarthy lad leads into the dance  
his lovely, blue-eyed miss;  
kicks his spurs smartly;  
Csárdás music strikes up.

Kisses and hugs his sweet little dove,  
twirls her, leads her, shouts and leaps,  
tosses three shiny silver florins  
to make the cymbalom ring.<sup>24</sup>

Each song is in duple metre, the same used in the Hungarian *csárdás*, and is in strophic form. Because Brahms, like many other nineteenth-century composers, did not distinguish between Hungarian “gypsy music” and Hungarian “folk music”, he used his own “gypsy” formulæ in these folksongs to make them sound Hungarian. He combined the texts with many syncopated rhythms and grace notes to create the “Hungarian” sound, a style developed and performed by the gypsy bands. These characteristics are associated with music performed by the gypsies, but are largely absent from the music of the peasants. Sudden changes of key, dynamics and tempo as well as numerous accents are all typical of gypsy band

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24. Patrick Mason, CD notes from *Jan De Gaetani in Concert: Volume 2*, Brahms, *Zigeunerlieder*, op. 103 (Bridge Records, BCD 9025, 1991).

music. The tenth of the *Gypsy Songs*, op. 103 contains a clear reference to gypsy bands in its imitation of the cimbalom in the piano part.<sup>25</sup>

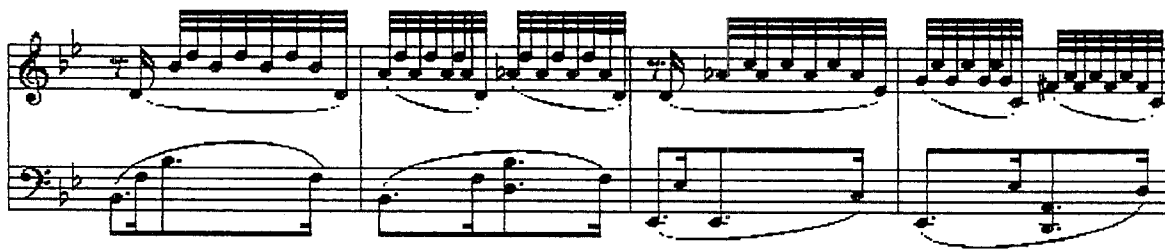


fig. 1 : Brahms, *Gypsy Songs*, op. 103, No. 10

Four years after composing the *Gypsy Songs*, Brahms once again used Hugo Conrat's Hungarian texts for some of the vocal quartets that comprise the *Six Vocal Quartets*, op. 112. After writing two songs to texts by Franz Kugler, he completed the set with four more *Gypsy Songs*. In the first of these, Brahms again uses the tremolo figure in order to create the impression of the cimbalom.

Vög- leins Lied so lieb- lich er- klingt

fig. 2 : Brahms, *Six Vocal Quartets*, op. 112, No. 3; mm. 29—32

25. See page 79 for an explanation of the various cimbalom figures.

## HISTORY OF GYPSY BANDS

Interest in gypsy musicians and their music rose to a peak in 1849 after the War of Independence. The performances of the gypsies became known as representative of the Hungarian regeneration movement.

In the middle of the [nineteenth] century Pest had become the centre in gypsy music-making as well. The majority of gypsy musicians worth anything attempted to come to the capital from the country.<sup>26</sup>

The first-known gypsy ensemble dates back almost a century earlier and was led by a woman, Panna Czinka. She was the grand-daughter of Michel Varna, a famous gypsy musician.<sup>27</sup> Her group consisted of two violins (one playing *kontra* — an accompaniment with a rhythmic “oom-pah” figure often played on the viola),<sup>28</sup> a cimbalom and a bass.<sup>29</sup> This band was employed by a rich landowner who gave them a house in exchange for their musical services at meal-time. Panna Czinka's husband, the bass player in the band, worked in a smithery as well and she helped him with his work there. She became very famous for her excellent violin skills — she even travelled as far as thirty kilometres away from her home to play, an immense distance and a major undertaking in those days!<sup>30</sup>

Some sixty years before Johannes Brahms made it his home, Vienna was a major centre of European musical life and was situated close enough to Hungary to be an influence in the lives of the Hungarian people. Many gypsy bands originated in the north part of Hungary (now the Slovak Republic), close to Vienna. The gypsies modelled their

26. Sárosi, *Gypsy Music*, p. 134.

27. Clébert, *The Gypsies*, p. 110.

28. Listen, for example, to the “animato” section which concludes Brahms's *String Quintet* in G major, op. 111. In the last measures of the piece, there is an impression of an *accelerando*, for which Brahms scores the *kontra* figure in the inner strings. This impression is one often conveyed by gypsy bands in their excited finales.

29. Bercovici, *The Story of the Gypsies*, p. 99.

30. Sárosi, *Gypsy Music*, pp. 71—72.

own groups on the Viennese serenade ensemble, a string group (typically violins, violas and a bassline) together with a chordal instrument (harpsichord) and woodwinds (flutes and clarinets), thus prefiguring the “gypsy band” that consisted of strings, cimbalom and clarinet. Even though the gypsies imitated the Viennese sound, they adopted neither Viennese harmonic structures nor indeed any ability to read music until much later.<sup>31</sup>

The earliest account of gypsies visiting Vienna dates from the 1780s, when a group of Transylvanian gypsies first arrived in the city. There is a report about a group called *Galánta* visiting Vienna in the edition of the *Pressburger Zeitung* dated March 13, 1784. This account states that

...the Galánta gypsies are excellent musicians in Hungary, and, what is more, they are also employable musical artists. They frequently take their places in aristocratic orchestras, too, and never play without the music. Apart from dance music they also perform concertos and symphonies.<sup>32</sup>

It would seem that this tribe of gypsy musicians was unique in its ability to read scores and also was more thoroughly grounded in European musical culture. Apparently, gypsies employed by aristocrats living in a feudal environment were trained so that they could play whatever was required of them by the gentlemen they served.

By 1851, a large number of gypsy musicians in Hungary had settled in Pest, where they could be gainfully employed for long periods. Nevertheless there were, according to an article published in *Hölgyfutár* on November 3, only three performing gypsy ensembles in the town.

Gypsy music has come into fashion so much in our capital that at present even three ensembles can scarcely cope with carrying out the demands of the restaurant keepers.<sup>33</sup>

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31. Sárosi, *Gypsy Music*, p. 68.

32. *Ibid.*

33. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

Because the gypsy musicians entertained the people and made them feel nationalistic after their defeat in the Revolution, the musicians found themselves welcome and even honoured by the people of Hungary. They were supported in their studies and encouraged in their careers. In the 1850s, some of the ensembles toured Hungary and later even performed abroad. Frequently the gypsy bands would play not only in Europe (where Brahms certainly heard them), but also in America and North Africa. These foreign tours gave the musicians a certain prestige in that they were considered to be spreading the good reputation of Hungarian culture. When they returned to Hungary, they were often given large and impressive homecoming celebrations.

Gypsy musicians were also influenced by composers who did not write *verbunkos* melodies. Some even went to the Vienna Conservatory, though structured classes and academic techniques were not suited to most. From their studies, they learned Western theories and techniques of harmonization which was a new departure in terms of their musical culture. These skills were not learned from Hungarians, but rather from the German and Czech musicians of the military bands. By the 1850s they were playing music which was far removed from the original Hungarian melodies upon which they had based their repertoire. They performed opera arrangements and medleys which were of German origin. This shows that while the Germans (and other Western composers) imitated the “Hungarians” in their works, the gypsies also imitated the Westerners in their performances. Once the gypsies had assimilated these newly found skills, they were in demand for arranging, harmonizing and teaching more difficult pieces to other musicians.<sup>34</sup>

One famous name linked with gypsy bands is the band leader János Bihari (1764—1827). He was “the greatest *prima* of them all, the man who carried Tzigan

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34. Sárosi, *Gypsy Music*, pp. 138—139.



virtuosity to a pinnacle of artistic and emotional perfection.”<sup>35</sup> Ervin Major has written Bihari’s biography, calling him

...the most important Hungarian musician and the greatest Hungarian performer during the first decades of the nineteenth century. [...] The verbunkos music becomes truly representative, national Hungarian music under his hands [...]. His significance is increased by the fact that he was able to relate to Hungarian folk music, as is proved by his arrangements of folksongs [...]; in this way, on the one hand, he brought the new art-music style of the verbunkos closer to wider sections of the people, and, on the other hand, he enriched that style with new and deeper elements. Besides this it was Bihari who reached back into the traditions of the *kuruc* period [the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries] in his verbunkos music and above all in his interpretations, and spread the music of this “Hungarian heroic age” [...] with which he made a significant contribution towards the merging of the two kinds of musical tradition into one single national tradition in the minds of the public.<sup>36</sup>

János Bihari was well-known as a composer even though he did not know how to employ music notation. Other musicians transcribed his music for him, writing simple versions of pieces Bihari played in virtuosic fashion. Most of these compositions are arrangements of popular songs and *verbunkos* melodies.



fig. 3 : Bihari, Hungarian dance or *verbunkos*, 1804

35. Pauline Saltzman, “Riddle of the Gypsy Fiddle” in *Counterpoint* (November, 1952), p. 24.

36. Sárosi, *Gypsy Music*, p. 76.

## GYPSY BANDS AND PERFORMANCE

The *lăutarii*, professional musicians, did not play authentic gypsy music for the most part. Most representative of their music was the *verbunkos*, the Hungarian recruiting music, a musical tradition that the gypsies took as their own and developed.

Musically, the *verbunkos* tunes were rooted in the folk melodies of the Hungarian peasants. These songs were transformed by the gypsies into dance music with fantasy-like ornamentation and the frequent insertion of the interval which was so typical of their music, the augmented second.<sup>37</sup> These transformations also included chromatic runs leading to the first note of the melody. The melody itself was usually begun an eighth note before the accompaniment.<sup>38</sup>

The *verbunkos* was the basis of a spontaneous reform of musical language by gypsy musicians who assimilated elements of contemporary European music out of professional interest.<sup>39</sup>

In the nineteenth century, the works of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven were the epitome of successful music, so the *verbunkos* composers attempted to assimilate these Teutonic influences into their own Hungarian compositions. Bihari, Lavotta and Csermák were members of the group of musicians working to make their national music as great as the music of Western Europe. Other *verbunkos* composers, such as Kossovits and Ruzitska, wanted to make Hungarian music popular, and genuine Hungarian music, the folk music of the peasants, was not considered to be useful for their purposes. They therefore turned to Western art music.<sup>40</sup>

There is also something thought-provoking in that it was precisely during the instrumental period enduring the greatest number of foreign elements,

37. Sárosi, *Gypsy Music*, p. 96.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 116.

39. Weissmann, "Verbunkos" in *New Grove Dictionary*, XIX, p. 630.

40. Sárosi, *Gypsy Music*, p. 110.

the period of the verbunkos, that the gypsy musicians were decidedly and in large numbers able to be drawn into the Hungarian musical tradition. They, who were themselves more or less foreign as far as this tradition was concerned, were able to take part more uninhibitedly in the trend which in the end produced from these many kinds of music one unified style — the verbunkos style of Hungarian music history.<sup>41</sup>

Svanibor Pettan, in his Ph.D. dissertation, “Gypsy Music in Kosovo”, cites the common characteristics of gypsy music identified by scholars at an 1891 international folklore congress in London.

1. Gypsy music for their own use is vocal and for the use of the other communities, instrumental. 2. In Hungary, even songs in Romani are based on Hungarian tunes. 3. Even borrowed melodies performed by the different branches of the Gypsies have common features. 4. Gypsies, while adopting foreign tunes, corrupt them, as they have recently done with old Hungarian music.<sup>42</sup>

The congress’s use of the word “corrupt” here is suspect. In using Hungarian folk music as the basis for their creativity, the gypsies were not exploiting or in any way destroying the music of the Magyars. To modify musical ideas to one’s own culture is not a corruption of the original culture; was Brahms corrupting source melodies in writing his *Hungarian Dances*? Have Liszt, Brahms, Rachmaninoff and Lutoslawski corrupted the Italianate Paganini with their variations on the twenty-fourth *Caprice*? The gypsies are supreme masters of variation technique. As Clébert says,

To regard the gypsies as simple adapters, even though gifted with great virtuosity, would therefore be unjust if one really considers that they found

41. Sárosi, *Gypsy Music*, p. 112.

42. Svanibor Hubert Pettan, “Gypsy Music in Kosovo: Interaction and Creativity” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Maryland, Baltimore, 1992), pp. 134—135.

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in the folklore of the Hungarian plains the musical elements which had already struck the ears of their ancestors.<sup>43</sup>

Growth and evolution are hallmarks of the gypsies' art.

Pettan supports Sárosi's contention that there is no single gypsy style — even in Hungary. There is, however, music that the gypsies feel to be their own, particularly the folk music sung by gypsies for their own entertainment, rather than the music played by gypsy bands for the public. Interviewing many gypsies in Kosovo, Pettan discovered that most were not concerned about the origin of their music; they felt that their fashion of playing was more lively and that they simply took what they needed from many different sources.<sup>44</sup>

Pettan concluded that the *lăutarii* adapted tunes as the basis for their creativity. By adopting the original music into their repertoire, gypsy musicians considered that it was legitimate to change any feature of that music. They tended to translate lyrics into their own language rather than to imitate something which they did not understand. By adapting, they created a music which was no longer foreign to them. They modified all the major musical parameters and the result was not just an imitation of someone else's work, but rather, an entirely new realization of that piece of music. Variation is where the gypsies showed their greatest creative abilities. They almost never repeated a section without altering it in some way and each gypsy musician always created their own personal version of a work.<sup>45</sup>

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43. Clébert, *The Gypsies*, pp. 11—112.

44. Pettan, "Gypsy Music in Kosovo: Interaction and Creativity", pp. 136—138.

45. *Ibid.*, pp. 238—240.

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## GYPSY BAND CHARACTERISTICS

How did the gypsies create their own versions of other people's music? What were the characteristic features of their performances? Since no recordings of gypsies in the nineteenth century are available, we can only refer to contemporaneous descriptions and compare them to twentieth-century gypsy band performances. Such descriptions of gypsy bands from the early twentieth century can in turn be compared to actual recordings from the mid-twentieth century. Writings about the gypsies and their performances from the mid-nineteenth century tally with accounts from fifty years later; from this we can infer that gypsy performance practice has not changed much in its technical elements in the period from 1858 (when Sándor Czeke published "Hungarian Music and the Gypsies") to 1970 (when Bálint Sárosi wrote *Gypsy Music*). We can therefore take recordings of gypsy bands as relevant evidence of characteristics of the gypsy style.

The most original timbre in the gypsy band is that of the cimbalom, an instrument strongly associated with Hungary's music. When composers attempt to imitate the gypsies in their own works, imitating the sound of the cimbalom is an obvious necessity. The manner in which the instrument is played (felt-headed mallets striking the strings) creates a percussive sound which decays very rapidly. The only method for producing a continuous sound is to repeatedly hit the strings either with one mallet or, for very fast repetition, with two mallets, one in each hand. Two different effects can be achieved with this technique: (1) two mallets alternately strike one string making a prolonged sound on the one note which is to be emphasized either as accompaniment (figure 4) or as melody (figure 5); (2) each mallet hits a different note, two notes which will form a static harmonic entity, a tremolo impression (figure 6).



fig. 4 : accompanimental repetition of notes



fig. 5 : melodic repetition of notes

fig. 6 : tremolo on two notes

Additionally, the cimbalom player can simulate chords with a rapid arpeggio figure, which in piano technique would be termed a “rolled chord”. This, and many other gypsy characteristics were used by Johannes Brahms and are evident in a number of his works, both obviously and subtly “Hungarian”. The second theme of Brahms’s *Hungarian Dance* No. 2 is based on the repeated-note melody figure as is the first Capriccio of *Piano Pieces*, op. 116 and the Finale of the *Trio* in C major, op. 87. The tremolo effect is prevalent in many of Brahms’s works, particularly in piano parts. The *Hungarian Dances*, of course, contain numerous examples of this type of cimbalom imitation. The fourteenth dance is the most typical:



fig. 7 : Brahms, *Hungarian Dance* No. 14

All four of the cimbalom effects previously described are employed in works of Brahms in which “Hungarianisms” are not immediately apparent. The repeated-note melody can be heard in the *Ballades*, op. 10, as well as in the third movement of his *Symphony No. 2* in D major:



fig. 8 : Brahms, *Symphony No. 2*; third movement, Presto

Brahms, noted for his pervasive use of arpeggio-based melodies, gives us numerous examples of the cimbalom arpeggiation figure in his compositions. All of Brahms’s piano works contain rolled chords, but not all of these remind the listener of Hungary’s national instrument. His *Variations on a Theme by Händel*, op. 24 includes, in Variation 13, a melody harmonized in sixths accompanied by rolled chords. It is embellished with turns and contains an augmented second surrounded by semitones, a melodic characteristic derived from the gypsy scale (to be discussed further in “Elements Derived from the Gypsy Scale”).

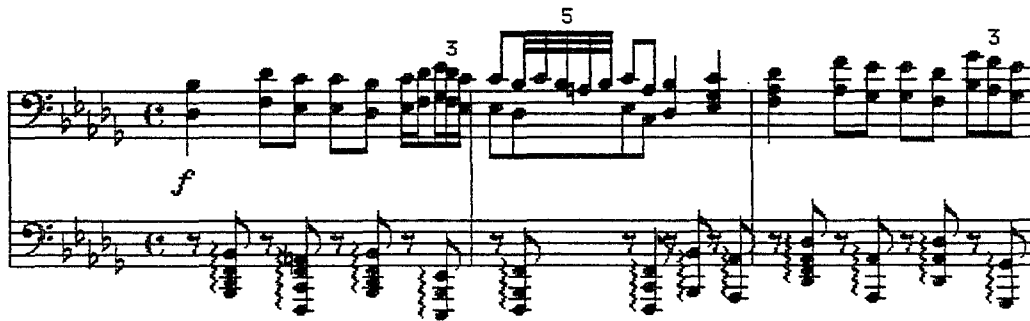


fig. 9 : Brahms, *Variations on a Theme by Händel*, op. 24; Variation 13

The figures typically used to imitate the cimbalom (repeated notes, or broken chords) exist in much of the Western classical repertoire without any intention to imitate Hungary’s national instrument. How then can we identify when Brahms intentionally attempting to convey the impression of a cimbalom? It will be instructive to compare different uses of these figures within one piece. The *Variations on a Theme of Paganini*, op.

35 contains two significant passages, the ninth variation of Book 1, which employs a continuously repeated-note figure, and the *Finale* of the same Book, which simulates the two-note repeating figure.

The ninth variation is a bold example of Brahms's forward-looking harmonic ideas, a sliding effusion of chromatic scales and unexpected juxtapositions (figure 10). The role of the repeated notes here is rhythmic and accompanimental. Rhythmic, in that the triplets move against the duple beat of the chromatic voice; accompanimental because the line has no melodic function. At no point does the listener equate this music with a Hungarian influence. The *Presto, ma non troppo* conclusion of this set of Variations presents a much simpler harmonic pattern (figure 11). The chromaticisms are restricted, for the most part, to passing dissonances that can be viewed "horizontally" as a subordinate relationship between different contrapuntal strands. Thus the opening measures, with the startling combination D $\sharp$ —D—E, is perceived as a consonant combination of two separate lines. What draws our attention to the gypsy influence in this finale? It is not the individual elements, the characteristics that *may* appear in a Hungarian-style composition, but rather a minimal ensemble of clues that imply the influence. The gypsy scale (the occidental harmonic minor with a raised fourth) is implied from the first chord, a tonic—dominant oscillation in a minor, and the inner voices hint at the idea of repeated notes. It is interesting that from measure nine to measure sixteen, where the harmonic web becomes denser, this underlying feel of "otherness" is lost.



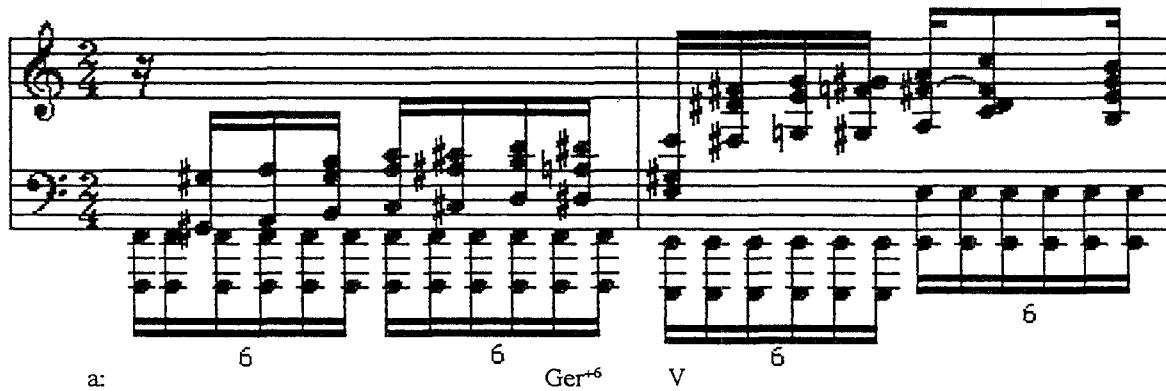


fig. 10 : Brahms, *Variations on a Theme of Paganini*, op. 35; Book 1, Variation 9

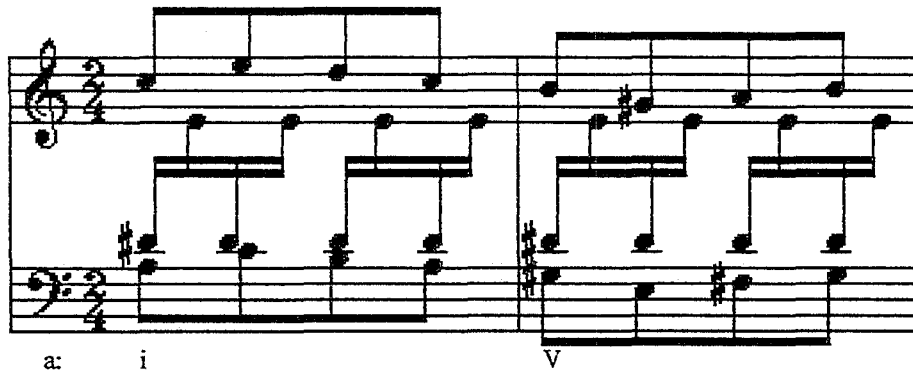


fig. 11 : Brahms, *Variations on a Theme of Paganini*, op. 35; Book 1, Finale

Another instrument closely associated with gypsy music-making is the violin, or “gypsy fiddle”. Techniques employed in performing on the violin are of a flamboyant nature, since gypsies had to display a passionate and fiery personality in order to entertain their audiences. The *primás*, or gypsy band leader, executed impressive and florid scalar passages and “running melodies” based on a turn figure.<sup>46</sup> In Brahms’s *Hungarian Dances* there are many examples of violinistic figurations. In the thirteenth dance, for instance, the *Vivace* section contains a wild theme, resembling a chase, typical of gypsy embellishments on a violin:

46. Recordings of gypsy bands from the early part of the twentieth century show that these “running melodies” can be so wild that they become impossible to write with standard musical notation. They are truly a feature of performance practice that cannot be reduced to well-tempered notes and binary rhythms.

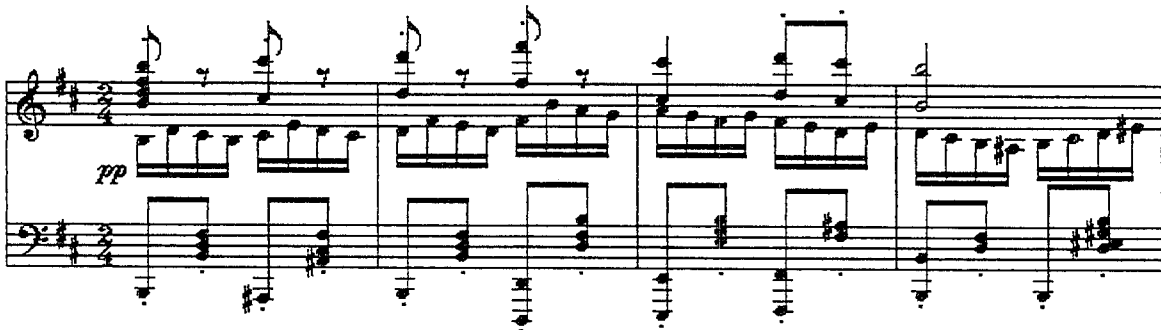


fig. 12 : Brahms, *Hungarian Dance No. 13*; Vivace

It was not only in the obviously Hungarian works that Brahms had recourse to such devices. From the early *Piano Concerto No. 1* to the late *Clarinet Quintet*, op. 115, Brahms demonstrated his intimate knowledge of the gypsy ensemble, both in its composition and in its performance tradition. He chose a chamber group, a clarinet quintet, which is well-suited to displaying the gypsy band style. Like the gypsy ensemble, the group comprises clarinet, violins, viola and cello, and displays the composer's combined mastery of Germanic and Hungarian compositional techniques. The only "missing" instrument is the cimbalom, a lacuna that Brahms remedies in the rococo slow movement with the string tremolos serving as an accompaniment to the clarinet's flourishes which hint at the gypsy scale (note the augmented second between B $\sharp$  and A):

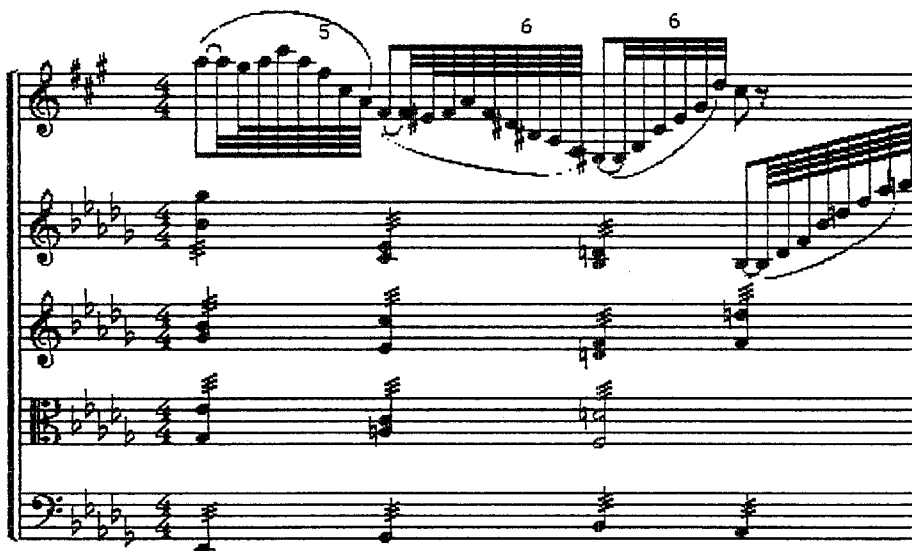


fig. 13 : Brahms, *Clarinet Quintet*, op. 115; Adagio (Più lento)

In his *Waltzes*, op. 39, Brahms surprises us again with some obvious and not so obvious “Hungarianisms”. *Waltz* No. 14 contains a brilliant scale in the middle of the second section, an obvious imitation of an excited violinist:



fig. 14: Brahms, *Waltzes*, op. 39, No. 14

More subtly, an imitation of the violinist’s bow can be used for tremendous dramatic effect. The “gypsy swoop” — a phrase which is interrupted abruptly on a high note, the bow being swept up and off the string, continuing with a strong down-bow — was a common technique used for this purpose. The fourth of the *Waltzes* begins with such a figure. On the first beat of the first full measure, the listener can well imagine the gypsy fiddler throwing the bow upward with an extravagant gesture:

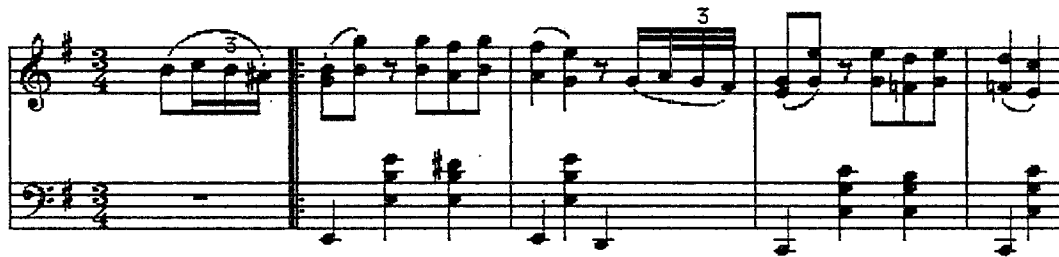


fig. 15: Brahms, *Waltzes*, op. 39, No. 4

This motion whereby the phrase is momentarily interrupted in its natural line by an upward sweep, is transferred into a structural phenomenon in several of Brahms’s works. The effect is sometimes a clear “gypsyism”, but is more often a subtle reminder of this influence. Sometimes it is the upward sweep which is the indicator, sometimes it is the break which tells the listener about the “Hungarianism”. The orchestral opening of Brahms’s *Piano Concerto No. 1*, op. 15 is a good example of the upward sweep phrase with its abrupt cæsura. The octave displacement creates an impression of the “gypsy swoop”. Compare the linear phrase of

figure 16a with what Brahms actually wrote:



fig. 16a : Brahms, *Piano Concerto No. 1*; variant



fig. 16b : Brahms, *Piano Concerto No. 1*; opening

Such clear “Hungarianisms” will not be found in what are considered to be more Teutonic works (notably the *German Requiem* or *Symphony No. 3* as well as the majority of his vocal works), but they certainly left their imprint in the phrase-structure of Brahms’s entire œuvre. In the first movement of *Symphony No. 2*, there is a dramatic upward sweep spanning two octaves.



fig. 17 : Brahms, *Symphony No. 2*; first movement, fourth theme

The Teutonic *Symphony No. 4* has fast scale passages in the violins which are abruptly broken off in exactly the spirit of the gypsy violinist:

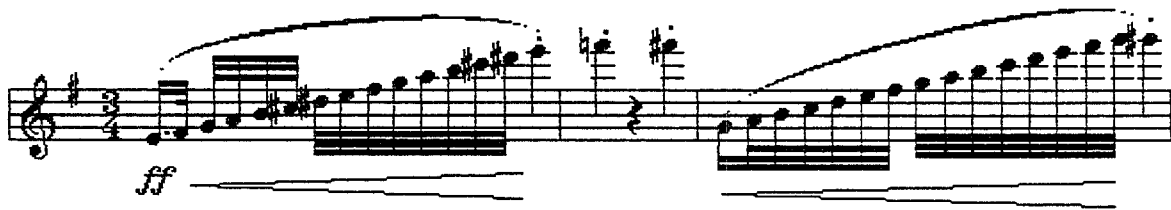


fig. 18 : Brahms, *Symphony No. 4*; last movement, mm. 169–171

As with the cimbalom, repeated notes are also typical of the violin, although stemming from a different technical source. A common motive consists of a two-note figure, given first in its prime form, then in retrograde. The two notes are slurred in order to separate the similar pitches. This figure is idiomatic to string playing in general. In Brahms’s *Waltzes*, op. 39, he uses this style of violin imitation at the opening of the sixth waltz:



fig. 19 : Brahms, *Waltzes*, op. 39, No. 6; second section

## Elements Derived from the Gypsy Scale

It is an indication of the importance of pitch that a single change in a major scale — a semitone shift — can radically alter our perception of the musical line. A flattened seventh degree evokes harmonic instability (figure 20a); a flattened third degree takes us to the opposite end of the Western musical spectrum, the melodic minor key (figure 20b).

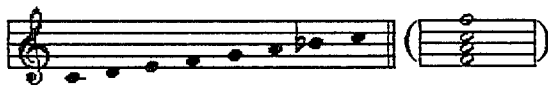


fig. 20a : the dominant seventh

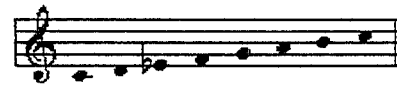


fig. 20b : the melodic minor scale

The major/minor distinction is so fundamental to the way we think about music, that other arrangements of tones and semitones are perceived as “non-common practice” composition. We could cite the whole-tone scale or the octotonic scale, or, more pertinent to this study, the gypsy scale which differs by a remarkably small degree from the harmonic minor scale. The gypsy scale can also be tonicized on the fifth degree, giving a semitone between  $\hat{1}$  and  $\hat{2}$ ,  $\hat{3}$  and  $\hat{4}$ .

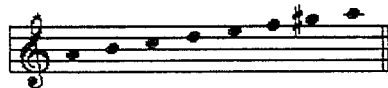


fig. 21a : the harmonic minor scale



fig. 21b : the gypsy scale

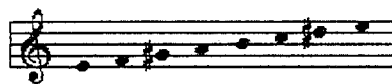


fig. 21c : the gypsy scale, tonicized on the fifth degree

Just as the harmonic minor scale is characterized by the sound of its widest interval (between  $\hat{6}$  and  $\hat{7}$ ), so the gypsy scale is memorable for the two augmented seconds (between  $\hat{3}$  and  $\hat{4}$ ,  $\hat{6}$  and  $\hat{7}$ ), a melodic interval commonly connected with Hungarian music.

Joseph Joachim employs this scale in his *Hungarian Concerto*, op. 11, written in 1858 and 1859. Tovey describes the opening as “typically Hungarian in its minor mode with raised fourth, and also in its later cadences”.<sup>47</sup> A descending half-step to the tonic is also a common feature of this work, a derivation of the gypsy scale tonicized on the fifth. The melodies are singable and ornamented with many appoggiaturas, mordents, anticipations, turns and grace notes, lending to the gypsy character of the work.

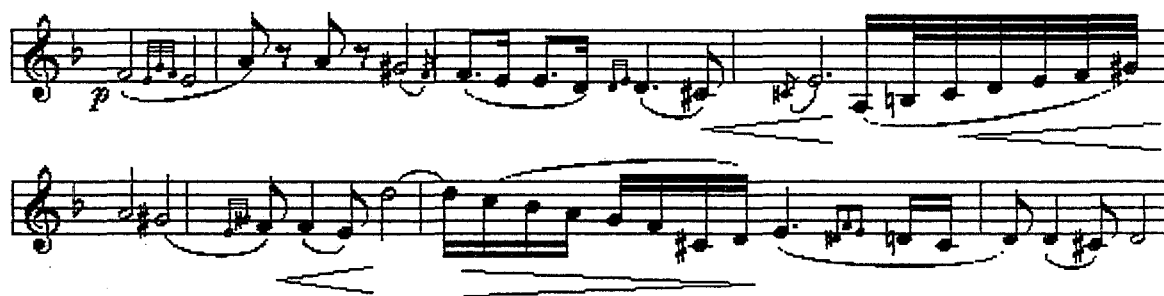


fig. 22 : Joachim, *Hungarian Concerto*; first movement, mm. 123—131

The interval of an augmented second, not originally extant in Hungarian folk music, creates an impression of “otherness” in Western ears. Composers, in assimilating “Hungarian” music, often employ the augmented second both melodically and harmonically. Brahms is no exception. Compare these two melodies from the *Sonata in A Major* for violin and piano:

47. Tovey, “Joseph Joachim, Hungarian Concerto for Violin and Orchestra, op. 11”, in *Brahms and His World*, p. 155.

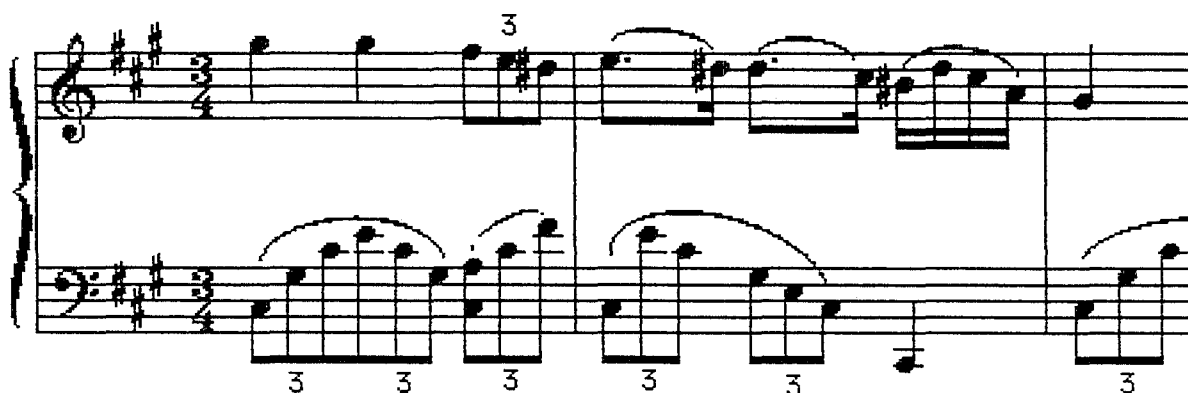


fig. 23a : Brahms, *Sonata in A*, op. 100; first movement, mm. 138—140

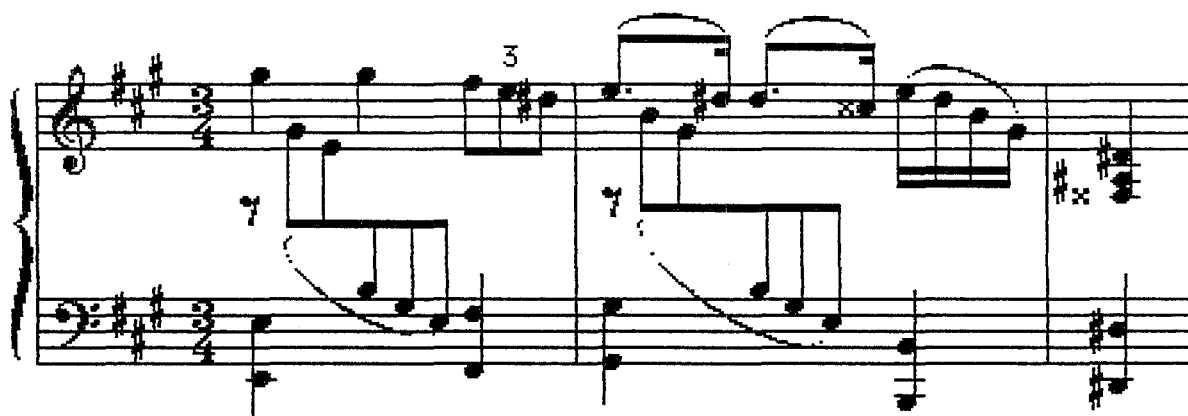


fig. 23b : Brahms, *Sonata in A*, op. 100; first movement, mm. 142—144

In the first example (the antecedent phrase of this eight-bar period) we find a melody based on the notes of the harmonic minor scale, the  $F^\sharp$  (unaltered fourth degree in  $C^\sharp$  minor) distinguishing it from the gypsy scale. In the second example (the consequent phrase) the augmented fourth degree of the gypsy scale (the  $C^\times$ ) is heard for the duration of a sixteenth note — brief, but sufficient to imbue the measures with the colour of this scale. The opening solo line in the *Violin Concerto* makes obvious use of the gypsy scale based on D, with an augmented second between F and  $G^\sharp$ .



fig. 24 : Brahms, *Violin Concerto*; opening solo

In the *Trio* in C major, op. 87, the Finale's main theme contains an augmented second between B $\flat$  and C $\sharp$  (measure 6) in combination with several other gypsy scale features — augmented fourth (measure 2), diminished seventh chord (measures 1 and 2), and repeated notes:



fig. 25 : Brahms, *Trio* in C major, op. 87; Finale

Within the gypsy scale there is a cluster of three notes spanning two semitones (notes four, five and six) which is used melodically in the gypsy style of playing. Brahms makes use of this aspect of the gypsy scale in both overt and subtle ways. *Hungarian Dance* No. 12 opens with this semitone motif, beginning with the expanded figure (minor third—semitone in the first measure) and continuing with the semitone cluster (measure 2):



fig. 26 : Brahms, *Hungarian Dance* No. 12; opening motif, upper voice

In *Piano Concerto No. 1* Brahms creates some enharmonic twists, moving from C $\sharp$  minor to D minor, via the semitone figure of the gypsy scale. Initially, the gypsy scale is implied because he writes F $\times$ —G $\sharp$ —A, oscillating with C $\sharp$ ; the context is clearly defined as C $\sharp$  minor. By enharmonically redefining F $\times$ , the notes become G $\flat$ —A, oscillating with C $\sharp$ , a harmonic context which is no longer C $\sharp$  minor, but the dominant seventh of D minor:



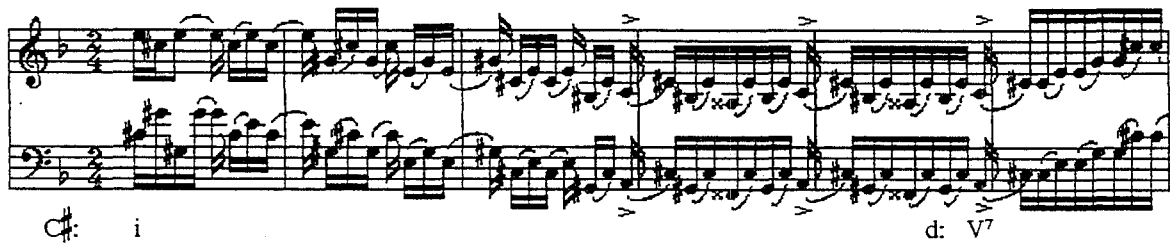


fig. 27 : Brahms, *Piano Concerto No. 1*; last movement, mm. 23—28

The *Violin Concerto*, the finale of which is noted for its “Hungarian” character, actually employs the gypsy scale in all three movements. The clearest example of the semitone figure occurs in the final movement.



fig. 28 : Brahms, *Violin Concerto*; third movement, mm. 136—141

Other examples of melodies based on the semitone figure are the contrasting second theme in the *Rhapsody* in G minor, op. 79, and the *Trio* in B major, op. 8, which begins its final movement with a shifting, evasive semitone figure.

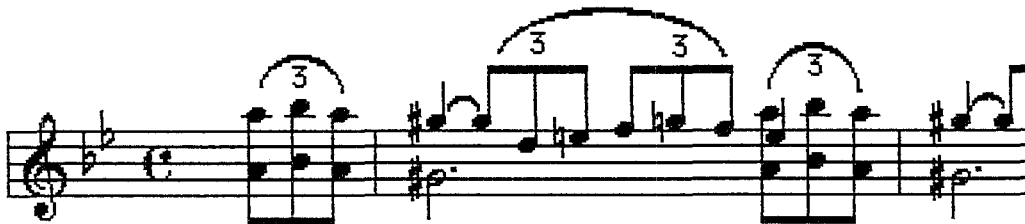


fig. 29 : Brahms, *Rhapsody in G minor*, op. 79, mm. 13—15



fig. 30 : Brahms, *Trio in B major*, op. 8, Allegro, mm. 1—5

Of greater significance is the occurrence in Brahms’s œuvre of derivations and developments of the semitone cluster. Brahms is often (and erroneously) thought of as a

conservative composer. In fact, in terms of chromaticism, his melodic writing owes a significant debt to the gypsies. Shifting semitone motifs suffuse his music, from the more Hungarian *Violin Concerto* to the more Germanic symphonies. The first *Symphony*, a work which took a score or more years to write, opens with just such a shifting chromatic line, simultaneously rising in the violins and cellos and descending in the violas and woodwinds:



fig. 31 : Brahms, *Symphony No. 1*; first movement, mm. 1—3

Much of the material of this same movement is conceived as an extension of the semitone idea, often elaborated with passing notes and “passing motives”. Since the idea of off-beat accents is a rhythmic focus throughout the movement, we can consider the dotted-quarter notes of the following example to be the focal points of the melodic line. The measures can therefore be reduced to a rising semitone motive:<sup>48</sup>



fig. 32 : Brahms, *Symphony No. 1*; first movement, mm. 161–164

Is this Hungarian or not? As a technique, it is undoubtedly rooted in the harmonic practice of the gypsy bands and parallels the melodic techniques of the *lăutarii*. Brahms's skill resides in the fact that these characteristics are integrated within his own very personal style.

48. Taken in conjunction with the descending diminished arpeggio of the next measure, this phrase shows the same contour as the first theme of the *Allegro*.

The derived figure  $\sharp\hat{4}-\hat{5}$  is of less importance in this discussion of Hungarian influence since this elaboration has been a typical figuration which tonicizes the dominant in Western music since at least Mozart's time (the last movement of his third *Violin Concerto*, for example). The combination  $\hat{5}-\flat\hat{6}$  in the major mode is less usual. Even in descending arpeggio passages it is customary in classical Western musical traditions to embellish with lower, rather than upper grace notes:



fig. 33 : lower grace note embellishment

Brahms uses a flattened sixth in many places as either an embellishment or as part of a melodic line. However, its appearance is not a herald of "Hungarian-ness", in spite of its origin in the gypsy scale (recall also the gypsy scale built on the fifth degree with the flattened second degree). It shows, perhaps, more than any other pitch device how Brahms subsumed these early influences into a personal style.



fig. 34 : Brahms, *Symphony No. 4*; first movement, mm. 53–56

## Rhythmic Features of Gypsy Performance

Gypsy bands always played with a large degree of syncopation in their renderings of folksongs, popular melodies and classical transcriptions. The rhythmic device most commonly associated with the gypsies is the "syncopation pattern", consisting of  $\text{♪} \text{♪} \text{♪}$ . In Brahms's *Hungarian Dance No. 3* the syncopation pattern is used as an accompanimental

figure in the first section and as a melodic rhythm in the third section.<sup>49</sup>



fig. 35 : Brahms, *Hungarian Dance* No. 3; accompaniment, first section; melody, third section

The last movement of Brahms's *Piano Quartet* in A major, op. 26 begins with this syncopation pattern, as does the main theme in the Rondo of *Piano Concerto No. 1*:



fig. 36 : Brahms, *Piano Concerto No. 1*; third movement, main theme

The gypsies often emphasized this pattern with an extra accent on the longer note (as above), underlining the dance-like rhythm. The natural extension of the syncopation pattern is to prolong it over the barline, not only as a melodic figure but also as an accompaniment. For Brahms this became a rhythmic fingerprint, though, curiously enough, he was more prone to syncopations when using triple metre than duple metre.<sup>50</sup> As an accompanimental figure in the *Andante con moto* of Brahms's *Trio* in C major, op. 87, the syncopated pattern is featured prominently, while the *parlando* rhythm in the strings adds to the Hungarian flavour.

49. Brahms followed Liszt's example in this dance, underlining the "Hungarian" with a phrase three bars in length. In the entire collection of twenty-one *Hungarian Dances* we only find this phrase-length in three other places: No. 5 (part two), No. 13 (opening) and No. 14 (opening). This last is Brahms's original music.

50. In duple metre: *Tragic Overture*, op. 81 (second theme), *Serenade No. 1*, op. 11 (first movement, second theme). In triple metre: *Piano Quartet* in C minor, op. 60 (first movement, first theme), *Piano Quintet* in F minor, op. 34 (third movement, first theme), *Symphony No. 1*, op. 68 (first movement, introduction and first theme).



fig. 37 : Brahms, *Trio* in C major, op. 87; Andante con moto

When this type of syncopated accompaniment is performed in a short, staccato manner, leaving a silence between each note, it becomes the *kontra* figure present in gypsy band performances (see page 71).

Based on the formal structure of the *verbunkos* and *csárdás* with a slow section followed by increasingly faster sections, gypsy bands often changed tempo without any indication or relationship between the tempos. Brahms's *Hungarian Dances*, of course, are largely constructed in this manner, but his less obviously "Hungarian" works also contain this sudden change of tempo. The *String Quintet* in G major, op. 111 has an "animato" section at the end of the "Vivace". The manner in which Brahms approaches this tempo change is in keeping with the gypsy style. He finishes the previous section with two chords separated by full-beat rests and then immediately moves into the faster tempo. Note also the abrupt and unexpected change of key at the *Animato*:

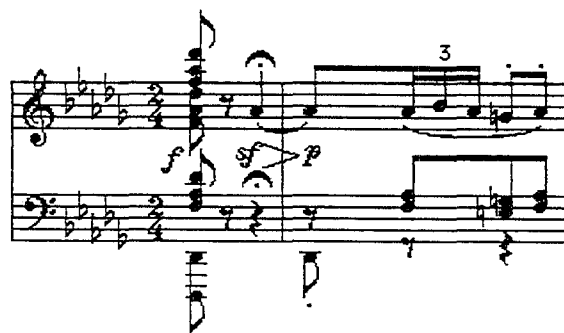
(Vivace ma non troppo presto) animato

b: V7 G: I ii<sup>6</sup> V vi ii<sup>6</sup> ii V<sup>7</sup> I

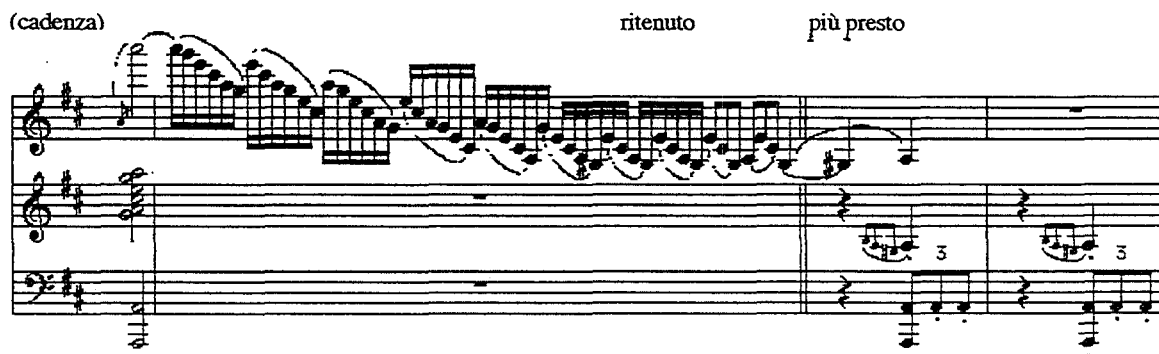
fig. 38 : Brahms, *Quintet* op. 111; last movement, mm. 241—248

The Rondo alla Zingarese movement of the *Piano Quartet* in G minor, op. 25 has many tempo changes from *Meno Presto* to *Poco più Presto* and back, then *accelerando* to *Molto Presto*. It is also a feature of the Hungarian national dance style to push with increasing speed to the last notes of a piece. Such a style is exhibited here at the conclusion of the Rondo alla Zingarese movement.

Gypsy bands made wide use of the *fermata*, a rhythmic device which created a sense of expectation, especially at the opening and in the middle of their pieces. Brahms's *Hungarian Dance* No. 10 is an example of an arresting opening, using the *fermata* to halt the rhythm almost before it has begun, asking the listener to wait.

fig. 39 : Brahms, *Hungarian Dance* No. 6; opening

This same sense of expectation within a piece can be created without a written *fermata*, but with an implied pause. The *Violin Concerto*, for instance, contains many sections in which the rhythm is arrested after a flamboyant violin solo, leaving the music suspended and the listener waiting for the next phrase. *Fermate*, of course, are not unusual in a concerto as a conclusion to a phrase. Here Brahms places his *fermata* at the beginning of the orchestral phrase, anticipating the G $\sharp$  grace note of the next section.

fig. 40 : Brahms, *Violin Concerto*; last movement, mm. 265—268

## Gypsy Band Embellishments

Most of the embellishments used by gypsy bands in performance evolved because they were idiomatic to the violin. As would be expected, Johannes Brahms used gypsy ornamentation to the fullest degree in his *Hungarian Dances*, but it is evident elsewhere as well. Grace notes, for example, are employed in the fifth variation of *Variations on a Hungarian Song*. Here they are in thirds and sixths, adding to the exotic atmosphere of the section.



fig. 41 : Brahms, *Variations on a Hungarian Song*; Variation 5

The *Violin Concerto* is full of ornamentation in the gypsy manner. The slow movement contains a decoration of the melody which might well be the transcription of some improvised figuration by a *primás*.



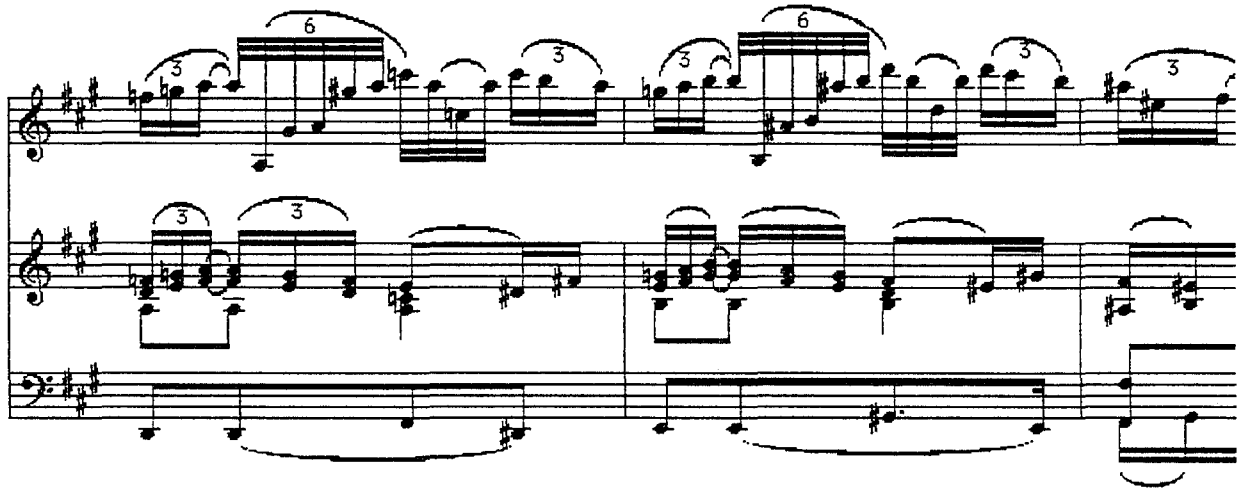


fig. 42 : Brahms, *Violin Concerto*; second movement, mm. 67—69

## Gypsy Band Harmony

The most characteristic feature of music performed by gypsy bands is the gypsy scale. Jonathan Bellman has pointed out that, contrary to earlier assumptions, it is now generally held that this scale was not in fact omnipresent in gypsy music, but was mixed with Western major and minor modes.<sup>51</sup> As a harmonic device, the gypsy scale is indeed restrictive in terms of Western classical practices, allowing an easy tonic-dominant relationship but excluding subdominant harmonies. The characteristic harmonic pattern based on this scale is tonic minor—tonic diminished (figure 43a), or, with more sense of modulation (by enharmonically respelling  $E^b$  as  $D^\sharp$ ), tonic minor—supertonic major with the seventh (figure 43b).

51. Bellman, "Toward a Lexicon for the *Style Hongrois* " in *The Journal of Musicology*, IX, no. 2 (Spring 1991), p. 234.



fig. 43a: tonic→diminished



fig. 43b: tonic→supertonic

The first of these patterns is the more fundamental and well-suited to the drone accompaniment, typical of much gypsy folk music. It is therefore probable that in more sophisticated and complex improvisations the modes would be mixed, the minor mode being employed for an underlying harmonic structure while the augmented fourth of the gypsy scale would be used mostly in the melodic line. The recorded performances of twentieth-century gypsy bands certainly bear out this hypothesis, and Brahms may well have been imitating standard gypsy performance practice in the second movement of his *Violin Concerto* cited above. Johannes Brahms's harmonic language includes the occasional pedal point, which is connected to the drone concept. A fine example occurs at measure 310 in the first movement of the *Piano Concerto No. 1*, op. 15.



fig. 44 : Brahms, *Piano Concerto No. 1*; first movement, mm. 310–317

Although the gypsy scale excludes the subdominant key, the harmonic movement to the chord on the natural fourth degree was one of the most common in gypsy music. The possible dissonance  $\hat{4}/\hat{\sharp 4}$  was avoided simply by excluding the one in the presence of the other. In Brahms's seventeenth *Hungarian Dance* we find a typical example of this oscillation between raised and natural fourth degree. In the first measure we hear the raised fourth; in the second measure, where the underlying harmony moves to the subdominant, the melody includes the natural fourth degree. This mixed use of gypsy scale and subdominant harmony was probably a mutual influence of Western harmonic practice and gypsy music, a mixture that gives an extra “bite” to the sound.

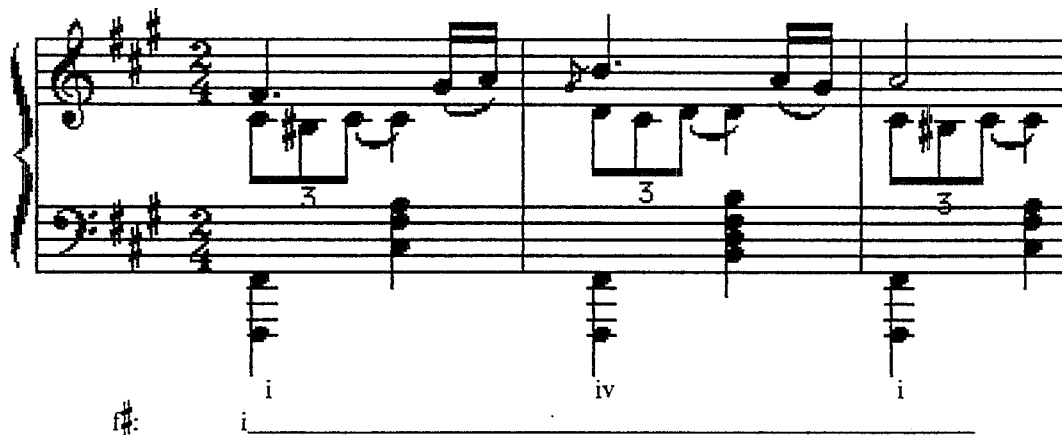


fig. 45 : Brahms, *Hungarian Dance* No. 17; opening

The gypsies extended their final authentic cadence with a sequence which was as typical as the *verbunkos* cadence.<sup>52</sup> This sequence, whether in major or minor mode consisted of three rapid staccato chords — either IV-V-I, V-V-I, I-V-I or I-I-I — which did not necessarily bear any relationship to the melodic movement, and indeed often bore no

52. Although there is no contemporary description of this particular cadential figure, twentieth-century recordings display a preponderance of this feature (*Csárdás: Hungarian Gypsy Music*, Ferenc Sánta and his Gypsy Band. Naxos, 8.550954, 1994 and *Hungarian Folk Songs and Csárdáses*. Elemér Horváth és Cigányzenekara. Fiesta, FLPS 1469). Since these recordings match contemporary description on many other points, we can infer that the cadence was probably part of nineteenth-century gypsy practice.

relationship to the speed or dynamic of the piece. Brahms concludes *Hungarian Dances* Nos. 1, 5, 8 and 15 with this formula. The spirit of this pattern marks the end of the *Violin Concerto* in D major, op. 77:



fig. 46 : Brahms, *Violin Concerto*; last 5 measures

It is interesting to note that the *verbunkos* cadence was harmonized in three different ways. In its most usual form it consisted of an authentic cadence.<sup>53</sup>



fig. 47 : *Verbunkos* authentic cadence (Brahms, *Hungarian Dance* No. 10; first section)

Some forms could be harmonized equally with authentic or plagal cadences (figure 48a) and the semi-*verbunkos* cadence would be harmonized with a simple repetition of the tonic chord (figure 48b). As stated earlier (page 44), the *verbunkos* cadence is a *melodic* concept rather than a *harmonic* one.

53. Statistic compiled from sources including Brahms's *Hungarian Dances*, Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, pieces by Csermák, Ruzitska, Kéler, etc.

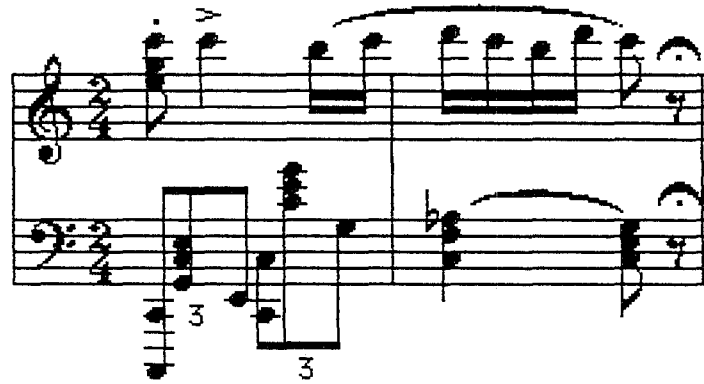


fig. 48a : Brahms, *Hungarian Dance* No. 8

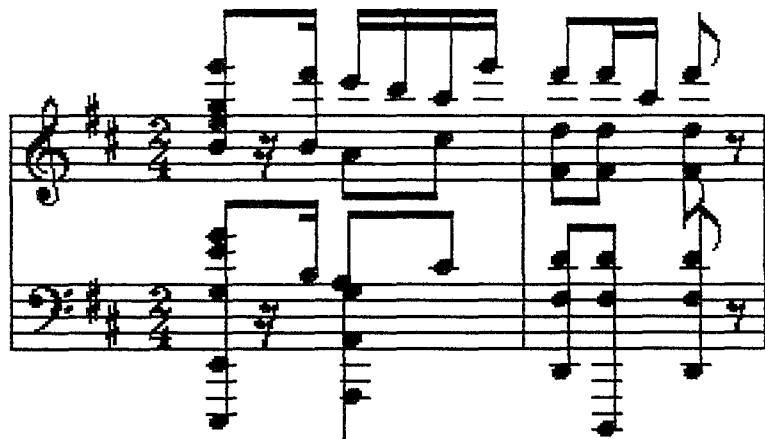


fig. 48b : Brahms, *Hungarian Dance* No. 15

Melodies performed by gypsy bands were often harmonized in thirds and sixths, either on the violin or between two instruments (two violins or violin and clarinet).

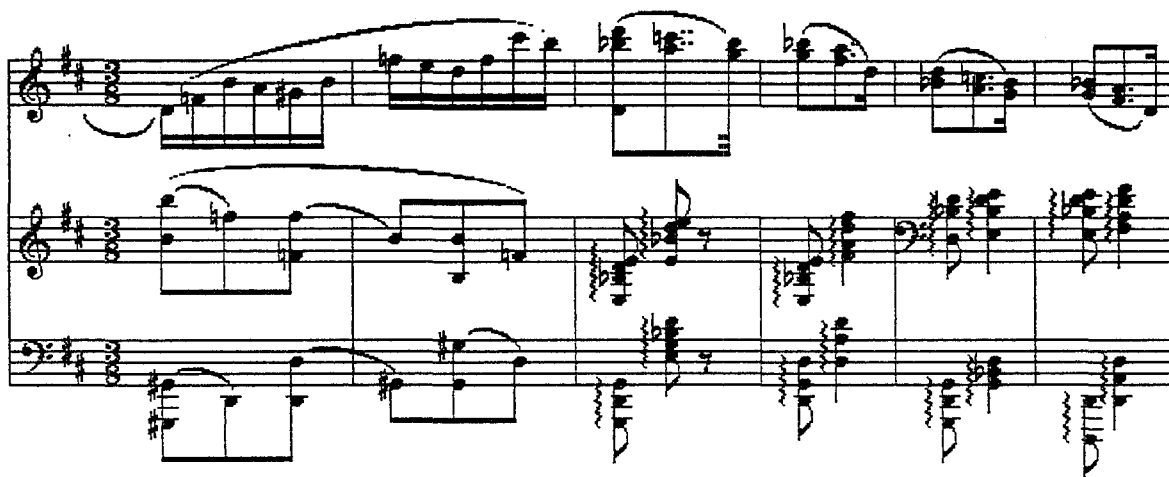
It is important to remember, as a performance consideration, the sixths in this particular context are not voiced unequally; each voice in this folk-derived style is singing for all it is worth, so neither “melody” takes precedence, as it might in more standard musical usage.<sup>54</sup>

In Brahms’s *Hungarian Dances* we hear many examples of this kind of voicing . The eleventh of these dances is a slow lament-style piece with the melody based on thirds and sixths.

54. Bellman, “Toward a Lexicon for the *Style Hongrois* ”, p. 227.

fig. 49 : Brahms, *Hungarian Dance* No. 11; opening melody

This particular dance is a good model of typical gypsy band harmonic progression. It employs simple harmonies, usual for gypsy musicians: tonic, subdominant, dominant in root position. In many of Brahms's less obviously "Hungarian" works, he also uses harmonies of thirds and sixths which contribute to the subtle exotic sound. The Adagio of the violin and piano *Sonata* in D minor, op. 108, for example, has as its climax a melody in thirds, harmonized by a diminished chord on the tonic moving to a minor subdominant. Brahms was particularly fond of the minor subdominant, a chord relationship which has its roots in the gypsy scale with its characteristic semitone cluster around the dominant note.

fig. 50 : Brahms, *Sonata* in D minor, op. 108; second movement, mm. 51—56

The *Piano Quartet* in G minor, op. 25 also provides us with a gypsy-style melody in thirds. The *Meno Presto* in the Rondo alla Zingarese movement has a passionate melody played by the viola and cello, later with the violin:



fig. 51 : Brahms, *Piano Quartet*, op. 25; last movement, mm. 173—176

Both the *Piano Concerto No. 1* and the *Violin Concerto* are replete with thirds and sixths in their solo and orchestral parts.

Movement in thirds and sixths is very common in occidental tonal music. However, the gypsy use of these intervals differs in the extent to which they employ extended strings of thirds or sixths. Thus, while it is rare in Western art music to find lines of these intervals more than five or six notes in length, gypsy band music is characterized by prolonged melodies with no intervallic variety. Note how the Hungarian flavour is diluted in the example from *Hungarian Dance No. 11* (page 54, figure 33 ) when the lower line does not follow the upper line in parallel thirds:

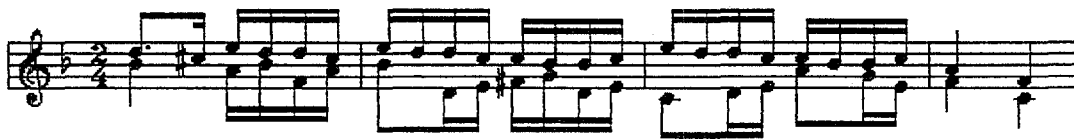


fig. 52 : Brahms, *Hungarian Dance No. 11* with the lower voice re-written

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## PERSPECTIVES

Brahms initial contact with gypsy music came at a time when gypsy bands were considered to be an important political tool for Hungary. Performance standards were very high and the technical quality of the musicians was unsurpassed. Such displays of virtuoso ensemble playing, as well as individual prowess, would inevitably make a deep impression on the young composer. He heard a style so distinctive that it marked a large part of his oeuvre in overt and subtle ways. This music (band music for the gypsies, salon music for the Hungarian middle-class composers) was however not indigenous to the gypsies. It represented their response to the reactions of the world around them. It is unlikely that Brahms knew much about the gypsies' folk music, although in his *Gypsy Songs* he did represent this genre in his own manner.

The interaction between salon music and gypsy improvisation was in a continuous state of evolution. Middle-class composers and gypsies heard and adapted each other's work for their own audience's needs. The gypsies were particularly adept at "adapting", rarely playing the same piece twice in quite the same manner. (Bercovici recounts that the gypsy fiddler Bihari begged a young violinist to repeat a piece so that he might learn it, only to be told by the astonished player that he had learned it himself just a few months previously — by listening to Bihari play it!<sup>54</sup>). The techniques of salon composition were much closer to classical Teutonic practices than were gypsy improvisation, and the boundaries between Hungarian and Germanic music were as variable as the political boundaries between the countries.

Most of the characteristics of gypsy performance — embellishments, syncopations, abrupt changes of tempo, mode or dynamic — cannot be considered "Hungarianisms" when

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55. Bercovici, *The Story of the Gypsies*, p. 95.



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weighed individually. It is the various groupings of these features which create the sound commonly understood to be “Hungarian,” but which is in fact the gypsy style.

The research of identifiable Hungarianisms in Brahms’s music is interesting and informative. However, it is more pertinent to trace the thread of these influences to the point where they merge with the non-Hungarian, the classical occidental forms, structures and harmonies, and to parallel the techniques that Brahms inherited from Bach and Beethoven with the techniques he borrowed from his neighbours. Is there a boundary between the German Brahms and the Hungarian Brahms, or do the two merge imperceptibly?

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## EPILOGUE

Brahms's interest in "Hungarian" music may have been a response to an innate musical sensitivity for that mode of expression. Certainly it was propelled by his meeting and consequent performing with Ede Reményi. Elements of the style were already present in his own compositional imprint, but he learned about the "Hungarian" from Reményi through his flamboyant performances of "national airs".

These "national airs" — the compositions by middle-class Hungarian composers, including Reményi, which had become popular through performances by the gypsies — were taken by gypsy musicians who adapted them to their own style of interpretation. They made popular the national dances, the *verbunkos* and *csárdás*, and occasionally used folksongs in their performances. Because of this mosaic of genres, it is often difficult to make the distinction between these Hungarian styles. Although Brahms used all four types of Hungarian music in his works (folk music, salon music, gypsy folk music and gypsy band music), it is most probable that he was exposed to the folksongs and popular songs through gypsy musicians and their presentation of them.

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An important aspect of the “Hungarian” style is the exaggerated performance practice of gypsy bands. They make a significant distinction between music as written symbols — a score — and the interpretation of those notes and rhythms. Jonathan Bellman points out that

we must distinguish between the music itself and the stylistic ‘accent’ given to it by the musicians who performed it. Each is important, but they should be understood as separate entities before being viewed as a whole.<sup>1</sup>

Gypsy musicians were always extrovertly emotional, giving an impression of playing to the deepest feelings of their audiences.

Gypsies can still achieve by music what is no longer possible for others in words, the conveying of a thought exactly as it sprang into consciousness. They do not need brain work to set it in order and clear it from inessential associations so as to present it in a shape approaching the original. Their music springs from the fountain of life, it has no rules and cannot even be written down, for our system of notation does not contain the infinitesimal degrees of tone from which the gypsies derive their unique wealth of colour, light, and shade.<sup>2</sup>

This romantic vision of the gypsies is one held by many, but another view is that shallow sentimentality was their speciality, a style of performance where nothing was left to the imagination and subtlety had no place. All contrasts in tempo, dynamics, key, etc. were exaggerated and over-emphasized for the purpose of entertaining and holding the attention of the audience. As Liszt said,

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1. Bellman, “Toward a Lexicon for the *Style hongrois*”, p. 216.

2. Block, *Gypsies: Their Life and their Customs*, pp. 224—225.

...there is no rule of discipline; no effort made to modulate. The Gypsy likes to spring suddenly to a remote key just as in his conversation he is likely to leap from one question to its direct opposite.<sup>3</sup>

Of course, the many gestures idiomatic to the gypsy style cannot be easily notated on a score. They are, however, very important for unadulterated imitation. The manner of performance is a crucial consideration when discussing gypsy style, especially with regard to the violin. The “gypsy swoop”, for instance, is only evident when there is an upward motion, either physically or musically. If, in a violin piece, the musician chooses to play the “swoop” on a down-bow, the effect is marginalized. If the structural “swoop” is somehow diminished, perhaps by a pianist lengthening the end of the phrase or a conductor indicating for the orchestra to play in a subdued fashion, the “Hungarianism” may no longer exist. It is interesting to note that the “Hungarian” in works by Brahms can be found in his more Romantic pieces (displaying the characteristics of the Romantic era) and little of the gypsy style is heard in his more Classic compositions.

As we have seen, a comparison of diverse Hungarian musical traditions with Brahms’s own compositions yields a plethora of information on the kind of gypsy performances Brahms must have heard in his youth. In particular, the *Hungarian Dances* show us how Brahms perceived this style and what elements of it formed part of his “Hungarian” technique. This in turn furnishes us with tools with which to examine the links between Brahms’s Teutonic style and the characteristics assimilated from gypsy performances.

The “Hungarian” in works of Brahms is evident in more than one manner. In works such as the *Hungarian Dances* and the Rondo alla Zingarese movement of the *Piano Quartet*, op. 25, Brahms was clearly imitating the travelling gypsy musicians and purposefully making use of the many techniques central to their style. In the *Clarinet Quintet*, again, he seems to

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3. Saltzman, “Riddle of the Gypsy Fiddle”, p. 25.

have stepped into Hungary for the second movement, giving a rhapsodic flourish and then returning to Germany.

More important, though, is the less conscious use of the “Hungarian” in pieces whose titles do not readily expose the influence, the pairing of gypsy characteristics in such a way as to conjure the “Hungarian” without the extravagant performance of gypsy musicians. All the *concerti* — the two for piano, the one for violin as well as the double — provide us with excellent examples of this type of “Hungarian” in Brahms’s musical personality. The essential point here is that Brahms is *combining* characteristics to the extent that the gypsy manner of performing is impressed on the listener without pronounced reference to such unmistakable pointers as the gypsy scale or a *kontra* accompaniment. The last movement of the *Double Concerto*, op. 102 has many contrasts of the evident with the implied: evident, when Brahms uses elements with those clear hints (for example at mm. 164–172); implied, when he juxtaposes and contrasts rapid, dynamic passages and lyrical melody:



fig. 1 : Brahms, *Double Concerto*, op. 102; last movement, mm. 268–277

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The third manner in which the gypsy style penetrates Brahms's compositions is far more subtle. Individual traits linked with the idiom permeate the composer's works, not always grouped with enough other gypsy elements to qualify as "Hungarian", sometimes much more complex in rhythm or harmony than the gypsies would ever attempt themselves, but always underlying even the most German of pieces, such as the *German Requiem* and many songs.

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## APPENDIX

The sources for Brahms's *Hungarian Dances*, available in diverse publications during the composer's lifetime, have long since been out of print, hence some are gathered here for the reader's convenience. Three of the following four scores are found in Katalin Szerző's *Johannes Brahms: Ungarische Tänze für Klavier zu vier Händen — source publication and commentaries*, edited by Gábor Kovács (Budapest: Editio Musica Budapest, 1990). *Hattyú-Hangok* by Miska Borzó, a military bandmaster, is the source for Brahms's *Hungarian Dance* No. 1. N. Mértý's *Kalocsai emlék* was the basis for the *Poco sostenuto* and *Vivace* sections of *Hungarian Dance* No. 4. The main part of *Hungarian Dance* No. 6 had as its source a *csárdás* found in an 1864 publication which was transcribed by Adolf Nittinger.

Brahms's *Hungarian Dance* No. 5 has been the subject of much research. It was initially thought that Béla Kéler's *Bártfai Emlék* was the original version of the piece. Included here is the version for violin and piano, published in 1887.

## HATTYŰ-HANGOK

Csárdás

Borzó Miskától

1

The first system of musical notation for 'Hattyű-hangok' is in 2/4 time and B-flat major. It features a treble and bass staff. The treble staff begins with a melodic phrase marked 'pp' (pianissimo) and includes a crescendo hairpin. The bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and moving lines.

The second system continues the piece, showing further development of the melodic and harmonic themes. The treble staff has a melodic line with some rests, while the bass staff continues with a steady accompaniment.

The third system of musical notation shows a continuation of the piece. The treble staff features a melodic line with some rests, and the bass staff continues with a steady accompaniment.

The fourth system of musical notation concludes the piece. It features a final melodic phrase in the treble staff and a corresponding accompaniment in the bass staff, ending with a double bar line.



2

First system of a musical score in G minor (three flats). The left hand (bass clef) plays a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The right hand (treble clef) features chords with accents and a melodic line. The dynamic marking *f* (forte) is present.

Second system of the musical score. The right hand continues with a melodic line and chords, while the left hand maintains the eighth-note accompaniment. The dynamic marking *p* (piano) is present.

Third system of the musical score. The right hand features a more active melodic line with sixteenth notes. The left hand continues with the eighth-note accompaniment. The dynamic marking *ff* (fortissimo) is present.

Fourth system of the musical score, concluding the piece. The right hand has a melodic line with some grace notes, and the left hand continues with the eighth-note accompaniment. The system ends with a double bar line.

# Kalocsai emlék

Csárdás

N. Mértv

1

*p dolce*

*pp*

*ppp*

*ff Fine*

*f*

*p*

*f*

*D.C. al Fine*

# Csárdás

Adolf Nittinger



Friss

The first system of musical notation for 'Friss' consists of a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The treble staff contains a series of chords and single notes, including a triplet of eighth notes in the third measure. The bass staff provides a steady accompaniment with eighth notes and chords. The key signature has one sharp (F#).

The second system continues the musical piece. It features similar chordal textures in the treble staff and a more active bass line with eighth notes. There are some slurs and accents in the treble staff, particularly in the fourth and sixth measures.

The third system shows a continuation of the musical theme. The treble staff has more complex chordal structures, while the bass staff maintains a rhythmic foundation with eighth notes and chords.

The fourth system concludes the piece. It features a final cadence in the treble staff with a double bar line, followed by a few more notes. The bass staff continues with a simple accompaniment until the end.

# BÁRTFAI EMLÉK (HONGROISE)

*Allegro moderato*

BÉLA KÉLER

The musical score is written for piano and consists of four systems of staves. The first system begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking in both the treble and bass staves. The second system includes a crescendo (*cresc.*) marking in both staves. The third system features a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic marking in both staves. The score is written in 2/4 time and includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and slurs.

First system of musical notation. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. Both staves begin with the instruction *cresc.* (crescendo). The music consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some measures containing beamed sixteenth notes.

Second system of musical notation. The upper staff begins with *sf* (sforzando) and *Vivo*. The lower staff begins with *ff* (fortissimo). The music features a variety of note values, including eighth, sixteenth, and thirty-second notes, with some measures containing beamed sixteenth notes. The tempo marking *Vivo* is placed between the staves.

Third system of musical notation. The upper staff begins with *f* (forte) and *dim.* (diminuendo). The lower staff begins with *dim.* (diminuendo). The music consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some measures containing beamed sixteenth notes.

Fourth system of musical notation. The upper staff begins with *sf* (sforzando) and *ffz* (fortissimissimo). The lower staff begins with *ffz* (fortissimissimo). The music features a variety of note values, including eighth, sixteenth, and thirty-second notes, with some measures containing beamed sixteenth notes.

Più moderato

The first system of musical notation consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). It begins with a half note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and then a series of eighth and sixteenth notes. The piano accompaniment is in grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with the same key signature. It starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic and features a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand and a more active bass line in the left hand.

The second system continues the musical piece. The vocal line features a melodic phrase with a half note G4, a quarter note A4, and a series of eighth notes. The piano accompaniment maintains its rhythmic pattern, with the right hand playing eighth notes and the left hand providing harmonic support with a mix of eighth and quarter notes.

The third system shows a change in dynamics and texture. The vocal line begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic and includes a series of sixteenth-note runs. The piano accompaniment also features a forte (*f*) dynamic and includes a series of sixteenth-note runs in the right hand, while the left hand continues with a steady accompaniment.

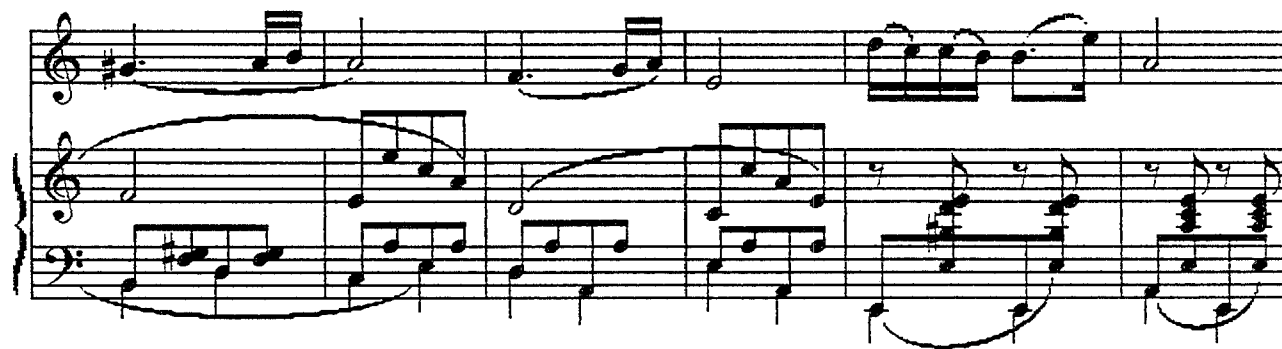
The fourth system concludes the piece with various performance markings. It includes first and second endings for both the vocal and piano parts. The vocal line ends with a *ritard* (ritardando) marking. The piano accompaniment includes *dim.* (diminuendo) markings and ends with a *ritard* marking. The system also features a *tranquillo* marking and a piano (*p*) dynamic.



The first system of musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). It features a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, including some beamed sixteenth notes. The lower staff is in bass clef with the same key signature, providing a harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes.



The second system of musical notation continues the piece. It includes the instruction "Tempo I" and "dolce" above the upper staff, and a dynamic marking "p" (piano) below it. The notation continues with similar melodic and harmonic patterns as the first system.



The third system of musical notation shows further development of the musical themes. The upper staff continues with flowing melodic lines, while the lower staff provides a steady accompaniment with eighth-note patterns.



The fourth system of musical notation concludes the page. It begins with a "cresc." (crescendo) marking above the upper staff. The melodic line in the upper staff becomes more active with sixteenth-note runs, while the lower staff continues its accompaniment.



This musical score is for a piano and violin duo, spanning measures 1 to 16. The tempo is marked **Vivo**. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The score is written in two systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clef for piano) and a single staff for the violin.

**Measure 1:** The piano part begins with a half note F# in the bass and a half note A in the treble. The violin part has a half note F# in the treble.

**Measure 2:** The piano part continues with a half note C in the bass and a half note B in the treble. The violin part has a half note A in the treble.

**Measure 3:** The piano part has a half note E in the bass and a half note D in the treble. The violin part has a half note G in the treble.

**Measure 4:** The piano part has a half note G in the bass and a half note F# in the treble. The violin part has a half note E in the treble.

**Measure 5:** The piano part has a half note B in the bass and a half note A in the treble. The violin part has a half note C in the treble.

**Measure 6:** The piano part has a half note D in the bass and a half note C in the treble. The violin part has a half note B in the treble.

**Measure 7:** The piano part has a half note F# in the bass and a half note E in the treble. The violin part has a half note A in the treble.

**Measure 8:** The piano part has a half note A in the bass and a half note G in the treble. The violin part has a half note G in the treble.

**Measure 9:** The piano part has a half note C in the bass and a half note B in the treble. The violin part has a half note E in the treble.

**Measure 10:** The piano part has a half note E in the bass and a half note D in the treble. The violin part has a half note C in the treble.

**Measure 11:** The piano part has a half note G in the bass and a half note F# in the treble. The violin part has a half note B in the treble.

**Measure 12:** The piano part has a half note B in the bass and a half note A in the treble. The violin part has a half note G in the treble.

**Measure 13:** The piano part has a half note D in the bass and a half note C in the treble. The violin part has a half note E in the treble.

**Measure 14:** The piano part has a half note F# in the bass and a half note E in the treble. The violin part has a half note C in the treble.

**Measure 15:** The piano part has a half note A in the bass and a half note G in the treble. The violin part has a half note B in the treble.

**Measure 16:** The piano part has a half note C in the bass and a half note B in the treble. The violin part has a half note A in the treble.

**Dynamic markings:** ***sf*** (sforzando) appears in measures 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16. ***ff*** (fortissimo) appears in measures 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16. ***ffz*** (fortissimo with accent) appears in measures 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16. ***dim.*** (diminuendo) appears in measures 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16.

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