Hungarian Romani Influence on German *Lieder*:
A Historical Analysis of Johannes Brahms’ *Zigeunerlieder* for the Solo Performer

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Abstract

When a professional vocalist prepares to execute a piece of music, there are many different aspects of that music that he or she must consider in order to present a detailed, expressive performance. Among these aspects are who wrote the piece and why, in what language the text is written, the proper pronunciation of the text if it is not in the performer’s native tongue, and the historical context in which the piece was composed (and if that influences the meaning of the composition). All of this knowledge must be combined with accurate musicality to produce a skillful execution of the work. This is true for Brahms’ Zigeunerlieder—a song cycle comprised of Hungarian love poems and written in the style hongrois. The style hongrois is a musical discipline developed during the Romantic era of Western classical music and is aimed at mimicking the musical and expressing the cultural attributes of the Hungarian Roma. This thesis gives a background on the Hungarian Romani people and the music that inspired Brahms’ use of the style hongrois in his Zigeunerlieder in the hopes that the solo vocalist who reads it will have a detailed knowledge of the piece to influence their own performance, and that non-musicians who read it will have a better understanding of the Hungarian Roma in the 19th century and aspects of performance preparation.
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1 Johannes Brahms, Zigeunerlieder. In Brahms: 70 Songs (for low voice), Libretto by Hugo Conrat, ed. Sergius Kagen, trans. Edith Braun and Waldo Lyman. (New York: International Music Company, 1954), 205-221. All figures are excerpts from the same score used by Jenna Sims in her own performance of the cycle.
List of Terms

**Alla zoppa** (pg 24) – in a syncopated style; Italian, in a limping manner

**Baroque music** (pg 23) - a period of European classical music that was in widespread use from roughly 1600-1750; characterized by the use of one melodic voice and accompaniment with similar rhythms, dramatic musical forms such as opera, the acknowledgement of God’s influence, and the expression of emotion through ornamentation and virtuosic passages

**Classical music** (pg 23) – a period of European music that was in widespread use from roughly 1750-1820; is often thought of as the period during which most high class Western musical traditions were established; showed a focus on strict forms and the rise in popularity of the piano instead of the harpsichord

**Csárdás** (pg 13) – a Hungarian dance with a slow introduction and a fast, wild finish

**Exoticism** (pg 2) – the quality of being exciting and unusual that something has because it is connected with foreign countries (or people)

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German lieder (pg 4) – any number of particular types of German song; commonly used to refer to the 19th century genre of German art song writing for voice and piano (usually to be performed in intimate settings); treated poetry and music with equal importance\(^7\)

*Hallgató* (pg 13) – Hungarian, student or listening; in a musical context, this is music for listening, not for dancing due to its unsteady beat pattern\(^8\)

*Hemiola* (pg 27) – a rhythmic device involving the superimposition of, for example, two notes in the time of three\(^9\) (or vise versa)

*Magyar Nóta* (pg 13) – Hungarian urban music with an indistinct distinction from traditional Hungarian folk songs\(^10\)

*Romani* [also Roma, Romany] (pg 1) – a member of a race of people, originally from Asia, who traditionally travel around and live in caravans; language of the Romani people\(^11\)

*Romantic music* (pg 1) – a period of European classical music that was in widespread use from the early 18th century through the 19th century; related to romanticism in literature, visual arts, and philosophy; sought to increase emotional expression and create greater harmonic elusiveness and fluidity in compositions\(^12\)


Song cycle (pg 1) - a set of romantic art songs that may be unified by a story line that runs through the poems, or by musical ideas linking the songs.\(^\text{13}\)

*Style hongrois* (pg 1) – a style of music developed and used by European composers around the late 18\(^{th}\), early 19\(^{th}\) centuries which imitates characteristics of the music and performance style played by Hungarian Romani bands of the time

Syncopation (pg 30) – (assuming a steady meter) an accent in an unusual place, such as a weak beat or in between beats; lack of accent on a strong beat.\(^\text{14}\)

*Verbunkos* (pg 12) – a Hungarian musical style used to recruit young men into the Habsburg army in the 18\(^{th}\) and 19\(^{th}\) centuries, only later to be used to reference Hungarian independence from the Austrian empire; a steady introduction section leads into a medium tempo dance then ends with a fast dance.\(^\text{15}\)

*Zigeunerlieder* (pg 1) – German for “Gypsy Songs;” a song cycle consisting of eight Hungarian love songs (eleven in the choral arrangement, 1887) written by Johannes Brahms for the voice and piano in 1889

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\(^\text{14}\) Ibid., 1158.

I. Introduction and Literature Review

i. Introduction

The general public does not understand the amount of work that professional vocalists put into their craft. Most people know that soloists practice singing and often memorize their music. What the public does not know, is that it takes hours of translating, diction practice, and research (related to the composer, the librettist/poet, influences of the piece, the genre of music, historical influences that might exist, and, frequently, past performances of the music). Any musician who plays music written by someone else devotes much more time doing research than most people realize. Therefore, “Hungarian Romani Influence on German Lieder: A Historical Analysis of Johannes Brahms’ Zigeunerlieder for the Solo Performer” is aimed at helping the soloist looking to perform Brahms’ song cycle understand its history and composition so that they have a detailed knowledge of the piece in order to execute their own performance. Furthermore, any non-musician who reads this thesis will have a better understanding of performance preparation, the Hungarian Roma in the 19th century, and their influences on Western music within the context of the style hongrois (a form of composition that imitates the music of Hungarian Romani bands).

Before going any further into the depth of this paper, the reader should understand that the analysis presented here focuses only on the Hungarian Roma (an ethnic group associated with traveling in caravans; also often derogatorily called gypsies). Moreover, when the term “Gypsy” is used in the following text, it is not meant offensively, but as an academic word often

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16 Oxford Learners Dictionaries, s.v. “Romani.”
used interchangeably in discussion of the Romani people in the 19th century. Although a broader history will be given of European Roma in Chapter II, those Romani who settled in the Austro-Hungarian territory are the topic of fascination and mimicry for the Western composition practice to be discussed here and, ultimately, the influence for Johannes Brahms’ *Zigeunerlieder* for the solo voice.

The purpose of this paper has deep roots in the idea of “musiking.” This term, “coined for the first time in 1995 by musicologist and writer Christopher Small” in his book entitled *Musicking* (1998), considers all facets of creating music to be included in the experience of music.17 In short, the composition of the piece, the influences of the composer, where the piece is performed and by whom, as well as who may be sitting in the audience, are all important to the creation of the music. Although some aspects of a song’s “musiking” may remain the same (such as the structure of the harmony), some aspects are fluid (such as when the song is performed). Music is considered a verb in this context, not just a noun. The point that musicologists (including Dr. Louis Niebur at the University of Nevada, Reno who introduced me to this term) who use the word are trying to make, is that the experience of music is much larger than simply what a person hears.18

Exoticism is another notion that the reader must consider in order to understand the nuances of the musical style of Brahms’ *Zigeunerlieder*. Exoticism is the quality something has

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18 Thompson and others, “Musiking,” 795.
of being exciting and unusual because it is connected with foreign countries or people. As Bellman states in the introduction he wrote for *The Exotic in Western Music*, “exoticism is not about the earnest study of foreign cultures; it is about drama, effect, and evocation.” The intention of exoticism is not to seek to understand the culture being exhibited, but is merely to ogle at peoples with cultural realities that differ from one’s own. The influences that led to the creation of Brahms’ first Gypsy song cycle are not straightforward or truly authentic. They are misinterpreted through the eyes of composers and historians (such as Franz Liszt) who did not fully understand the differences between true Hungarian Romani culture and what was stereotyped as such by aristocrats who looked down on Gypsies. The specific stereotypes put on Hungarian Romani people and their mistreatment by those who shared resources with them will be further explained in Chapter II, but it suffices, for now, to say that Hungarian Gypsies (and their music) were viewed as morally fickle but also more organic. This misconstrued understanding of the Romani is sometimes not even done intentionally or consciously, yet because the Hungarian Roma were outcasts from society and also skeptical of outsiders themselves, the archetype proliferated anyway. The consequences of exoticism affect the authenticity and effectiveness of Brahms’ *Zigeunerlieder*.

Finally, the reader must understand the musicological context of the *Zigeunerlieder*. Johannes Brahms lived and composed during the Romantic Period of music (late 18th century through the 19th century). Occurring a bit later than Romanticism in literature, philosophy, and

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art (roughly 1780-1840), Romanticism in music still had many of the same themes. Just as writers and artists were rebelling against the Age of Enlightenment and Industrialization, composers too were becoming more unconventional. Composers such as Ludwig von Beethoven and Franz Schubert changed the frequency and style of the modulations (changes between harmonic key centers) within a piece. They increased the complexity of classical harmonies and increased their use of chromaticism (movement by half-steps that are not normally found in a typical Western scale). There was a focus on emotion, intuition, and the sublime over logic and tradition. Music became less exclusive to the aristocracy - the middle class now had the time and money to participate. Additionally, the topic of nature became more prevalent in Romantic music (in connection to Romantic Transcendentalism - a philosophy that prizes spirituality over materialism and often focuses on the healing power of nature). Furthermore, many composers, including Brahms, compounded upon the idea that the poetry (lyrics) and the music of a piece were of equal importance. Johannes Brahms became known for his subtle but expressive text painting or use of music to “express the meaning of the poetry.” The Romantic musical era was also the time when German lieder became a popular style of composition. Lieder are written for solo voice and piano, and are meant to be performed in more intimate settings (except for a

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20 *New World Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Romantic Music.”


22 Ibid., 15.

23 Ibid., 276.

24 *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. “Lied.”
few exceptions from the late Romantic period by composers such as Gustav Mahler and Richard Strauss). Composers such as Robert Schumann— a friend of Brahms—wrote cycles, or sets, of lied (the German word for song) that were connected by some common motif or theme and were performed all together (such as Schumann’s Frauenliebe und –leben).\textsuperscript{25} It was within this intimate style of Romantic music that Johannes Brahms composed the Zigeunerlieder.

A friend of Brahms, Hugo Conrat, translated twenty-five folk songs that he learned from his Hungarian maid, and collaborated with Zoltán Nagy to create Ungarische Liebeslieder: 25 Ungarische Volkslieder für mittlere Stimme. (More knowledge is available on Hugo Conrat, but not in any English sources that could be found for this paper.) Finding inspiration from Nagy’s setting of the songs and Brahms’ own interest in Hungarian Roma culture (which will be discussed further in Chapter III), Johannes Brahms chose eleven of the twenty-five songs to set for four voices- soprano, alto, tenor, bass- and piano. Only later, after the song cycle received praise from audiences in Vienna, did Brahms arrange eight of his eleven songs for the solo voice and piano.\textsuperscript{26}

ii. General Literature Review

It is not to be assumed that this paper covers the entire life of Johannes Brahms, all knowledge of Hungarian Romani culture, or every detail of musical and poetic analysis possible for the Zigeunerlieder. Although extensive research has been done in order to compile the

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{25} Gorrell, German Lied, 149.
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\textsuperscript{26} Errante, “Zigeunerlieder and their Sources,” 45.
\end{flushleft}
information presented here, there is too much material on all the connected subjects to be contained within a single thesis. Instead, the knowledge has been condensed in order to give a thorough but concise background and explanation of one particular song cycle by Johannes Brahms. Furthermore, most of what is contained herein is a condensed review and analysis of the knowledge gathered by others on the *Zigeunerleider*—enough to give the performer a basic but effective understanding of the piece.

In order to give a comprehensive look at Brahms’ *Zigeunerlieder*, I conducted research on Brahms and his influences, on the use of Romani themes in Western music around the nineteenth century, on Hungarian Roma culture, on the fascination of the popular Western world with the unknown, and on the song cycle itself. The writings of Jonathan Bellman, Kristina Eckelhoff, Valerie Errante, and Maira Balacon became the pillars upon which my inquiries into the influences of the *Zigeunerlieder* were founded. These scholars stood out as experts in the field of Hungarian Roma musical influences. Errante and Eckelhoff analyzed the *Zigeunerlieder* as a way of supporting their research into Johannes Brahms’ use of the *style hongrois* (not a common choice amongst all of Brahms’ compositions). Bellman, Eckelhoff, Errante, and Balacon led me to discover literature on the broader topic of the *style hongrois* and its ties to Gypsy music by writers Shay Loya and Max Peter Baumann.

Next, I inquired about the life and studies of Johannes Brahms himself, starting with *Brahms: His Life and Work* written by Karl and Irene Geiringer in the 1980s and expanding from there. Finally, I pursued my own understanding of the music by finding a copy of the song cycle in a register befitting my voice-type (mezzo-soprano) in the collection *Brahms: 70 Songs* edited
by Sergius Kagen. I analyzed its composition and text for myself, confirming most of the conclusions reached by the above authors, which will be further discussed in Chapter V.

An expansive amount of research has been conducted on the Hungarian Romani, including histories of the people themselves and their interactions with the populations they lived with. Any missing information about the personal lives of the Hungarian Romani people could be explained by their private nature. Primary sources are not easily found in the English language that describe how they interacted amongst themselves. What has become abundantly apparent, however, is that the music played by Romani bands- and therefore inspired composers throughout Europe- was not their own, but a compilation of Hungarian music forms that they then expanded upon in order to please their audiences. This huge distinction will be discussed in more detail in Chapter II of this thesis.

Another gap in information that may be identified in previous research related to the topic of Gypsy influences on Johannes Brahms’ Zigeunerlieder is that not many people have done in-depth analyses on this particular song cycle. Brahms’ Hungarian Dances are a much more common topic of dissection when discussing the Roma influences on any of Brahms’ work. Additionally, when the Zigeunerlieder is discussed, it is usually in its choral arrangement and not that for the solo vocalist. Therefore, it is hoped that this inquiry into the influences that inspired the song cycle will help to clarify and confirm previous analyses as well as bring the most important facts to the attention of the performer and reader to create a succinct comprehension of the piece.
II. The Roma in 19th Century Western European Culture

i. Origins

The word “Romani,” comes from the Sanskrit word *domba*- a man of a low caste of musicians, according to the Collins Dictionary online.\(^{27}\) This seems to be an accurate etymology of the word since many Roma people have historically made a living by playing music. Moreover, Hungarian Romani musicians will be one of the main focuses of this thesis. There are millions of people across the globe that identify ethnically as Romani, including the French *Manouche*, the Spanish *Gitano*, the Palestinian and Egyptian *Domari*, and many more.\(^{28}\) According to Marsh, each community has its own traditions and unique signifiers, but they are all connected by their mobility- the nomadic nature of their culture- their common dialects of the Romany language, and their historical treatment as outsiders and vagabonds. During the 19th century, Western Europeans saw the Romani as exotic because of these characteristics, which will be explained later in this chapter.

Jonathan Bellman gives a brief history of the Hungarian Roma in his chapter “The Hungarian Gypsies and the Poetics of Exclusion” from *The Exotic in Western Music*, which was expanded upon and confirmed by Adrian Marsh’s article and video on the Open Society Foundation’s website. The Roma people migrated up from northwestern India, through Persia,


and into the Byzantine Empire around the 11th century. From there, groups of Romani spread northwest across the rest of Europe and settled in different nations including Austria-Hungary during the early 15th century. The term “gypsy” came from the misguided belief by those in Europe that the Roma had come from Egypt, but recent genetic experiments have discredited this hypothesis. Additionally, the Romany language has similarities to Indian dialects.

ii. Treatment and Stereotypes

The prejudices against the Romani people expressed by Western Europeans affected how their contributions to literature, art, and music were interpreted. During the Reformation in the sixteenth century, there was a large rise of interest in traveling and expansion within Europe. This interest in other lands eventually led to large bursts of colonization that continued far into the nineteenth century; yet, despite Europeans’ curiosity in the foreign, there was always a strong sense of the civilized and the uncultured. As Bellman states, “there is an ‘us’ and a ‘them,’ each quite settled, clear, and unassailably self-evident.” This delineation between what was familiar and what was divergent was only strengthened by the strong nationalism that arose in Europe during the nineteenth century. For citizens of the German nation during the 19th

29 Marsh, “Gypsies, Roma, Travellers.”
32 Bellman and others, The Exotic, 29.
33 Ibid., 28.
century, for example, even Hungarians seemed far-off and bizarre. The multi-cultural and diverse Austro-Hungarian people seemed so out of touch with the common and respectable German folk. With the expansion of world travel came a grotesque interest in whatever was considered different from the home country. People wanted to see the strange, but also wanted to stay clearly separated from it. Europeans have always had a strong identity related to location, which explains, in part, why the roving Gypsy has always been seen as an untrustworthy outsider.

The Romani have also been seen as barbaric and untrustworthy because they have no common religion. Although some communities adopt the religion of the nation they settle into, the knowledge that the Romani people put more stock in adherence to a code of respect than they do a prescribed religion marks them as outsiders in societies that are strongly Catholic/Christian. Furthermore, the Gypsies’ amorphous religious beliefs led aristocratic Catholics to connect them to the “Original Sin” of the Gypsies in the Bible: that Gypsies had refused Mary and Jesus protection while they were fleeing Egypt. As ridiculous as this may seem to the present-day reader (especially with the knowledge that Gypsies actually came from India), the notion that Romani were descendants of sinful people was quite enough of a reason for many Europeans to hate the entire race.

The Gypsy stereotype became that of a primal, impassioned people with little control over themselves. Thus, they could not be trusted. They did not follow the strict set of “etiquette

34 Bellman and others, The Exotic, 75.
35 Marsh, “Gypsies, Roma, Travellers.”
36 Ibid., 76.
guidelines” laid down by the Western European people over hundreds of generations. These dissimilarities led to unfounded accusations of theft, incest, cannibalism, baby snatching, and the like, all because the bourgeois class did not understand the Romani culture. Additionally, the image of the “seductive Gypsy maiden” became a popular stereotype used by many composers and writers, such as Georges Bizet in his opera Carmen. In this opera, the passionate and beautiful Carmen follows her every whim, causing confusion and ultimately, her own death by a jealous lover. At the conclusion of the story, however, Carmen is often still regarded as a woman who could not be held accountable for the draw of her wild emotions. (Bellman likens the historical treatment of the Roma to that of African Americans in the United States of America before the Civil Rights Movement.)

Trapped in their impoverished way of life by the typecasts proliferated about them, the Romani people often had no choice but to be exactly what the privileged class thought them to be—thieves, beggars, and poor musicians. Finding work as musicians was only made all the harder when, after the Counter-Reformation’s Council of Trent (meetings between leaders of the Catholic Church in the mid-16th century with the goal of creating procedures to remove sinful actions from the clergy and hearten the devout), most music was deemed immoral. Balacon draws the conclusion that this, in part, is why Romani bands did not play their own people’s

38 Ibid., 29.
39 Ibid., 24.
40 Bellman and others, The Exotic, 80.
41 Ibid., 29-82.
music, but instead, chose to play what pleased the people.$^{42}$ If they did not entertain their audiences- did not play what the public demanded- then they would have no livelihood, and no home.

In fact, in 1726, Charles VI forced all Gypsies to leave Hungary, punishing any who tried to stay in the empire.$^{43}$ Although the Roma people eventually migrated back into Hungary, their persecution was far from over. During the Hungarian revolution against Austria’s rule in 1848 and 1849, relations between the people of the two nations became strained, even violent.$^{44}$ Liszt was employed to compose a version of the *Rákoczi March* with hints of *verbunkos* music (a Hungarian dance promoting Hungarian nationalism). The song only made the Austrians’ oppression of the people tied to the music’s performance (the Romani) all the worse. Many Hungarian Romani fled west to countries like France and Great Britain in the hope of finding more hospitable homes.$^{45}$ Yet, even then, there were places in the world where Gypsy hunting and selling Gypsies into slavery was still acceptable far into the nineteenth century.$^{46}$ Although treatment of the Roma people has slowly improved over the years, they were not excluded from the horrors of the National Socialist German Workers' Party in the twentieth century, and they are, to this day, looked down upon by many in the western world.

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$^{43}$ Ibid., 27.
$^{44}$ Baumann, “The Reflection of the Roma,” 118.
$^{45}$ Ibid., 115.
$^{46}$ Balacon, “Fictionalized Gypsy,” 27.
iii. Music Associated with the Hungarian Roma

For many years, musicologists (including Franz Liszt) believed, incorrectly, that Romani music was one and the same as Hungarian music. This is no at all true. As Errante discusses in her article, the traditional music of the Hungarian Roma people was not played for the public. What they played was what their audiences wanted to hear - Hungarian songs. Therefore, what composers and musicologists often call Romani or Gypsy musical influences in music of the 19th century are actually Hungarian musical influences. Jonathan Bellman discusses the musical form that influenced the creation of the style hongrois in his Gypsy chapter of The Exotic in Western Music. First, it imitates aspects of verbunkos music (a Hungarian dance used to recruit young men into the Habsburg army in the 17th and 18th centuries). It also takes features from csárdás songs (a variation of verbunkos with both fast and slow sections), and hallgató music, which is an embellished version of magyar nóta (a type of Hungarian art song). All of these styles are fundamentally Hungarian, but confusion arises because all of these styles were performed by Romani bands. The differences between the original forms and what the Gypsy bands played, are that the Roma added improvisational and ornamental embellishments in accordance with the whims of the spectators, and the Roma sometimes changed Hungarian tunes to fit the Gypsy scales that they were familiar with (to be discussed further in Chapter IV). The topics of many

48 Bellman and others, The Exotic, 83-84.
style hongrois compositions— including Antonín Dvořák’s Cigánské melodie— portrayed the European idea of Gypsy culture (dramatic, brutish), but took musical cues from traditionally Hungarian tunes.

Of all the prominent European composers of the 19th century, however, it was Franz Liszt who had the biggest impact on bringing Roma music to Western Europe. While “pursuing his forgotten Hungarian roots,” Liszt searched for any and all information on the people that he considered a crucial portion of the Hungarian peasantry. Unfortunately, he wrongly concluded that Gypsy music was synonymous with Hungarian national music. He wrote the book, Des Bohémiens et leurs musique en Hongrois, explaining his incorrect findings with fervor. It must be conceded, however, that without Liszt’s avid interest in Hungarian Romani culture, the style hongrois may never have become a popular form of composition during the Romantic Period. He even criticized Beethoven and Schubert for their incorrect attempts at capturing the Gypsy nature in their own works. As well-meaning as Liszt was, he created in the public mind, an untrue idealization of Roma life and music (happily artless and melodramatic) that would be perpetuated for years to come— even in Brahms’ own Zigeunerlieder.

iv. The Romani Band

Max Peter Baumann gives a detailed list of the famous Romani virtuosos that brought Hungarian Gypsy music to the general public’s attention. Three important Gypsy artists were

51 Baumann, “Reflection of the Roma,” 111.
52 Ibid., 116.
Mihály Barna, Czinka Panna, and János Bihari. Barna was the first Gypsy violinist to earn renown in Austro-Hungarian courts around 1776, and was the only Roma in his band. Czinka Panna was the first female Romani violinist to earn wide-spread praise. She was in the first Gypsy band to ever perform in Vienna. Finally, Bihari performed in Budapest, at the 1814 Congress of Vienna, and was also the first famous Roma composer. These Hungarian Romani musicians and their fellow Gypsy band performers slowly caught the attention of the Austro-Hungarian and German courts, which in turn led to their discovery by revered composers. These men, such as Franz Liszt and Ludwig von Beethoven, then took the essence of the Gypsy band’s music and created their own hybrid styles (the style hongrois). Beethoven heard Bihari play in person once, which inspired him to write.

Baumann also gives a breakdown of the Gypsy band and what instruments the performers predominantly used. He describes the original group as “three to eight musicians” with, at the very least, “two violins and [a] contrabass.” The only non-string instrument added to this original group was the cimbalom (a dulcimer-like instrument played with mallets). Baumann affirms that later in the 19th century, clarinets and “brass instruments were [occasionally] added.” In her article, Valerie Errante states that the drum and “zurna (an oboe-like instrument)” were also not uncommon additions to the band.

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54 Balacon, “Fictionalized Gypsy,” 34.
56 Errante, “Zigeunerlieder and their Sources,” 50.
III. Johannes Brahms

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) was a well-connected and influential composer/conductor in the 19th century. He knew many other prominent composers of the time (including Robert and Clara Schumann), whose music he would hear in concert halls and with whom he would sometimes collaborate.\(^{57}\) Part of his inspiration for the Zigeunerlieder came from the people he met throughout the course of his life. Other motivating factors to this cycle include his early love for folk music and the simple fact that the *style hongrois* was a popular method of composition by the time Brahms began creating music. This chapter will give the reader a better idea of how Brahms came to be influenced by Hungarian Romani band music and the *style hongrois*.

According to Balacon, Brahms had a collection of Hungarian music and poetry in his personal library as a young man, and found joy in the varied meters that they used.\(^{58}\) This interest in Hungarian music was not uncommon for a young man in the early 1800s, since, for most of the nineteenth century, Austria-Hungary shared a border with Germany. The close proximity of the two nations and their people meant that aspects of both cultures (including music) were often imparted by those that facilitated trade between the two countries or by those who had the means

\(^{57}\) Jacob Herzog, “Brahms and the *Style Hongrois,*” in “Historical and analytical aspects of the *style Hongrois* with special emphasis on the piano music of Johannes Brahms,” (Doctoral dissertation, University of Hartford, EUA, 1998), 81.

\(^{58}\) Balacon, “Fictionalized Gypsy,” 36.
to travel for pleasure. Brahms also had a love of folk music. This proclivity towards folk most likely came from his belief that it was the true, unfiltered music of a nation and that music of the upper classes was often tainted by privilege and knowledge of other great countries. The nineteenth century saw the rise of romantic nationalism- an intense love for one’s own country and a need to characterize it against all others. This led some to the conclusion that the simplicity of folk music symbolized the true roots, the morality, and blood of the nation. Brahms shared this belief and used it as a creative influence in much of his work. This folk influence manifested itself in the simple strophic form of many of his vocal pieces, and critics often touted Brahms for masterfully “uniting folk simplicity with urban amateur music-making.”

The same could be said of his Zigeunerlieder- that he artfully combined style hongrois traits (a combination of Hungarian and Romani influences) with his own Romantic interpretations.

After receiving an offer to tour America as a child piano prodigy in 1843, Brahms’ first teacher, Friedrich W. Cossel begged the boy’s parents to refuse the proposal and let him continue developing his budding skill with Hamburg’s most “eminent” music teacher, Eduard Marxsen. Taking Cossel’s advice, Johann and Christiane Brahms kept their son in his German hometown to further his studies. Marxsen not only expanded upon Brahms’ skill at the piano, but also “encourage[d] his passion for composition.”


Hamburg at the age of thirteen in order to help bring in money for his family, and at fifteen, he performed his first solo recital.\textsuperscript{61} Had Johannes Brahms taken up the offer to travel America as a child, he would have been exposed to a whole different set of cultural stimuli and perhaps never been inspired to compose in the \textit{style hongrois}.

As early as 1844, Brahms was arranging Hungarian melodies.\textsuperscript{62} As Herzog points out in his dissertation, there are Hungarian influences (ornamented accompaniment phrases akin to the use of the cimbalom in the Romani band) in Brahms’ \textit{Sonata in F sharp minor, op. 2} composed in 1852.\textsuperscript{63} This piece and other early compositions (such as \textit{Variations on a Hungarian Song, Op.21 No. 2}) of Brahms’ “show [his] continuing efforts to personalize the \textit{style hongrois}”\textsuperscript{64} even at an early age. By eighteen, Brahms was composing more often than performing, and reading large amounts of literature including romantic poetry.\textsuperscript{65} This penchant towards getting immersed in literature helps explain why Brahms often wrote clusters of songs based on the text of one poet or writer.\textsuperscript{66} However, unlike other Romantic composers, he made no distinction between the writers celebrated by the public and those considered inferior.\textsuperscript{67} He merely chose text that he thought would meet his artistic needs. This non-judgmental approach to text was why he chose

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 19, 21.
\item \textsuperscript{62} Balacon, “Fictionalized Gypsy,” 37.
\item \textsuperscript{63} Jacob Herzog, “Brahms and the \textit{Style Hongrois},” in “Historical and analytical aspects of the style Hongrois with special emphasis on the piano music of Johannes Brahms,” (Doctoral dissertation, University of Hartford, EUA, 1998), 52.
\item \textsuperscript{64} Ibid., 59.
\item \textsuperscript{65} Geiringer and Geiringer, \textit{Brahms}, 22.
\item \textsuperscript{66} Grove Music Online, s.v. “Brahms, Johannes.”
\item \textsuperscript{67} Gorrell, \textit{German Lied}, 262.
\end{itemize}
Hugo Conrat’s translations for his *Zigeunerlieder* instead of translations by a more well-known librettist or poet.

Under Marxsen’s tutelage, Johannes Brahms met Eduard Reményi - a talented violinist who was well versed in the Roma performance style (ornamented and improvised)- whose acquaintance, it could be argued, was the turning point of Brahms’ career.68 Intrigued by Reményi’s performance of Hungarian dances, the two quickly became friends, and in April 1853, young Brahms began touring with Reményi as his accompanist, undoubtedly learning more about the Hungarian folk style from his partner as they traveled. However, as Herzog points out in his quotation of Michael Musgrave, Brahms’ “‘interest was not in genuine Hungarian peasant music… but in popular composed music of recent provenance played by gipsies as café entertainment,’” making his compositions less authentic to the original source material (Hungarian folk songs).69 Furthermore, Swafford states that “from Reményi and later from Joachim, [Brahms] absorbed not only the style but the spirit of “Hungarian” folk music,” but also that Brahms wasn’t truly interested in the Hungarian nationalism associated with the styles, he just liked the music.70 It is observations like this that bring the sincerity and authenticity of Brahms’ *Zigeunerlieder* into question.

This close professional relationship between Brahms and Reményi led to Brahms’ introduction to another violin virtuoso, Joseph Joachim, who was then the concert master in the

court of Hanover. Joachim also played the virtuosic Hungarian song forms that were performed by Romani bands. The friendship between Brahms and Joachim quickly became one of the most important and influential friendships in Brahms’ life. They critiqued and helped develop one another’s work for years, always with the utmost respect and adoration. It was also Joachim who first insisted that Brahms meet the couple that would disputably become his closest friends of all, Robert and Clara Schumann. He officially met their acquaintance in 1853. Robert Schumann is credited with “[expanding] the piano’s role in the lied” genre, and it was most likely Schumann who encouraged Brahms to write lieder in the first place. Unlike Schumann however, Brahms kept the preludes and postludes (introduction and closing of a song where the vocalist does not sing) to his songs short. Joachim and Schumann, due to their collaborations with young Brahms, both had a huge impact on the compositions he would later write.

Johannes Brahms was also known to spend time in Viennese restaurants that hired Gypsy bands as entertainment. This exposure to the music of Romani bands was yet another influence on Brahms’ work. He began producing what he probably thought were comprehensive pieces that mixed themes of Hungarian/Rromani music with popular Romantic ideas of Gypsy culture. Herzog does concede that Brahms “used Hungarianisms with greater art in [his] late pieces than

71 Geiringer and Geiringer, Brahms, 28.
72 Geiringer and Geiringer, Brahms, 37.
73 Gorrell, German Lied, 144.
74 Ibid., 267.
in [his] early ones” (the *Zigeunerlieder* being a part of his later work), so perhaps he knew exactly how authentic or not his compositions were and specifically wrote them in that manner.
IV.  Style Hongrois

i.  Hungarian vs Romani Influences

As discussed previously in relation to Valerie Errante’s analysis of Brahms’ *Zigeunerlieder*, differing levels of music are associated with Hungarian Gypsies: the private folk music of the Gypsy people, the music of native Hungarians, the music played by Gypsy bands for the public, and the *style hongrois*. The *style hongrois* is a style of music that Western conventional composers created to imitate what they heard Gypsy musicians play. It is the Western culture’s approximation of Hungarian songs and Romani performance practice. The reader should not forget that most of the styles that influenced this form of music were Hungarian, although the performance practice of the Romani bands- ornamentation (the addition of extraneous notes that do not necessarily follow the form of the over-arching phrase), improvisation, and the application of Gypsy scales- also had an impact on the style. According to Piotrowska, the practice of improvisation, in particular, was connected to “primitive cultures (such as Gypsies)” and their oral traditions of passing down information. To the Western European of the 19th century, improvisation was seen as primitive because it showed a disregard for the composer of a piece.\(^\text{76}\) In oral traditions such as the Romani’s, authors and composers are rarely remembered after generations have passed, since the work often changes slightly during

each retelling. (This is also part of why it is hard to find primary records of Romani music: because there is only what current generations remember.)

Bellman points out that the *style hongrois* has been a “popular form since the last third of the 18th century.” Therefore, by the time Johannes Brahms began to experiment with the *style hongrois* in the mid nineteenth century, it was already widely used as a means of showcasing the exotic to curious audiences in Germany and Austria (Vienna). Additionally, the *style hongrois* may be referred to as the *verbunkos* idiom, but the musical result is the same regardless of the assigned name.

**ii. Harmonic Characteristics**

More than just guileless, the Romani were seen by the western majority as outlandish because of their nomadic and non-Christian lifestyle. This exoticism was partially displayed by composers of the *style hongrois* with the use of the “Gypsy scale” with minor-scale qualities which would have been immediately unfamiliar to a bourgeois audience. Bellman succinctly defines this Gypsy scale as “a harmonic minor scale with a raised fourth degree.” For example, if one were to write this scale beginning on C, then one would write: C- D- E flat- F sharp- G- A flat-B- C. As Loya points out, the raised fourth creates a second leading tone (note), or half step, that leads the ear up to the next note. In the most commonly used scales in the Western

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77 Bellman and others, *The Exotic*, 95.
tradition, there is only one leading tone, which leads the ear to the tonic (or root of the scale). Additionally, Baumann discusses the Gypsy scale displaying major-scale qualities. This scale has a flat second and sixth, as other scholars such as Errante (2003) have noted, which would result in the following notes: C- D flat- E- F- G- A flat- B- C. Although this Hungarian Gypsy scale holds more in common with other gypsy scales from countries such as Turkey and India, this scale type is used less often by style hongrois composers, perhaps because it is less jarring to the ear of the everyday listener, and therefore, less exciting.

In addition to using unfamiliar scales in the style hongrois, composers also used the chordal irregularities of Roma band music. Doubled third and sixth scale degrees were to be avoided in most music seen before the Romantic era of music, but were used freely by Gypsy musicians. Balacon attributes this harmonic sound to sorrow- another reference to the stereotypical Gypsy’s deep emotional soul. Loya also points out the frequent use of parallel fifths and octaves in the verbunkos idiom, which were seen as ill-trained and glaring in the Baroque and Classical traditions. She also acknowledges the “persistent” change between major and minor key centers in this imitative style. These harmonic choices may not sound out of the ordinary to the modern classical listener, but in the nineteenth century, most audiences still listened to a very particular type of music, namely, that which was considered correct, or only deviated from the norm in ways that were not overtly vivid.

80 Baumann, “Reflection of the Roma,” 117.
81 Errante, “The Zigeunerlieder and their Sources,” 51.
82 Balacon, “Fictionalized Gypsy,” 50.
iii. **Rhythmic Gestures**

Due to the Romani performance of the music *style hongrois* emulates, there is an abundance of ornamentation found in this Western European imitation of Gypsy band music. This ornamentation comes in many forms- two of which, Balacon notes, are grace 32\textsuperscript{nd} notes and 16\textsuperscript{th} note runs (such as in the solo cycle of *Zigeunerlieder*).\(^8^4\) Loya draws an interesting parallel between the use of ornamentation to express the Gypsy’s wild emotions and the ornamentation used in mad scenes of Italian (and French) opera of the same time period.\(^8^5\) These scenes portrayed a character (often soprano) losing their minds, or being overcome by a powerful emotion, and acted as a chance for the vocalist to demonstrate their virtuosity. Within the context of the opera, the intricate singing style (also prevalent in bel canto music) that contrasted most of the other music within the opera, was explained as the literal hysteria being experienced by the character.

Equally as important as the raised fourth scale degree in *style hongrois*, are the rhythmic patterns copied from the Hungarian music played by Romani bands. Three types of these rhythmic patterns are most commonly taken from Gypsy folk music according to Errante: the *spondee* (two accented beats such as two quarter notes), the *choriambus* (long-short-short-long such as a dotted-quarter note, eighth, eighth, dotted-quarter), and the *Lombard* (short-long, short-long such as an eighth note, quarter, eighth, quarter).\(^8^6\) Balacon adds that the syncopated *alla*

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\(^8^4\) Balacon, “Fictionalized Gypsy,” 10.
\(^8^5\) Loya, “Beyond Stereotypes,” 274.
\(^8^6\) Errante, “Zigeunerlieder and their Sources,” 53.
zoppa\textsuperscript{87} rhythm and the Hungarian \textit{anapest} (short-short-long, i.e. eighth, eighth, quarter) were also regularly used.\textsuperscript{88}

iv. Melodic Gestures

In addition to the irregular rhythms used in the \textit{style hongrois}, composers also used asymmetrical phrase lengths taken from Hungarian Gypsy poetry and melody.\textsuperscript{89} The unbalanced nature of these phrases often came from the rhythm of the Hungarian language, as will be discussed further in Chapter IV. Loya was one of many to also recognize that the repetitious nature of \textit{style hongrois} came from the provincial nature of Gypsy music.\textsuperscript{90} Many repetitions with small cadential differences are a common occurrence in many folk traditions. Errante went as far as to attribute the strophic nature of \textit{style hongrois} to its origins in the \textit{notá} practice.\textsuperscript{91} Yet, I find it hard to attribute the repetitive nature of the \textit{verbunkos} idiom to any one style of Gypsy band music, since traditionally pastoral music from all over the world follows a similar pattern.

\textit{Style hongrois} also copies the large leaps down and varied cross-rhythms that many Gypsy bands employed in their pieces.\textsuperscript{92} According to Balacon, the leaps were often seen by the

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{88} Balacon, “Fictionalized Gypsy,” 53-54.
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., 61.
\textsuperscript{90} Loya, “Beyond Stereotypes,” 263.
\textsuperscript{91} Errante, “\textit{Zigeunerlieder} and their Sources,” 51.
\textsuperscript{92} Errante, “\textit{Zigeunerlieder} and their Sources,” 52.
\end{flushleft}
popular western world as “untrained” and sporadic,\textsuperscript{93} whereas the cross-rhythms create a sense of almost manic, fervent emotion. Both of these perceptions are accepted by the audience as commonalities within Hungarian Gypsy life: that they are untrained, primitive, and controlled by their forceful emotional whims.

\textbf{v. Miscellaneous}

In another broader survey of pieces within this compositional practice, Balacon attributes the thin use of the left hand in accompaniment as well as “freely realized” internal harmonies to Hungarian Gypsy influences.\textsuperscript{94} Both of these attributes can be linked to the entertainment nature of Gypsy music. Since the virtuosity of the soloist was often a point of focus for the audience, a more subtle low-range accompaniment makes sense. Also, as a band would improvise much of their performance, it stands to reason that the inner harmonies and rhythms would often be composed to reflect that flexible intent.

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\textsuperscript{93} Balacon, “Fictionalized Gypsy,” 45.
\textsuperscript{94} Balacon, “Fictionalized Gypsy,” 48.
\end{flushright}
V. Musical and Poetic Analysis

a. Zigeunerlieder Overview

Compared to Zoltán Nagy’s Ungarische Liebeslieder: 25 Ungarische Volkslieder für mittlere Stimme: Die Clavier-Begleitung von Zoltán Nagy: In’s Deutsche übertragen von Hugo Conrat (1887?), from which Johannes Brahms took his inspiration for the Zigeunerlieder, Brahms set the text in a way that is very much in keeping with the Romantic, Western European musical aesthetics of his time (explained in Chapter I). He takes the ideas of style hongrois and incorporates them into his own Romantic style. Brahms is also known for using Baroque-style musical ideas such as the hemiola (a rhythmic device involving the superimposition of, for example, two notes in the time of three or vise versa). Therefore, when he uses musical devices such as the hemiola, Brahms is imitating an older era of music as well as (as some analysts have claimed), the style hongrois. His interpretation of Roma music and culture in this cycle is one that takes ideas from a “foreign” style and molds them to fit into a box created by the traditions of popular Western music.

The Roma influences seen in Brahms’ work can be broken down into: rhythm, harmony and texture, structure, and thematic text. From the many varied styles of Hungarian folk tunes and music played by Gypsy bands, Brahms decided to only use the quick, duple-metered dance form that Loya and others refer to as friss. All eight songs are andantino (relaxed tempo,

95 Errante, “Zigeunerlieder and their Sources,” 54.
96 Collins Dictionary, s.v. “Hemiola.”
97 Loya, “Beyond Stereotypes,” 259.
slightly faster than *andante* or faster: five maintain a form of *allegro* (brisk, lively), two are marked *vivace* (also lively, but usually faster than *allegro*), and the sixth is the slowest but still moves along gracefully, without dragging. Trills, *glissandi*, grace notes, and ornamentation are all mimic the improvisational style of Gypsy folksong as well as the original instruments used by Gypsy bands, which will be explained in detail later in this chapter.\(^98\)

Although Brahms’ almost rarely uses the *choriambus, Lombard, or anapest*, the *spondee* and *alla zoppa*, however, are used at length throughout the cycle. From the very first phrase of the *Zigeunerlieder*, this principle is applied: the melodic line follows a strict long-short pattern until the final two notes- a *spondee* (see Figure 1). Brahms simplifies the complicated rhythms of Hungarian Gypsy music but still maintains the feeling of lunging dance music with the use of the long-short dotted pattern.

\(^{98}\) Errante, “*Zigeunerlieder* and their Sources,” 52.
Figure 1. Brahms, “He, Zigeuner,” mm. 3-8 Note that the voice has dotted-quarter notes and eighth notes until m. 8 where the two quarter notes create a spondee.

The exclusion of the *choriambus, Lombard,* and *anapest* is most likely due to Brahms’ attempt to set the German translation of the text (Hugo Conrat). Most of these rhythms are fashioned to fit the stresses of the Hungarian language, and though the short-long rhythm fits the text better in the original language, it makes the German translation unwieldy.\(^{99}\)

Errante (2003) discusses the use of hemiolas (a rhythmic device involving the superimposition of, for example, two notes in the time of three or vice versa\(^{100}\)) to suggest the

\[^{100}\] Collins Dictionary, s.v. “Hemiola.”
irregularity of the Gypsies’ dance music.\(^{101}\) Brahms’ use of cross rhythms, too, contribute to the improvisational and freely-interpreted Gypsy performance. Furthermore, any irregularity incorporated in Brahms’ Zigeunerlieder will, by the nature of the title (“Gypsy Songs”), be interpreted by the audience as yet another confirmation of the “otherness” of the piece. Although cross-rhythms (see Figure 2) and syncopation (see Figure 3) were not new concepts by the Romantic era of music, audience’s preconceptions (and prejudices) always play a role in their reception of music. With the title and text clearly intending to portray the Gypsy culture, any deviance from traditional sounds in the music will make the listener assume that it is due to the “exotic” influence.

*Figure 2.* Brahms, “Brauner Bursche,” mm. 1-3. The cross-rhythm appears as the voice sings in two, while the accompaniment moves in three.

*Figure 3.* Brahms, “Hochgetürmte,” mm. 1-4. The right hand of the accompaniment begins on the “and” of one, and continues to stay on the upbeat throughout.

\(^{101}\) Errante, “Zigeunderlieder and their Sources,” 54.
Harmonically and texturally, it can be argued that Brahms composed the *Zigeunerlieder* completely within the traditions of mid-Romantic German lieder, which were more relaxed and exploratory than compositions of the Classical period. However, Shay Loya asks: when viewed with different contextual knowledge, can the same practices not be interpreted differently? The question gives this analysis room to interpret certain harmonic principles as more Romani than commonly traditional.

One of these harmonic principles is the use of parallel intervals (such as octaves and fifths, Figure 4), a recurring device in the *style hongrois* or *verbunkos* idiom.\(^\text{102}\)

*Figure 4.* Brahms, “Hochgetürmte,” mm. 18-20. Notice the parallel octave movement in the left hand in mm. 18 and 20.

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\(^{102}\) Loya, “Beyond Stereotypes,” 277.
Also a typical device of the style hongrois is the augmented fourth scale degree. Although there is some contention over what an actual Gypsy scale is or sounds like, it is widely agreed that the augmented fourth and lowered sixth were commonly used in Roma folk music. Brahms uses the lowered sixth degree (which often simply indicates a modulation into or temporary use of the Western minor scale), but it is the augmented fourth that stands out throughout this cycle (see Figure 5). It occurs in every song, most often in the melody (making it obvious to the listener), but also within the accompaniment texture.

Figure 5. Brahms, “He, Zigeuner,” mm. 9-11. Notice the B-natural in both the accompaniment and the vocal line in m. 11.

Direct modulations and modulations to distantly related keys has been identified by many as another influence of Gypsy music, but once again, this can also be attributed to the

103 Bellman and others, The Exotic, 85.
more flexible modulation being explored by so many composers during Brahms’ lifetime. This instability of key centers additionally emphasizes the unclear focus between the tonic and dominant that Loya describes as a common *verbunkos* stylistic device.\(^{104}\) This is apparent in Brahms’ *Zigeunerlieder*, because he uses a multitude of secondary dominants, and it is often unclear whether he fully modulates or only hints at the other key (see Figure 6).

*Figure 6.* Brahms, “He, Zigeuner,” mm. 31-34. In m. 32, there is a V/V (secondary dominant) to a V\(^7\) which continues into m. 34. It is unclear whether this is a full modulation, or just an extended half cadence (ending on the fifth scale degree).

Most pieces within the *style hongrois* tradition are organized into strophic verses. This comes from the simple form patterns often associated with folk music. Repetitious structures (motives, cadences, themes, and sections) are also very common within the *verbunkos*\(^{105}\) and *notá*\(^{106}\) traditions. Brahms stays true to these ideals by writing every song of the cycle in a variation of binary (AB) form.\(^{107}\) Although the B section of each song is repeated in some way,

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\(^{104}\) Loya, “Beyond Stereotypes,” 269.

\(^{105}\) Loya, “Beyond Stereotypes,” 263.

\(^{106}\) Errante, “*Zigeunerlieder* and their Sources,” 51.

\(^{107}\) Ibid., 54.
Brahms varies when the A section is repeated and whether the A and B sections are repeated in equal proportion. In numbers three and six, he repeats the B section, then returns to the beginning and to restate the entire song again (repeating the A section twice and the B section four times). Though the melodies stay the same for every repetition save for the occasional ending cadence, some of the songs have different words upon the reiteration. In addition, Brahms frequently follows the Hungarian Gypsy tradition of irregular phrase lengths.\textsuperscript{108} For example, in the second song, \textit{Hochgetürmte Rimaflut}, the sub-phrase lengths are as follows: 8, 8, 10, 9, and 2 (coda). Although eight and ten measure-long phrases are not uncommon, the nine measure phrase breaks up the symmetry of the text, calling attention to the last phrase before the coda. This prepares the listener’s ear for the end of the song, since another even-numbered phrase could just as easily lead into another verse.

In truth, not much background is known about the text that Brahms used for his \textit{Zigeunerlieder}. All that is known definitively is that they were translated into German by a friend of Brahms, Hugo Conrat, from twenty-five folk songs Conrat sought from his Hungarian maid. Conrat originally collaborated with Zoltán Nagy to create \textit{Ungarische Liebeslieder: 25 Ungarische Volkslieder für mittlere Stimme} using his translations. (More knowledge is available on Hugo Conrat, but not in any English sources that could be found for this paper.) From the twenty-five songs that Nagy set, Johannes Brahms chose eleven to set for four voices- soprano, alto, tenor, bass- and piano. Only later, after the song cycle received great praise from audiences,

\textsuperscript{108} Balacon, “Fictionalized Gypsy,” 61.
did Brahms arrange eight of his eleven songs for the solo voice and piano.\textsuperscript{109} The lyrics depict the general stereotypes applied to Gypsies by the mainstream Western European culture: musically talented, fun-loving, deeply emotional, and viscerally connected to nature. Brahms’ use of musical devices either perpetuates these stereotypes or follows a subtle form of text-painting as is common in his style.\textsuperscript{110}

i.  \textit{He, Zigeuner!}

“He, Zigeuner!” begins the cycle by addressing the gypsy outsider directly. This evokes a sense that someone from the Western European majority is giving the entertainer a request, opening the cycle by acknowledging the otherness of the Hungarian Gypsy. The piece stays in f-minor, but often briefly journeys into the dominant or subdominant key centers, as in mm. 12-14 and 27-29 respectively.\textsuperscript{111} The melody concludes with a Picardy third (the tonic of the relative major), but the piano postlude returns to the original minor mode. Though this song retains a lively pace (\textit{allegro agitato}), the text asks the Gypsy to play a mournful song about an unfaithful woman until the audience is moved to tears, which explains the fundamentally minor

\textsuperscript{109} Errante, “Zigeunerlieder and their Sources,” 45.

\textsuperscript{109} Gorrell, “Johannes Brahms,” 276.

\textsuperscript{111} Johannes Brahms, \textit{Zigeunerlieder}. In \textit{Brahms: 70 Songs} (for low voice), Libretto by Hugo Conrat, ed. Sergius Kagen, trans. Edith Braun and Waldo Lyman. (New York: International Music Company, 1954), 205-221. Since the purpose of this paper is to prepare the performer, it stands to reason that a performer should be the one to write it. I am a mezzo-soprano myself, and I performed this song cycle during my Bachelor Recital; therefore, the analysis for this paper is based on the low-voice transcription for solo voice and piano (see Appendix A).
setting of the piece. The large A section ends on a strongly emphasized half cadence, employing the use of the “exotic” augmented fourth during the word “ungetreuen” (faithless), a contrast that Brahms uses to draw attention to the difference between the conventional and the unusual. The raised fourth also appears in mm. 13, 23, and 25. Furthermore, the three-against-two rhythm (eighth-note triplets against sixteenth notes) that persists in the accompaniment throughout the song imitates the raucous dance music of Gypsy bands.\textsuperscript{112} The slightly unsettled nature of the cross rhythm also suggests the twanging, resonant sounds of the cimbalom. This accidental can be interpreted in a typical harmonic (Roman numeral) analysis as a secondary dominant that references the key of the fifth scale degree, but because of the topic of this cycle, Brahms means for it to reference the emotional and unconventional world of the Gypsies seen through the eyes of the \textit{style hongrois}.

There are several stylistic influences introduced in this song that occur throughout the rest of the cycle. The piano accompaniment builds dynamically as the vocal line reaches emotional peaks, which is similar to the way the strings of a Gypsy band would swell with whatever instrument (or voice) was performing the solo line. Also, inversion of the common Lombard rhythm mentioned earlier is vigorously introduced in this song.\textsuperscript{113}

\textbf{ii. Hochgetürmte Rimaflut}

\textsuperscript{112} Errante, “Zigeunerlieder and their Sources,” 52.
\textsuperscript{113} Errante, “Zigeunerlieder and their Sources,” 55.
Also quick-paced and centered around a minor tonality, the second song, “Hochgetürmte Rimaflut,” begins in Bb-minor and briefly explores the relative major key (Db-major) in mm.11-14 and the subtonic key (Ab-minor) in mm. 21-22. Extensive anticipation is used in the first half of this song, as the last chords of a measure move to the new scale degree before the downbeat of the following measure. This works in tandem with the *alla zoppa* rhythm Brahms introduces at the start of the piece. Referencing and emphasizing the lilting, arrhythmic beat of Gypsy dance music, this technique also paints the tumultuous emotions that the soloist expresses as well as the movement of the river water being described. An augmented fourth does make an appearance in this piece in m. 18, but the harmonic twist of this piece is that it ends on a Picardy third in the postlude, setting the listener up for the major mode of the next song.

The use of grace notes in “Hochgetürmte Rimaflut” should be particularly noted. Zoltán Nagy’s transcription and translation of the original Hungarian folk tunes has much more ornamentation and note-for-note texture than Brahms’ interpretation. This shows that Brahms was not trying to distinctly write in the Gypsy folk style, as much as introduce ideas from Gypsy music into the popular Romantic style of the day. The grace notes in mm. 14 and 16 of this song, however, do present a nod to the improvisational and ornamental style of performance most often associated with Gypsy bands.

**iii. Wisst ihr**

The third song in the cycle is “Wisst ihr” and is one of the simplest of the set. Set in the key of Bb-major, the key center wavers slightly towards the relative minor (g-minor) around mm. 13-16, but makes its way back in order to end on a perfect authentic cadence
(dominant to tonic). As in the past two songs, Brahms includes an augmented fourth in m. 12 alluding to the scales used by Gypsy bands. He also uses secondary dominants as a way to make the harmonic progression of the song more interesting and complex, compounding on the simple original transcriptions by Nagy.\textsuperscript{114} The arpeggiated sixteenth-note runs can be interpreted as modified expressions of Gypsy improvisation, especially since the \textit{staccato} notations already liken the accompaniment to a plucked violin.

\section*{iv. \textit{Lieber Gott}}

“Lieber Gott,” the fourth song in the cycle is also rather straightforward, remaining in the key of D-major despite the remorseful nature of the lyrics. The augmented fourths appear in mm. 6, 7, and 11 of this song, but harmonically, the piece stays true to simple harmonic movement as befits a traditional Romantic-era art song. The moving sixteenth notes drive the harmonic progression forward, and yet again, imitate the improvisational nature of Romani folk music. Arpeggios are one of the basic tools of improvisation, so their reoccurring appearance in Brahms’ music as ornamentation in reference to the fluid construction of some Gypsy styles is unsurprising.

Though the \textit{spondee} (two accented beats) rhythm is used in the first three songs of the cycle (i.e. m. 2 of “Hochgetürmte Rimaflut”), the pattern is used effectively here because of its

\textsuperscript{114} Errante, “\textit{Zigeunerlieder} and their Sources,” 54.
dramatic contrast to the playful eighth-note groupings. It appears in almost every musical phrase of the melody (mm. 2, 6, 9, and 17), and quite obviously changes the continuity and direction of the rhythmical line. Furthermore, the use of both staccato and glissando in the piano accompaniment to imitate a violin and cimbalom respectively, give the impression that there are three separate voices moving and working together. With the vocal line, the accompaniment mimics the sound of an actual small Gypsy band as closely as Brahms knew how, given the intimate texture of German art song that Brahms was writing for in the nineteenth century.

v. *Brauner Bursche*

“Brauner Bursche,” the fifth song in the cycle, remains mostly in the key of B-major, ending on a half cadence at m. 20 and a perfect authentic cadence at m. 27. As in every song, Brahms uses the augmented fourth to add harmonic flavor in mm. 1, 11-13, 23, and 25. If harmonically, this song is not unique among those in the *Zigeunerlieder*, then it is the rhythmic interplay that brings life and dance to this piece. The disjunct “two-against-three and three-against-four figures lend a syncopated feeling of the Gypsy dance” as Errante puts it. The piece flies along, pulled forward by the sixteenth-note triplets in the left hand of the accompaniment. And though well within the confines of the tonal center and all traditional Romantic ideas of composition, the arpeggiated sixteenth-notes in this song act as the jangling cimbalom and interpretive ornamentation prominent in the folk music played by Romani bands.

As in the previous song, the *spondee* plays a big role in the drama of this piece. In mm. 17-19, the strong on-the-beat notes of the vocal line bring the playfully frantic dance to a brief halt for the fermata in m. 20 before charging to the end of the verse.

**vi. Röslein dreie**

After the strong and raucous “Brauner Bursche,” Brahms’ sixth song is more playful and light. The quick-flying German text of this song requires the soloist to keep their diction crisp and precise, creating a tumbling but joyful passage. The line only comes to a halt with the use of eighth notes that act as spondees (such as in mm. 9 and 13) which slow the rhythmic flow and add emphasis to the end of the line. All of the staccati contained in both the vocal line and accompaniment also keep the musical lines from becoming sloppy. Once more, this also evokes the pizzicato style of playing a stringed instrument- a common technique used by Gypsy bands. The playfulness can be seen in the harmony of the song in the way the two bars of introduction make the listener think the piece will be in c minor, but as the vocalist comes in, the key immediately changes to Eb major, remaining so throughout.

The structure of “Röslein dreie” is also noteworthy. The usual over-arching binary form stays true, but when broken down, the melodic form becomes more interesting. The A section has an 8 measure phrase followed by another 8 measure phrase. The B section however, has an 8 measure phrase followed by an unexpected 4 measure phrase, allowing the piano to conclude the piece. This surprising shortening of the last vocal phrase adds to the mischievous nature of the song which speaks of young love and boys seeking brides (see Appendix B). This frivolous
treatment of love contrasts the next song, full of longing, making it seem all the more powerfully tormented.

vii.  *Kommt dir manchmal*

The text of this song is directed toward the spouse of the speaker (see Appendix B). The beginning of the song begins in C major while the speaker asks his or her love if they remember the vows they made, once upon a time. Then, for part B, the second half of the song, the harmony is decidedly more minor, and the speaker loses all composure as he or she begs their spouse to stay with them, to love them. The B section repeats twice, strengthening the sense that the speaker is truly pleading, begging, that their love return to them. The ties in the accompaniment throughout this piece can be attributed to the disorganized dance rhythms of the Roma people, but they also drive the harmonic (and therefore melodic) line forward, as if with aching passion. The Perfect Authentic Cadence in the major key at the conclusion of the piece, however, gives hope that the couple will remain together.

viii.  *Rote Abendwolken*

The very last song of the cycle is full of triumphant joy. The *alla zoppa* rhythms in the A section give the song a dance-like quality, while the use of more spondees in the vocal line than we have seen previously keeps the beat steady and emphatic. Of course the most ardent use of the spondee occurs in mm. 34-37 (see Appendix A), slowing the rhythmic tempo of the piece to conclude the entire cycle in a grand, ecstatic gesture. Even the tremolos in m. 17 add to the fanfare as they mimic the resonance of the cimbalom.
The use of key centers also builds this piece up to the bombastic finish Brahms intended. Beginning in Bb major, the key makes an immediate and direct modulation to Db major for the second vocal phrase (which also modulates up a third), before modulating back into Bb major for the B section. There is frequent use of the dominant (V) throughout, but even with the fluctuation between tonic and dominant, the listener hears a strong and jubilant progression to the end
VI. Conclusion- The Performance

After reading this paper, the solo performer should have a comprehensive understanding of the themes and ideas which Johannes Brahms accrued to produce his *Zigeunerlieder*. The performer should understand the place of the Roma people in the nineteenth century. They should understand the clear difference between true Gypsy music, Hungarian folk music, Gypsy band music, and the *style hongrois*. They should have a brief understanding of Johannes Brahms’ life and the influences that shaped his composition. They should understand the main components of the *verbunkos* idiom. Lastly, they should have a comprehensive idea of how the song cycle is structured and what the text means. With all of this knowledge, the performer should be able to develop their own expression of the piece, and any non-musicians should now have a better understanding of the influences the Hungarian Romani had on 19th century European music.

Although the actual performance of music is a very personal creation since each person has his or her own experiences to add to the musiking of the piece, there are some general thoughts that ought to be considered while preparing the *Zigeunerlieder*. The first is that the original objective of this song cycle was to showcase the Gypsy passion and musicality to the audience. Although Brahms’ song cycle does not deviate greatly from the Romantic tradition, the details of the music that mark his influence from Roma bands (as detailed in Chapter V) must be acknowledged. Brahms may have only been successful in his mimicry of Gypsy music and culture within his limited view as an outsider who had no deeper grasp of the people, but it is the duty of the vocalist to give the music he or she performs life. With this obligation comes, then, the importance of emphasizing the stylistic motifs that Brahms uses from Gypsy music: the times
of ornamentation in the vocal line or tremolo in the accompaniment, for example. It is up to the
performer to decide whether or not they wish to stay true to the Roma performance practice of
ornamentation and improvisation by stretching and pulling the tempi or adding flourishes to the
vocal line, or to stay true to the music and remain more Western in their approach. Personally, I
felt that I did not have the sufficient time to develop any extra ornamentation within the piece,
and I also chose to stay truer to the music since improvised ornamentation is not in keeping with
Romantic musical ideas. I did, however, try to make the emotions of the individual songs more
apparent. I felt that it was Brahms’ goal to showcase not only the Gypsy music, but also his view
of their wild, emotional spirits.

The music itself is not terribly difficult, and the verses are all strophic which, as long as
you remember which verse you are on, can be simple to learn. This fortunately leaves more room
for the soloist and accompanist to change and tweak their approach until they find a mode of
expressing each song that is unique and powerful to them. Upon becoming familiar with the
music, vocalists must create their own way of musiking.
Bibliography


Appendix A

ZIGEUNERLIEDER (Gypsy Songs)

H. CONRAD

I.

Allegro agitato

Op. 103

Ha, Zigrui-ner,

sotto voce ma agitato

grei- se in die Sai- ten ein!

spiel das Lied von un- ge- tren- en
Mägdele!n! He, Zigeuner,
sotto voce sempre

grei-fe in die Saiten ein!

spiel' das Lied vom un-getreu-en

Mägdele!n! Lass die Saiten
weißen, klagen, traurig bang-
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II.

Allegro molto

Hoch getürmte Rimaflut, wie bist

ți non troppo ma ben marcato

du so trüb', an dem Ufer

klag' ich laut nach dir, mein Liebl!
Wellen fliehen, Wellen strömen, rauschen

an den Strand heran zu mir,

an dem Rimaxufer lasst mich ewig weinen nach ihr!
III.

Allegretto

1. Wisst ihr, wann mein Kind-chen am aller-schön-sten ist?
2. Wisst ihr, wann mein Lieb-ster am be-sten mir ge-fällt?

65.

wenn ihr sü-ses Mund-chen scherzt und lacht und küssst,

wenn in sei- nen Ar-me nen er mich um-schlun-gen hält.

dolce

Allegro

Mäd- de- lein, du bist mein, in-nig-l ich
Schat- ze- lein, du bist mein, in-nig-l ich
IV.

Vivace grazioso

1. Lieber Gott, du weisst, wie oft bereut ich hab',
2. Lieber Gott, du weisst, wie oft in stiller Nacht,

dass ich meinem Liebsten einst ein Kusschen gab.
ich in Lust und Leiden meinen Schatz gedacht.

Herz gebot, dass ich ihn küssen
Lieb' ist suss, wenn bitter auch die
muss, Reu',
denk' so lang' ich leb' an
armes Herz bleibt ihm
diesen ersten Kuss.
Herz gebot, dass
ewig, ewig treu.
Lieb' ist süß, wenn
ich ihn küssen muss,
denk' so lang' ich leb' an
bitter auch die Reu',
armes Herz bleibt ihm
diesen ersten Kuss.
evrig, evrig treu.
V.

Allegro giocoso

Braun - ner Bursche

führt zum Tanz - ze sein blau - äug'gig schönes Kind,

schlägt die Spo - ren keck zu - sammen, Czar - das Me - lo -
die beginnt, küss und herzt sein

süßes Täubchen, dreht sie, führt sie, jauchzt und

springt; wirft drei blan-ke Sil-ber-gul-den auf das Cim-bal,

dass es klingt.
Vivace grazioso

Rös-leindrei-e in der Rei-he blüh’n so roth,
Schönstes Städten in Al-föld ist Ketsch-ke - met,

dass der Bursch zum Mä-del geht, ist kein Ver - bot!
dort gibt es gar vie-le Mäd-chen schmuck und nett!

Rös-leindrei-e in der Rei-he blüh’n so roth,
Schönstes Städten in Al-föld ist Ketsch-ke - met,

dass der Bursch zum Mä-del geht, ist kein Ver - bot!
dort gibt es gar vie-le Mäd-chen schmuck und nett!
Lieber Gott, wenn das verboten wär',
Freunde sucht euch dort ein Bräutchen aus,

ständ' die schöne weiße Welt schon längst nicht mehr,
freit um ihre Hand und gründet euer Haus,

leidig bleiben Sünde war'!
Freudenbecher leeret aus!
VII.

Andantino grazioso

Kommt dir manchmal in den Sinn, mein süßes Lieb,

was du einst mit heil'gem Eide mir gelobt?

kommt dir manchmal in den Sinn, mein süßes Lieb,

was du einst mit heil'gem Eide
mir ge-loht?

Täusch mich nicht, ver-

lass mich nicht, du weisst nicht, wie lieb ich dich

hab', lieb' du mich wie ich dich.

dann strömt Gottes Huld auf dich her-ab!
VIII.

Allegro

Rot- te A- bend- wol- ken zieh’n am

Firmament, sehnsuchts-

voll nach dir, mein Lieb, das Herz- ze brennt,

Himmel strahlt in glüh- n- der
Pracht, und ich träum' bei Tag und Nacht

nur allein

von dem süßsen Liebchen

mein.
Appendix B

Zigeunerlieder

He, Zigeuner, greife in die Saiten ein!
Spiel das Lied vom ungetreuen Mägdelein!
Lass die Saiten weinen, klagen, traurig bange,
Bis die heisse Träne netzet diese Wange!

Hochgetürmte Rimaflut,
Wie bist du so trüb,
An dem Ufer klag’ ich
Laut nach dir, mein Lieb!
Wellen fliehen, Wellen strömen,
Rauschen an dem Strand heran zu mir;
An dem Rimauper lasst mich
Ewig weinen nach ihr!

Wisst ihr, wann mein Kindchen am allerschönsten ist?
Wenn ihr süßes Muendchen Schertz und lacht und küsst.
Mägdelein, du bist mein, inniglich küss ich dich,
Dich erschuf der liebe Himmel einzig nur für mich!
Wist ihr, wann mein Liebster am besten mir gefällt?
Wenn in seinen Armen er mich umschlungen halt.
Schätzelein, du bist main, inniglich küss ich dich,
Dich erschuf der liebe Himmel einzig nur für mich!

Lieber Gott, du weisst, wie oft bereut ich hab’,
Dass ich meinem Liebsten ein Kusschen gab.
Herz gebot, dass ich ihn küssen muss,
Denk so lang’ ich leb’ an diesen ersten Kuss.
Lieber Gott, du weisst, wie oft in stiller Nacht,
Ich in Lust und Leidan meinen Schatz gedacht,
Lieb’ ist süss, wenn bitter auch die Reu’,
Armes Herze bleibt ihm ewig, ewig treu.
Brauner Bursche führt zum Tanze

Gypsy Songs

Ho there, Gypsy, strike the strings,
Play the song of the faithless maiden!
Let the strings weep, lament in sad anxiety,
Till the hot tears flow down these cheeks.

High towering Rima waves,
How turbid you are!
By these banks I lament loudly
For you, my sweet!
Waves are fleeing, waves are streaming.
Rushing to the shore, to me;
Let me by the Rima banks
Forever weep for her!

Do you know when my little one is her loveliest?
When her sweet mouth teases and laughs and kisses me.
Little Maiden, you are mine, fervently I kiss you,
The good Lord created you just for me!
Do you know when I like my lover best of all?
When he holds me closely enfolded in his arms.
Sweetheart, you are mine, fervently I kiss you,
The good Lord created you just for me alone!

Dear God, you know how often I regretted
The kiss I gave but once to my beloved.
My heart commanded me to kiss him,
I shall think forever of that first kiss.
Dear God, you know how often at dead of night,
In joy and in sorrow I thought of my dearest one.
Love is sweet, though bitter be remorse,
My poor heart will remain ever, ever true!
The bronzed young fellow leads to the dance
Sein blauäugig schönes Kind,  
Schlägt die Sporen keck zusammen,  
Czardas Melodie beginnt,  
Küsst und hertz sein süßes Täubchen,  
Dreht sie, führt sie, jauchzt und soringt;  
Wirft drei blanke Silbergulden  
Auf das Cimbal, dass es klingt.  

Röslein dreie in der Reihe blühn so Rot,  
Dass der Bursch zum Mädel geht, ist kein Verbot!  
Lieber Got, wenn das verboten wär,  
Ständ’ die schöne weite Welt schon längst nicht mehr;  
Ledig bleiben Sünde wär!  
Schönstes Städtchen in Alföld ist Ketschkemet,  
Dort gibt es gar viele Mädchen schmuck und net!  
Freunde, sucht euch dort ein Bräutchen aus,  
Freit un ihre Hand und gründet euer Haus,  
Freudenbecher leeret aus.  

Kommt dir manchmal in den Sinn, mein süßes Lieb,  
Was du einst mit heil’gem Eide mir gelobt?  
Täusch mich nicht, verlass mich nicht,  
Du weisst nicht, wie lieb ich dich hab’,  
Lieb’ du mich, wie ich dich,  
Dann ströt Gottes Huld auf dich herab!  

Rote Abendwolken ziehn am Firmament,  
Sehnsuchtsvoll nach dir, mein Lieb, das Here brennt;  
Himmel strahlt ih glüh’nder Pracht,  
Und ich träum’ bei Tag und Nacht  
Nur allein von dem süssen Liebchen mein.

His lovely blue-eyed maiden,  
Boldly clanking his spurs together,  
A Czardas melody begins.  
He caresses and kisses his sweet dove,  
Whirls her, leads her, shouts and springs about,  
Throws three shiny silver guilders  
On the cymbal to make it ring!  

Roses three in the row bloom so red,  
There’s no law against the lad’s visiting his girl!  
Oh, good Lord, if that too were forbidden,  
This beautiful world would have perished long ago,  
To remain single would be a sin!  
The loveliest city in Alföld is Ketschkemet,  
There abide so many maidens sweet and nice!  
Friends, go there to choose a little bride,  
Ask for her in marriage and then establish your home,  
Then empty cups of joy!.

Do you sometimes recall, my sweet love  
What you once vowed to me with solemn oath?  
Deceive me not, leave me not,  
You do not know how dear you are to me!  
Do love me as I love you,  
Then God’s grace will descend upon you!

Red clouds of evening across the firmament,  
Longing for you, my sweet! My heart is afire,  
The heavens shine in glowing splendor,  
And I dreamt day and night  
Only of that sweet love of mine.