I, Maira Balacon, hereby submit this work as part of the requirements for the degree of:

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in:

Piano

It is entitled:

*Style Hongrois Features in Brahms’s Hungarian Dances: A Musical Construction of a Fictionalized Gypsy “Other”*

This work and its defense approved by:

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STYLE HONGROIS FEATURES IN BRAHMS’S HUNGARIAN DANCES:
A MUSICAL CONSTRUCTION OF A FICTIONALIZED GYPSY “OTHER”

A doctoral document submitted to the
Division of Graduate Studies and Research
of the University of Cincinnati

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requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

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by
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Abstract

Johannes Brahms’s Hungarian Dances are some of the most popular pieces in the art music repertory, yet they have elicited little scholarly inquiry. Existing writings generally focus on the musical sources these pieces are based on. The Dances include Brahms’s most consistent use of the style hongrois, a type of musical exoticism used to recall Gypsy performances and to evoke emotions associated with them. To date, there has been no systematic analysis of the Dances and their style hongrois traits. Furthermore, the writings that do include some discussion of the Dances’ style hongrois features do not relate these characteristics to the nineteenth-century Gypsy stereotype. In the course of this document, I systematically analyze the Dances’ style hongrois features and relate them to attributes of the Gypsy stereotype. I show how Brahms’s use of the style hongrois in his Hungarian Dances is a construction of the Gypsy “Other” and a recipe that can be broken down into specific musical ingredients.

This document includes an introduction to musical exoticism with a focus on the style hongrois, a detailed discussion of the facets of the nineteenth-century Gypsy stereotype, information on Brahms’s connection to Hungarian music and a background for his Hungarian Dances, and a categorization of style hongrois traits with examples from Hungarian folk and popular music. Included is an analysis of each Hungarian Dance, focusing on style hongrois characteristics and their connections to the Gypsy stereotype. Through this connection, each Hungarian Dance emerges as a facet of this complex stereotype.

A brief discussion of Brahms’s other works in the style reveals that none of them present such a consistent use of the style hongrois as the Hungarian Dances, making the latter a unique appearance in his output. Through their abundant style hongrois traits, the Hungarian Dances
clearly show Brahms’s musical construction of the Gypsy “Other,” based on this author’s five main categories of the Gypsy stereotype: 1) the Gypsies’ sensual, fascinating manner; 2) their wildly emotional behavior; 3) their love of freedom and fierce independence; 4) their alleged immoral, criminal, even subhuman behavior; and 5) their “inborn,” bountiful musical talent.
Acknowledgements

I owe a debt of gratitude to the many people who have helped me make this document a reality: to Elizabeth and Eugene Pridonoff, whose musical insight and warm caring have helped me in my understanding of the Hungarian Dances; to my parents, Dan and Maria Balacon, whose selflessness, love, and support have been a main source of strength and inspiration for me; to Nancy Handrigan, for her kind efforts in helping me obtain and study her thesis, *On the “Hungarian” in Works of Brahms*; to Dover Publications and to the Hungarian Electronic Library for their kind permission to reproduce musical examples needed in this document; to Dr. Hilary Poriss and Professor Frank Weinstock, for their dedication and helpful suggestions on improving this project; and to my advisor, Dr. bruce d. mcclung, whose meticulous, knowledgeable, and direct comments and suggestions have given this document direction, focus, and polish.
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Introduction

Relatively little has been written about Brahms’s Hungarian Dances. The composer barely mentions them in his correspondence and reveals little about his personal feelings about these works. Carol Ann Roberts Bell\(^1\) and Eric Jung-Teng Chang\(^2\) have written recent theses on the Hungarian Dances, but they focus on performance practice. The rest of the writings about the Hungarian Dances generally address the pieces’ musical sources (i.e., folk or popular melodies the Hungarian Dances may be based on) or historical issues surrounding the works. Source studies can be found in the articles of Janos Berenczky\(^3\) and Katalin Szerző\(^4\) and in the Brahms biographies by Malcolm MacDonald\(^5\) and Michael Musgrave.\(^6\) In his article “The Reflection of the Roma in European Art Music,” Max Peter Baumann presents a focused, yet informative, discussion of the Gypsy influence on Western art music. He only addresses the Hungarian Dances briefly, however, and limits himself to mentioning some melodic sources of the Hungarian Dances and including a very short and general list of “stylistic principles” of

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\(^3\) Janos Berenczky, “Quellen von Brahms’ sieben ungarischen Themen (Sources for Brahms’s seven Hungarian themes),” *Studia musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 38 (1997): 345–9.


these works.7 Barbara Rose Lange’s article on the discontinuity in Hungarian Gypsy nőta discusses a specific and narrow genre consisting of mainly “pop songs composed by Rom artists,” with an audience generally restricted to the Rom people.8

To date, the theses of Jacob Herzog9 and Nancy Handrigan10 are the only sources which include detailed, specific information about the particular style hongrois traits of the Hungarian Dances, but not even these two discuss how these characteristics show Brahms’s reconstruction of the Gypsy “Other.” Herzog’s thesis traces Brahms’s use of the style hongrois throughout his compositional career and places Brahms in the lineage of Schubert and Liszt as a skillful practitioner of this style. Herzog’s thesis is filled with musical examples and clear explanations, but the author allots the Hungarian Dances only a few pages of text, which narrowly focus on only six of the twenty-one dances.

Handrigan’s thesis gives some historical detail—about Brahms’s travels with Reményi, his friendship with Joachim, his acquaintance with Liszt, as well as his tours and the political situation in Europe at the time. Handrigan also carefully defines and gives musical examples of Hungarian folk music, Gypsy folk music, Gypsy band music, and salon music of the nineteenth-century. All of these types of music along with art music composed by Brahms’s Hungarian contemporaries influenced Brahms’s compositional style. In the last chapter of her thesis, Handrigan lays out the history of Gypsies and Gypsy bands and discusses specific features of


their music, as well as this music’s influence on art music, including many of Brahms’s pieces. Handrigan includes abundant musical examples of these features, often using excerpts from the Brahms Hungarian Dances, but also employing many other pieces of Brahms as well. This source shows many instances of the style hongrois in the Hungarian Dances. It also includes a complete list of the sources of the Hungarian Dances and prints four of these musical sources (for Hungarian Dances Nos. 1, 4, 5, and 6) in the Appendix. But there is no systematic analysis of the Hungarian Dances in Handrigan’s work. In discussing instances of the style hongrois, Handrigan focuses on their influence on Brahms’s compositional style in general and does not relate them to the nineteenth-century Gypsy stereotype. In other words, Handrigan’s discussion of the “Hungarian” in Brahms’s output is primarily musical and does not attempt to reconstruct the Gypsy “Other.”

In a broader study—and one of the few in-depth sources on the style hongrois—Jonathan Bellman highlights and breaks down the melodic, rhythmic, harmonic, and textural traits of the style hongrois in a thoroughly illuminating chapter. He spends a later chapter on Brahms’s works in the style hongrois, but does not analyze the Hungarian Dances. He writes that most discussion of the Hungarian Dances has been centered on finding the source Hungarian songs for these compositions. Because the Hungarian Dances are seen as “musically self-evident,” little further inquiry has been made. David Malvinni’s article does scratch the surface by addressing some melodic features of the fifth Hungarian Dance and relating them to the

11 Many of these specific features are similar to those discussed in Jonathan Bellman, “A Lexicon for the Style Hongrois,” in The Style Hongrois in the Music of Western Europe, 93–134.

12 Ibid.


14 Ibid., 205.
emotional directness of Gypsy performances. It is in a similar vein that I propose to direct my research and to further our understanding of specific musical traits of the Hungarian Dances and their place in Brahms’s construction of the Gypsy “Other.”

This document owes much to Bellman’s seminal book in the field, The Style Hongrois in the Music of Western Europe, mentioned above, but presents some new contributions to the topic in its focus on the Brahms Hungarian Dances. A discussion of musical exoticism and an explanation of the Gypsy stereotype form the necessary background to understanding the Hungarian Dances from the perspective of Brahms’s construction of the Gypsy “Other.” This background information (presented in Chapters 1 and 2), as well as descriptions of specific style hongrois traits (presented in Chapter 4) are derived from Bellman’s authoritative book on the topic. I will classify the Gypsy stereotype attributes into five categories. My main contribution is my own analysis of the Hungarian Dances from the perspective of this stereotype. My analysis (found in Chapter 5) constitutes a new addition to the study of the style hongrois and the Gypsy stereotype; despite the literature discussing this style and the pieces using it, to date there has been no systematic analysis of the Hungarian Dances and their style hongrois traits as a construction of the Gypsy “Other.”

Drawing upon Bellman’s lexicon and categorization of style hongrois characteristics, I will codify particular musical traits of the Hungarian Dances. Moreover, by comparing them to musical examples of recorded Hungarian folk and popular music and Gypsy performing style, I will show the “Hungarian-Gypsiness” of Brahms’s gestures. For example, I will discuss Brahms’s use of articulations to simulate pizzicato, a technique important to Hungarian and

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Gypsy traditions.\textsuperscript{16} The cimbalom, “a malleted string instrument of Hungarian derivation and … central to Gypsy bands”\textsuperscript{17} is imitated in soft tremolo passages. Rhythmically, the spondee (consisting of two longs) and the choriambus (a long/short/long/short metrical foot) are only two gestures that characterize the \textit{style hongrois}\textsuperscript{18} and are frequent occurrences in the \textit{Hungarian Dances}. Melodic aspects of the \textit{style hongrois} include the \textit{bókazó}, a turn starting on the upper auxiliary,\textsuperscript{19} and the \textit{Kuruc} fourth, which is a “rebounding figure that alternates between the fifth scale degree and the upper prime,”\textsuperscript{20} and is often employed in the \textit{Hungarian Dances}. Furthermore, I will relate these musical traits to Western Europeans’ attitudes about the Gypsies, showing how \textit{style hongrois} gestures in general and Brahms’s \textit{Hungarian Dances} in particular present a Western construction of the “Other.”

There is one important aspect that falls outside the scope of this document. I will not focus on the musical sources of the Brahms \textit{Hungarian Dances}, as much of the literature on these pieces already does so. Rather, I will concentrate on specific \textit{style hongrois} traits in these pieces and, through the lens of the Western European opinion of the time, demonstrate how Brahms’s gestures portray his view of the exotic Gypsy “Other.”

This document will explore all \textit{style hongrois} gestures in these pieces (see Table 1 for a list of \textit{style hongrois} traits). By codifying several of these traits in each piece and relating them to attributes of the Gypsy stereotype, I will be able to present a detailed picture of the construction

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{16} Bellman, \textit{The Style Hongrois}, 99.
  \item \textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 206.
  \item \textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 112.
  \item \textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 120.
  \item \textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 122.
\end{itemize}
of the Gypsy “Other.” Thus, by highlighting each work’s multi-dimensional musical personality, I will show the varied facets of the fictionalized Gypsy portrait each piece brings to light.
Table 1. A list of *style hongrois* gestures\textsuperscript{21}

Techniques associated with other instruments or ensembles
- Small, noisy ornaments
- Extremes of range and wide leaps
- Imitation of *pizzicato*
- Extreme rhythmic flexibility
- Rhapsodic ornamentation, especially in slow melodies
- Imitation of bagpipe drone
- Imitation of cimbalom
- Vocal gestures, especially pleading double thirds and sixths

Rhythmic gestures
- Spondee (two longs)
- Choriambus (long/short/short/long)
- Accented short/long
- Hungarian anapest (accented short/short/long)
- *Alla zoppa* (“limping” syncopation in duple meter)
- Dotted rhythms
- Decorative triplets

Melodic gestures
- *Bôkazó* figure (has both rhythmic and melodic associations)
- Augmented second
- Raised fourth scale degree in major mode
- *Kuruc* fourth (alternation between the fifth scale degree and the upper tonic)

Harmonic devices
- Nonfunctional harmony (sudden shifts, chords for color, etc.)
- Fifth scale degree stressed as much as tonic

Miscellaneous
- Sudden shifts in texture and/or mood with no transition
- Irregular phrases

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\textsuperscript{21} This table is a summary of the discussion of these gestures in ibid., 93–130.
Chapter 1. An Introduction to Musical Exoticism with a Focus on the Style Hongrois

Exoticism in art music represents Western society’s mix of fascination with and fear of a group of people who are, for one reason or another, perceived as being removed from that society’s mainstream. The marginalized “Other”—as a fictionalized distillation of this removed group—is a convenient canvas for society’s untold fears and repressed desires.\(^1\) Thus, by borrowing crystallized elements of the “Other’s” music into art music, Western society can—by musically reconstructing the “Other” according to its partly fictionalized ideas—indulge these forbidden yearnings or identify with the marginalized group’s situation. In the eighteenth century and earlier, exoticism in art music was largely confined to watered-down Orientalist gestures (including references to the popular Turkish style) or elements of the emerging style hongrois. At the height of musical Romanticism in the nineteenth century, however, musical exoticism grew to become a highly personal mode of expression, no longer watered down to fit Classical art music conventions, but celebrated for the unique avenue of self-expression it offered Romantic composers.

Between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, Western composers began to consistently include exotic references in their music, especially by invoking the popular Turkish style. As a branch of Orientalism—which references the fictionalized culture of the Middle or Far East—the Turkish style became the rage at the end of the eighteenth century, as was clearly seen in works such as Mozart’s Abduction from the Seraglio or his popular Rondo alla Turca. This interest was

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\(^1\) Ralph P. Locke writes, “Other . . . is defined by geographical and ethnic and religious difference from the West . . . . [T]he term, as generally understood in cultural and critical theory today, may apply equally to . . . any . . . individual or group understood as not inviting identification on the part of the viewer imbued with the proper values of mainstream (patriarchal) society.” (Ralph P. Locke, “Constructing the Oriental ‘Other’: Saint-Saëns’s Samson et Dalila,” in The Work of Opera: Genre, Nationhood, and Sexual Difference, ed. Richard Dellamora and Daniel Fischlin [New York: Columbia University Press, 1997], 162.)
largely sparked by the 1683 siege of Vienna by the Ottoman Empire. The Janissary regiment played music to encourage the Ottoman Turks in battle. Described by a seventeenth-century traveler, Janissary music was mostly percussive, non-melodic, with drums, trumpets and cymbals in abundance.\textsuperscript{2} This rhythmic music was probably highly effective in rousing the troops and motivating them in warfare.\textsuperscript{3} Very strange to Western ears, these sounds made a lasting impression. Despite the Turks’ loss of that 1683 battle, they continued to be feared by Western Europeans, as they remained a major power in the Middle East, and were viewed as a perpetual enemy of Hapsburg rule in Europe. By incorporating (mainly caricatured, stereotyped) aspects of Janissary music into art music, Western Europeans managed to “conquer” these feared outsiders and feel in control of the dreaded—now mocked—Turks.\textsuperscript{4} In instrumental art music, Turkish style references were mostly one-dimensional imitations of the percussive, “noisy” nature of Janissary music. These features included repeated eighth-notes, a profusion of clattering grace-notes, and prominent use of percussive instruments (or devices). While attractive in its foreignness, all this strange “noise” was difficult for composers to reconcile with Classical standards. In a letter dated September 26, 1781, Mozart expresses these challenges in discussing the \textit{Abduction from the Seraglio}: “[M]usic, even in the most horrifying situation, must never offend the ear, but must actually please, and consequently remain music.”\textsuperscript{5} Thus, Western European composers tamed down the percussive raucous to fit Classical conventions, and in doing so, reflected an attitude symptomatic of the mainstream’s desire to control the culture

\textsuperscript{2} Bellman, \textit{The Style Hongrois}, 33–4.

\textsuperscript{3} Ibid., 34.

\textsuperscript{4} Ibid, 32.

represented by the Turkish style. As Edward Said writes, “It is perfectly natural for the human
mind to resist the assault on it of untreated strangeness; therefore cultures have always been
inclined to impose complete transformations on other cultures, receiving these other cultures not
as they are but as, for the benefit of the receiver, they ought to be.”

While other facets of Orientalism continued to thrive in the nineteenth and early
twentieth centuries in works such as Saint-Saëns’s *Samson et Dalila* and Richard Strauss’s
*Salome*, the Turkish style, so popular in the late eighteenth century, began to lose favor and was
soon overtaken by the burgeoning *style hongrois*. There are many connections between the
Turkish style and the *style hongrois*, both musical and historical. In 1673 as the Hapsburg
domination tried to suppress the native language and culture in Hungary, Hungarian nobleman
Imre Thököly gathered his Kuruc warriors and presented a challenge to the Austrian power.

While the history and even the musical language of the Kuruc period represents a great source of
pride for Hungarians, it also represents a building block in the West’s mistrust of Hungarians,
and later, Gypsies. In 1673 Thököly signed a treaty with the Turks promising not to help the
Hapsburg power. He later refused to aid the Turks, helping to defeat the Ottomans that way.

Nevertheless, Thököly (and his fellow Hungarians) became viewed as outsiders and mistrusted
by Western Europe because of the treaty. This negative view towards Hungarians came despite
the fact that they were—like other Hapsburg-dominated people—Christians and also frequently
plagued by Ottoman attacks. But the Western mistrust persisted nevertheless and was

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7 Bellman, *The Style Hongrois*, 27.

8 Ibid., 30.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid., 29.
strengthened by the Hungarians’ nomadic roots, which caused Thököly’s people to be set as a “race apart” in Western perception.\textsuperscript{11} This very love of freedom and nomadic lifestyle would cause Western mistrust against Gypsies as well, especially since the Gypsies would travel westward from Hungary and would be playing Hungarian music in the West.\textsuperscript{12} Ultimately, the ramifications of the 1683 Vienna siege were not only a renewed Western hatred for Turks and a strange fascination for percussive Janissary music. Equally significant for musical developments was the West’s distrust for Hungarians and Gypsies after the Vienna siege, and a tendency to view both Hungarians and Gypsies as outsiders.\textsuperscript{13}

A transition from the Turkish style to the emerging style hongrois was made during 1775 to 1820, a period of time during which the two styles coexisted and were employed either discretely or in combination by art music composers.\textsuperscript{14} Such a combined reference to the two musical styles was possible because they shared several features. For example, the raised fourth scale degree common in the Turkish style was also employed in the style hongrois.\textsuperscript{15} Likewise, the two styles shared the use of non-traditional harmonic progressions—unsophisticated in the Turkish style, used for color in the style hongrois.\textsuperscript{16} Furthermore, Szabolcsi mentions the Törökös (Hungarian word for “Turkish”), a folk dance which existed in Hungary probably because of the many years of Turkish domination over and presence in Hungary during the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 30.
\item \textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 31–2.
\item \textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 45.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 38.
\item \textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 40.
\end{itemize}
country’s history. The Törökös displayed a reliance on melodic thirds, a possible connection with the Turkish style’s emphasis on the use of this interval.

The *style hongrois* overtook the Turkish style in the early 1800s for several reasons. From a broad perspective, the two styles shared “great popularity, dubious cultural associations, and an elemental attraction that made it successful with all levels of society.” Composers such as F. J. Haydn, W. A. Mozart, and Beethoven used both styles, and although combining Turkish style and *style hongrois* traits at times, were also fully aware of the two styles as independent entities and occasionally employed them separately from each other. These three composers were primarily responsible for the initial inclusion of the *style hongrois* in art music. Though Mozart was not completely comfortable with the *style hongrois*, Haydn and Beethoven used it confidently. Haydn grew up near the Hungarian border and later spent many years working for the Hungarian Esterházy family, thus insuring his familiarity with things Hungarian. Beethoven was familiar with the style partly through the performances of János Bihari, a famous Gypsy violinist.

Hungarian Gypsy music became popular and all musical things Hungarian—often published under titles such as *Ungarischer Tanz* or *Hongroise*—became commercially

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19 Ibid., 44.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid., 55.

22 Ibid., 48–9.

lucrative. Because of the sale of such publications and the frequent performances of Gypsies in Western cafés, Western audiences recognized style hongrois gestures in the music of composers such as Haydn and Beethoven. The waning Turkish style, meanwhile, had no such support, as the sounds of Janissary music at the siege of Vienna were but distant historical memories, already over a hundred years old. Also ongoing at this time was a change from polished Classical sensibilities to the highly personal expression of the Romantics. The style hongrois, though at first stylized (as was the Turkish style) to fit Classical conventions, was soon intensified rather than subdued by the burgeoning Romantic leanings of Weber and Schubert, who had an “increasing artistic interest in the strange, the terrible and the exotic.” Thus, the style hongrois was able to “speak to the emerging Romantic sensibility with an immediacy and relevance unavailable to the largely burlesque Turkish style.” Though examples of Turkish style use are to be found as late as the 1820s—see the Turkish march in Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony—the style’s demise was largely due to its aged implications of a Turkish empire no longer fearsome, and its strictly percussive, march-like character, a musical personality but one-dimensional. In the words of Jonathan Bellman:

As the Turkish style was neither an elevated nor a multifaceted musical language, and the style hongrois was developing into precisely that, the newer exotic dialect’s eclipse of the older was total. The style hongrois was capable of a wide range of emotion, from grief to abandon, utmost seriousness to frivolity, yet always with an accent and significance unattainable by more traditional musical language. What lent it this expressive power was less its country of origin than the people who disseminated it, because their extraordinary

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24 Bellman, The Style Hongrois, 63.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid., 65.
27 Ibid., 45.
28 Ibid., 66.
circumstances and situation in society lent both an aura of forbidden mystery and an allure to their music.29

It was these alluring Gypsy performances of Hungarian music that laid the foundation for the *style hongrois* in art music. Bellman defines the style as a “specific musical language used by Western composers from the mid-eighteenth century to the twentieth century to evoke the performances of Hungarian Gypsies.”30 As a musical style, the *style hongrois* is actually twice removed from Hungarian folk and popular music. Art music imitated Gypsy performances of Hungarian music, but because the musical materials were mostly Hungarian in origin, the Hungarian label has been employed to describe this dialect of art music more than the term Gypsy.31 Gypsy (or Romani) folk songs certainly exist, but have not been part of the *style hongrois*.32

The Gypsies formed a veritable musical caste in Hungary for centuries. Though often dreaded and ostracized, the Gypsies were nevertheless recognized for their musical talent. While native Hungarians were stifled in their performing aspirations, mainly by the religious decrees of the Counter-Reformation, Gypsies passed on the trade of musical performance to their descendants.33 Through their nomadic lifestyle, Gypsies contributed to this music’s dissemination throughout Western Europe.34 It was this “almost irresistible art of

29 Ibid., 68.
30 Ibid., 11.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid., 16–7.
33 Ibid.
interpretation”\textsuperscript{35} that inspired composers of art music to include traits of the Hungarian Gypsies’ performance into their works. Furthermore, Gypsies were regarded as outsiders in Europe and provided a target for the West’s fears and yearnings. Effectively, then, the \textit{style hongrois} evoked the same connotations in Western minds as live Gypsy performances.\textsuperscript{36}

Gypsies’ performances involved both folk melodies and popular dances of the Hungarians. In the eighteenth century, German-educated Hungarian musicians tried to do away with supposedly anachronistic Hungarian folk musical traits such as pentatonicism, ecclesiastical modes, homophony, irregular rhythm and meter, and attempted to censure the declamatory folk music, as well as Gypsy performances of the \textit{verbunkos}\textsuperscript{37} (the latter will be discussed below). Gypsies, who were usually in tune with commercially viable options, continued to play this newly censored music because it remained popular among the people of Hungary despite Germanophile disdain. By this action, Gypsies further cemented their status of a group removed from the mainstream (in this case, the mainstream of German-dominated music).\textsuperscript{38} Also, the instruments used by Gypsies were initially traditional in Hungarian music (including the fiddle and the bagpipe). Borrowing traditional Hungarian instruments kept Gypsies in the Hungarian people’s consciousness. And keeping “archaic” musical gestures of Hungarian folk music lent their performances a removed and exotic sound in a mainstream society committed to German art music.\textsuperscript{39} By preserving a “disappearing Hungarian musical language, [the Gypsies’] . . . performances took on the power of the sort of folk music that touches the deepest regions of

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{36} Bellman, \textit{The Style Hongrois}, 22.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid, 23.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 24.
national consciousness and became highly suggestive to all of Europe, not the Hungarians alone.\(^{40}\)

Gypsies are perhaps best known for their interpretations of Hungarian dances. Dancing was always an important aspect of Hungarian culture and was connected to the Hungarians’ history—“tribal, equestrian, and nomadic.” As a mode of expression, dancing provided an outlet for emotions, primarily “seriousness, courage, and freedom,” emotions the Gypsies were also familiar with.\(^{41}\) Gypsy performances were generally in two styles. The first was the hallgató (“to be listened to”) and entailed improvisatory-sounding music in a slow, rhapsodic pace.\(^{42}\) The second, the cifra (“flashy”) was meant for dancing and was partly responsible for the wild, frenetic side of the Gypsy stereotype.\(^{43}\) A dance type frequently associated with Gypsy performances was the verbunkos, or recruiting dance, initially called simply a Magyar (or “the Hungarian”). This recruiting tool was to paint a picture of a jolly army life; it began slowly and led to a frenzied dance finish.\(^{44}\) The verbunkos, partly through the Gypsies’ performances, was disseminated westward and became an internationally recognizable Hungarian national dance. A later offshoot of the verbunkos, the csárdás (and Gypsy performances of it) also became popular. This was also a Hungarian traditional national dance in two parts—a lassú, or lassan (“slow”) and a friss, or friska (“fresh” or “quick”). In a larger sense, the csárdás can simply mean a string

\(^{40}\) Ibid.

\(^{41}\) Ibid., 19–20.

\(^{42}\) Ibid., 17.

\(^{43}\) Ibid.

\(^{44}\) Ibid., 18.
of sections arranged from slow to fast. This dance was the one associated most often with Gypsies in the West European consciousness.

Through the Gypsies’ rousing renditions of this music in the cities of the West, mainstream European listeners fell in love with this new and individual music and started to imitate it. Moreover, this music’s popularity was also increased by the fictionalized picture of the Gypsies in the Western mind. This portrait revealed Gypsies as Europeans believed them to be, not who the Gypsies truly were. It is to this multi-faceted Gypsy stereotype that we turn our attention to in the next chapter.

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46 Ibid.
Chapter 2. Kaleidoscope: Facets of the Nineteenth-Century Gypsy Stereotype in Historical Context

In nineteenth-century European society, the image of Gypsies was a mixture of fact, fiction and nonfiction, an intermingling of positive and negative connotations, an emotional whirlwind of attraction and disgust, a mirage of idealized Romanticism, and a picture of earthiness and alleged misbehavior. The Gypsy stereotype emerged multidimensional, at once well-known and still mysterious, invigorated by the Gypsies’ omnipresence in nineteenth-century life, while concomitantly remaining removed from the mainstream. Like a shifting kaleidoscope, the many facets of the Gypsy stereotype are impossible to clearly capture in description. Our best chance, then, is to focus on some broad categories of Gypsy traits (whether real or fictionalized), and thus establish at least a sketch of this complicated image.

An attempt at clarity requires categorization. Reality, however, clouds those categories with some overlap, and the reader is urged to view these categories as broad brushstrokes rather than detailed drawings. Five such categories of the Gypsy stereotype emerge: 1) the Gypsies’ sensual, fascinating manner; 2) their wildly emotional behavior; 3) their love of freedom and fierce independence; 4) their alleged immoral, criminal, even subhuman behavior; and 5) their “inborn,” bountiful musical talent. This chapter will attempt to shed light on these aspects of the Gypsy stereotype, and in the process, bring that stereotype more clearly into focus. Such attempts usually fall short of the true complexity of the Gypsy image and therefore the image may remain—as the nineteenth-century Gypsies themselves—slightly mysterious, and thus all the more interesting.
1) The Gypsies’ sensual, fascinating manner

Let us begin with the mesmerizing, sensual aspect of this stereotype. The visual description often ascribed to Gypsies is easily perceived. Sir Walter Scott, in the novel *Guy Mannering* of 1815, depicts Gypsies’ “wild features, dark eyes, and swarthy faces.”¹ Their dress was portrayed as exotic and colorful, “with headscarves, trinkets and droopy earrings in abundance,”² referring especially to the allure of the exotic Gypsy maiden. In English and German fiction of the time, Gypsy characters were treated relatively kindly, with romanticized notions of freedom and prideful independence. Seductive Gypsy maidens were often found in stories of the day, either serving as Romantic escapism for the author and his readers—if an acceptable love story developed—or as a target for society’s reproach, if the Gypsy girl was portrayed as a dangerous temptress for the “white” hero. In either case, the exoticism of such writings held much fascination for the nineteenth-century reader. Gypsies’ alluring dance rhythms, captivating musical performance, and mesmerizing dance motions held even more fascination for Europeans. Gypsies were often present at nineteenth-century celebrations, and with their passionate music livened up the atmosphere and stirred the emotions. Also part of many celebrations was the dancing act of a Gypsy maiden, frequently seen—and described—at carnivals and street celebrations. The seductive sway of her motions signified much that was inwardly desired but outwardly forbidden.


2) The Gypsies’ wildly emotional behavior

These celebratory aspects provide an easy transition to the wildly emotional characteristic of the Gypsy stereotype. This supposed mercurial shifting of sentiments provided a strong attraction for mainstream Europeans who operated under centuries of social and behavioral etiquette guidelines. Gypsies were known for the wild celebrations mentioned above, and provided a fresh alternative to the often stuffy ballroom events of high society. As established and excellent entertainers, Gypsies often exploited the romanticized myth Europeans believed about an idle, carefree Gypsy life; by catering to what society found attractive about them, Gypsies could profit and make a living. Given their exclusion from most professions, Gypsies capitalized on those allowed to them by society, and entertaining at parties was one such money-making option.³ Sometimes organized balls were held in Gypsy camps; despite the warnings of religious and civic leaders about allegations of theft and prostitution, these balls were very popular.⁴ More typical, however, were the ubiquitous Gypsy fiddlers in Western restaurants and cafés, and Gypsy entertainers at rural celebrations. The latter situation became so habitual that it led to the inclusion (albeit reluctant) of Gypsies in some facets of rural life, and even some marriages between traveling Gypsy entertainers and locals.⁵

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³ That Gypsies gained some financial profit from their music in no way diminishes the real emotional character of their playing. Romanian-native Dan Balacon recounted his memories of witnessing Gypsy fiddlers entertaining at rural Romanian celebrations. The fiddlers generally performed the musical requests of the guests. Sometimes, however, a guest would tell one of the fiddlers, “Now play about your own passion.” Dan Balacon recounts that during such playing the emotional content was so high that few guests could keep from crying. (Dan Balacon of Hicksville, Ohio, interview by author, 7 May 2005, Hicksville, Ohio.)

⁴ Mayall, Gypsy-travellers, 56–7.

⁵ Ibid., 55.
Gypsies’ talent at rousing foot-stomping fervor at social events was only one emotional aspect Europeans attributed to the Gypsies’ supposed “black blood.”6 The wandering people’s dark skin, emotional behavior, and social practices that seemed strange to Europeans were quickly attributed a physical cause. This “black blood” served to explain Gypsies inclination toward “wild celebration and exultation” on one hand, deep melancholy and sorrow on the other, and professionally, Gypsies’ musical abilities.7

Society attributed Gypsies’ often inexplicably shifting emotional states to invented physical causes or equally fabricated “historical facts.” While Gypsies’ wild impulsiveness and passionate intensity frequently lent a special poignancy to their music, they were unpredictably moody and often sorrowful not because of their supposedly “black blood,” but because of the real and daunting challenges and persecutions they endured.8 Gypsies were thought to rapidly change from one emotional state to another, unburdened by societal constraints. This kaleidoscope of sentiments—from whimsical to passionate, from carefree to grief-stricken, from celebratory to melancholy—interpreted by Europeans as yet another anomaly of the Gypsies, was most likely the Gypsies’ attempt to cope with a difficult life and blatant mistreatment by society.

Accused of immoral and criminal behavior (for reasons to be discussed later in this chapter), Gypsies were openly punished and persecuted . . . . Depending on locale and period, they could be . . . legally hunted, enslaved, or simply subjected to far more common forms of persecution: banishment, harassment, and general abuse and contempt. As non-Christians with no

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7 Ibid.
8 Ibid., 86.
economic power, they occupied the lowest conceivable place in European society, to which all known contemporary sources bear witness.⁹

In the Romanian provinces of Wallachia and Moldavia, for example, Gypsies were slaves until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and female slaves were expected to perform sexual favors for their master and guests.¹⁰ The fate for Gypsies in Hungary was even worse. In 1726 Charles VI ordered Gypsies to leave Hungary: disobedience was severely punished with executions and beatings.¹¹ In fact, “the sport of Gypsy hunting” continued into the nineteenth century; it was lawful and condoned by society to such an extent that some noblemen were proud of their record of slaying Gypsies.¹² When faced with such severe realities, is it any wonder, then, that Gypsies were emotional and often melancholy people? This melancholy is aptly captured by nineteenth-century poet Matthew Arnold:

Who taught this pleading to unpractised eyes?
Who hid such import in an infant’s gloom?
Who lent thee, child, this meditative guise?
Who mass’d, round that slight brow, these clouds of doom?

Glooms that go deep as thine I have not known.
Moods of fantastic sadness, nothing worth.
Thy sorrow and thy calmness are thine own:
Glooms that enhance and glorify the earth.¹³

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¹¹ Ibid., 86.

¹² Ibid., 86–7.

3) The Gypsies’ love of freedom and fierce independence

Mistreatment stemmed partly from the fact that Europeans did not understand Gypsies’ lifestyle and culture; as most things misunderstood, such differences between the mainstream and Gypsies caused the latter to be viewed with mistrust. One facet of Gypsy behavior that troubled Western Europeans was the Gypsies’ nomadic lifestyle. To quote Jonathan Bellman, “In a Europe where people and their native land were to a certain extent conceptually inseparable, a wandering people, distinct in appearance and behavior, was immediate cause for suspicion and hatred.”\(^{14}\) This suspicion was perhaps understandable in Western Europe, but was highly ironic in Hungary, given Hungarian people’s own nomadic history.

Gypsies’ love of freedom and the open road and their fiercely independent nature gave rise to two conflicting stereotypical notions. The first notion was an idealization of the Gypsies’ carefree life, often exhibited in the fiction of the time.\(^{15}\) The characters’ “foreign origin was the basis around which images were drawn of a romantic people, living an idle, natural, al fresco life, camped in secluded woods and forests.”\(^{16}\) Thus emerged ideas of a separate, mystical race of Gypsies, which possessed pure blood and furthered the “true Gypsy” people as “aristocrats of the road.”\(^{17}\) These ideas of racial purity were set off against the second stereotypical notion about the nomadic people, which held that it must be the wanderers of mixed blood who committed the crimes society ascribed to Gypsies.\(^{18}\) This dual stereotype served to explain the concomitant harsh criticism and romantic curiosity Europeans had for Gypsies.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., 78.

\(^{15}\) Mayall, *Gypsy-travellers*, 71.

\(^{16}\) Ibid.

\(^{17}\) Ibid., 73, 186.

\(^{18}\) Ibid., 73–4.
4) The Gypsies’ alleged immoral, criminal, even subhuman behavior

As nomads, Gypsies became easy targets for accusations of criminal offenses in the communities they stopped in.\(^{19}\) As outsiders, Gypsies were ascribed illegal and immoral actions; they supposedly committed impermissible acts, a view similar to the criticism of their unorthodox musical performance practices (to be discussed in Chapter 4). These alleged crimes included theft and robbery, violence, incest, and even charges as ridiculous as cannibalism of “whites.” The latter was an accusation made in 1782 in Hungary. Though the allegation was not proven, the accused Gypsies were executed. This charge haunted Europeans for some time, and Gypsies were only much later, and reluctantly, acknowledged as innocent.\(^{20}\) A charge that was much more widespread, yet equally unfounded, was that of baby-snatching. Gypsies were thought to steal white babies because they supposedly disliked their own dark skin.\(^ {21}\) Europeans assumed that Gypsies used these stolen infants later to intermarry and strengthen their own race.\(^ {22}\) By far the most common allegation, however, was that Gypsies were thieves and robbers. This notion was so ingrained in European minds that even people unfamiliar with the Gypsies immediately assumed it must be true. The Reverend Robert Walsh, in a travelogue published in 1828, writes “expressing his surprise” when a Gypsy woman “neglected to rob him”: “I had been travelling [sic] for the first time in my life with a young Gipsey [sic]; and it struck me that she might have exercised her professional talents on whatever she could lay her hand.”\(^ {23}\)

\(^{19}\) Ibid., 81.

\(^{20}\) Bellman, *The Style Hongrois*, 86.

\(^{21}\) Ibid., 77.

\(^{22}\) Mayall, *Gypsy-travellers*, 82.

not resort to theft is a prime example of the flaws of the nineteenth-century Gypsy stereotype. Widely maligned, Gypsies rarely committed the offenses they were accused of, but because of their distinct appearance and lifestyle, remained nevertheless unjustly ostracized.

Europeans had plenty of myths to fuel their suspicion and mistreatment of Gypsies, however. Their belief that Gypsies had black blood was but one explanation for the wanderers’ supposed crimes. Another, slightly related cause was an ancient myth with fabricated Biblical connections. Often recounted in contemporary literature is a story about Mary and Joseph’s flight to Egypt with the infant Jesus. During their escape, they supposedly asked for, but were denied, shelter by the Gypsies. 24 As a result, the Gypsies were cursed. 25 This ancient curse was believed to have led them to criminal behavior and induced them to “pour out the wrath of the curse on themselves and future generations.”26 Religious rationalizations for mistreatment of Gypsies easily spring from this supposed curse. Furthermore, Gypsies did not seem to have a religion of their own. Though they adopted the religion of whatever country they were in, they adapted it to their own practices and therefore were accused by society of not “getting it right.”27 Because some Gypsies had trouble accepting the Christian concept of life after death, Europeans had few qualms about persecuting them as “heathens.”28 As Jonathan Bellman writes: “[If Gypsies supposedly denied] the resurrection of the soul after death, [then] they were really denying the divine part of humankind. If this was an accurate indication of the state of their souls, then their

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26 Ibid., 72.

27 Ibid., 81–2.

28 Ibid.
debased condition in society required neither explanation nor concern.”²⁹ Gypsies did not have their own religion that Europeans could criticize—as did the Muslims or Jews—but because of the curse, society felt entitled to draw a parallel with Jews who were also supposedly cursed for not accepting Jesus as the Messiah. This way, persecutions and punishment of Gypsies could be dressed in the garb of moral and religious entitlement.³⁰

Such “godless” people could only mean immoral temptation in European opinion. Though indisputably attractive, as temptations usually are, they were easy to condemn on morally self-righteous grounds. For example, the very image of the stereotypically exotic, alluring Gypsy maiden—and more rarely, the enticing handsome Gypsy man—were contrasted with severe accusations of exceeding sexual freedom: “They were free-living and free-loving, with a sexual appetite matched only by their wanderlust.”³¹ Not thought to honor marriage vows, Gypsies were often portrayed in literature as sexually attractive but fickle.³²

In non-fiction, criticisms were harsh, including such allegations as the Reverend Walsh’s, of multiple sexual partners, and Gypsy mothers bearing children by different fathers.³³ All of this allure and forbidden temptation of a people supposedly very open about their sexuality could only be threatening to society. Extremely tempting, it was feared to be pulling “innocent” Europeans into “sin.”

In addition to moral degradation, physical debasement was also ascribed to Gypsies. Notwithstanding the fact that their poverty was caused mainly by society’s ostracism, Gypsies

²⁹ Ibid., 82.
³⁰ Ibid.
³¹ Mayall, *Gypsy-travellers*, 75.
³² Bellman, *The Style Hongrois*, 84.
were viewed either to romantically embrace poverty as a choice—“poverty which owns everything because it can disdain everything”34—or as an outcome of Gypsies’ reputed laziness and stupidity. Their rustic and earthy camps were assumed to be terribly dirty and the inhabitants disgustingly lacking in basic hygiene. An extreme opinion of this situation was stated by a Lithuanian minister named Zippel, “Gypsies in a well-ordered state . . . are like vermin on an animal’s body.”35 An occasional more unbiased observer’s claims that Gypsy tents were actually quite neat went largely unnoticed against the flood of accusations of squalor and degradation. And such debasement seemed only logical to Europeans who saw these wandering outsiders as simple and stupid. Ironically, the Gypsies could not distinguish themselves professionally—and thus earn respect—mainly because society barred them from most professions. Yet, in a vicious cycle, the very fact that Gypsies only performed minor jobs reinforced Europeans’ pejorative view. Moreover, this supposed professional and intellectual shortfall, coupled with the above-mentioned mercurial emotional shifts, further reinforced the stereotype of Gypsies as removed from society, in fact, “so simplistic . . . as to be barely human.”36

5) The Gypsies’ “inborn,” bountiful musical talent

Yet despite all these negative connotations, Gypsies were universally acknowledged to be skilled musicians, possessors of an innate talent of a mythical nature. In spite of their supposed stupidity and lack of knowledge, Gypsies nevertheless were able to impress with their musical skills. The Reverend Walsh recounts, “by the delicacy of the sense of hearing, they readily catch the melody, and take their parts in the harmony of a concert; but I was informed they could not


be taught to read a note of music, and all their knowledge was by ear.”37 Offering one of the few positive comments on Gypsies in his travelogue, he also mentions that Gypsies “have naturally very acute and delicate perceptions of sounds, and hence they are greatly disposed to and delighted with music: this talent is much cultivated, and they form usually the musicians of these countries . . . . I have often heard them play, and always with pleasure.”38

Notwithstanding their romanticized discourse, the following two quotations show the impression Gypsy musicians made on listeners, including educated Western composers. In his book, The Gipsy in Music, Franz Liszt enthused about Gypsy musical inspiration:

In the very act of passing the bow across the violin-strings a natural inspiration suggested itself; and, without any search for them, there came rhythm, cadences, modulation, melodies and tonal discourses. . . . In his music [the Gypsy] revealed that golden ray of interior light proper to himself, which otherwise the world would never have known or suspected. He made it dance and glitter in the fascination of a wild harmony, fantastic and full of discords; and thus, by a mixture of unexpected outline, glaring colour, sudden change and quick transformation, endowed it with its many seductive features.39

Similarly, a traveler named Johann Georg Kohl described the fascination of a Gypsy performance he witnessed on a trip through Hungary in 1840:

But the Gypsies [play] the true national compositions of Hungary, which breathe a peculiar spirit, and are distinguished by certain original turns and phrases, which I never remember to have heard anywhere else. . . . I could easily understand the partiality manifested by the people generally for this music, for there is something in its character so wild and impassioned—it has tones of such deep melancholy, such heart-piercing grief, and wild despair, that one is involuntarily carried away by it; and although on the whole, the performance of the Gypsies is rude and wild, many of them manifest so much of musical inspiration, as may well make amends for their deficiencies in scientific culture.40

37 Walsh, Travelogue of a Journey, 193.

38 Ibid., quoted in Bellman, The Style Hongrois, 89.


Indeed, a few Gypsies were able to earn some respect in society because of their musical skills. The famous János Bihari, a Gypsy musician and virtuoso fiddler, played for important members of Western society, including Beethoven. He formed a famous Gypsy band around 1801. Despite a lack of formal musical training, he was even able to distinguish himself as a composer of *verbunkos*, being credited with more than eighty compositions.41

A two-dimensional connection between Gypsies and artists in general emerged. First, the word *Bohémien* (applied to Gypsies in France) was used because Gypsies initially came from the east, where Bohemia lies.42 But eventually the word Bohemian came to indicate carefree young artists who were interested in their art and youth more than practical matters.43 Second, in a broader sense than the word connection, artists of the Romantic era came to recognize Gypsies as “their spiritual cousins.”44 Just as artists have often faced suspicion and unpleasant situations because they choose to follow their artistic ideals, Gypsies’ ability to persevere despite obvious persecution was deemed worthy of respect in artistic circles. Gypsies held fast to their lifestyle despite obvious attempts by society to “correct” their behavior. In artistic minds, such adherence to ideals made Gypsies’ situation quite similar to an artist’s plight.45

Despite evident connections with the Gypsies’ situation, European artists maintained much more common ground with mainstream society than with Gypsies, however. Through their artistic expression, composers were often able to speak of society’s views. Ultimately, Europeans used their perceptions—of a “wild,” “impassioned” people with “heart-piercing grief” and “wild

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42 Bellman, *The Style Hongrois*, 90.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid, 91.

45 Ibid.
despair” feeding their “musical inspiration”—to construct a romanticized notion of the persecuted Gypsies. In discussing Orientalism, Edward Said makes a statement easily applied to Western composers and the style hongrois. He writes, “It remains the professional Orientalist’s job to piece together a portrait, a restored picture as it were, of . . . the Oriental. . . .” 46 In other words, by evoking Hungarian-Gypsy music through using the style hongrois, Western composers could reconstruct and depict the intriguing Gypsy “Other.” One such composer was Johannes Brahms.

46 Said, Orientalism, 151.
Chapter 3. Brahms’s Connection to Hungarian Music, Including a Background for the *Style Hongrois* in His *Hungarian Dances*

By the time Brahms reached musical maturity in the 1850s, the *style hongrois* had been in use in Western Europe for decades and was familiar to audiences. Brahms’s connection with Hungarian and Gypsy music developed through his interest in folk and popular music, his participation in performances of this repertory, and finally through a thorough absorption of this music’s recognizable traits into his own compositional language. His *Hungarian Dances* represent not only a musical product of this connection and final synthesis, but also an emotional outpouring quite unlike most of his works, a brash outburst of sentiment all the more startling when viewed in the context of Brahms’s usual emotional restraint.

Brahms’s interest in Hungarian folk and popular music began in his youth. He found inspiration in folk music\(^1\) and over the years amassed an important collection of old manuscripts and folk song transcriptions.\(^2\) His sizeable personal library contained Gypsy melodies which appealed to the composer by their unusual meters.\(^3\) Also in his collection were many notebooks of Hungarian folk melodies and Hungarian popular and art music pieces of the time. The collection included *verbunkos* examples, versions of the Hungarian Rákoczy song, and pieces by such art composers as Liszt and Joachim.\(^4\)

Brahms’s collaboration with Joseph Joachim and Eduard Reményi—both violinists of Hungarian-Jewish ancestry—was another source of his knowledge of the Hungarian style.

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\(^1\) MacDonald, *Brahms*, 51.
\(^2\) Ibid., 382.
\(^3\) Ibid., 192.
\(^4\) Szerző, “Magyar zeneműnyomtatványok Brahms könyvtárában”: 159.
Political upheaval following the 1848 revolution in which Hungary rebelled against the Austrian Habsburg dominance forced some Hungarians, including Reményi, to leave their native land.\(^5\) In Brahms’s native Hamburg, Reményi played concerts accompanied by the young pianist. During these concerts

the emotional peak of each program came when Reményi, his fiddle sobbing with nationalistic zeal, dispensed his Magyar and [Gypsy] . . . tunes. Brahms worked out his own accompaniments for the pieces and probably never wrote them down. This repertoire would be of great consequence to him. From Reményi and later from Joachim—a friend of Reményi’s—[Brahms] . . . absorbed not only the style but the spirit of “Hungarian” folk music.\(^6\)

Reményi’s repertoire of Hungarian and Gypsy melodies encouraged Brahms to explore the style further, through folk and popular song transcriptions and arrangements. This interest in Hungarian-Gypsy music was to leave an unmistakable mark on Brahms’s compositional output.

Brahms’s compositions in this style will be examined in some detail at the conclusion of this document, but a brief overview is appropriate here. As early as 1844, when Brahms was just eleven years old, he published arrangements of Hungarian tunes.\(^7\) He absorbed the Gypsy style of performance and often programmed his own arrangements of the famous Hungarian Rákoczy March.\(^8\) Brahms’s output in the style hongrois includes the Variations on a Hungarian Song for piano, Op. 21, No. 2, many Gypsy finales to chamber pieces, including the Rondo alla Zingarese from the Op. 25 Piano Quartet, and of course, the two sets of Hungarian Dances. Late in life, Brahms composed the Zigeunerlieder, Op. 103 and the Vier Zigeunerlieder, Op. 112, as well as the Clarinet Quintet, Op. 115 with a second movement in style hongrois. Other pieces—

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\(^{5}\) Herzog, “Aspects of the Style Hongrois,” 37.


\(^{7}\) Herzog, “Aspects of the Style Hongrois,” 38.

\(^{8}\) Ibid., 39.
including some piano variations and character pieces—have Gypsy tinges.\(^9\) Such examples include the eighth variation of the *Variations on a Theme of Robert Schumann* for four-hands, Op. 23, the thirteenth and fourteenth variations from the *Variations on a Theme by Handel*, Op. 24, and the ninth variation of the *Variations on a Theme of Paganini*, Op. 35. Two character pieces for piano that include Gypsy features are the Intermezzo Op. 118, No. 6 and the Rhapsodie Op. 119, No. 4.\(^{10}\)

That Brahms became such a master at expressing emotions through the *style hongrois* may be explained by the very fact that he had difficulty with strong emotions in other areas of life. Brahms once wrote: “[p]assions are not natural to mankind, they are always exceptions or excrescences . . . . The ideal and the genuine man is calm both in his joy and in his sorrow. Passions must quickly pass or else they must be hunted out.”\(^{11}\) Such a firm decision to control his feelings was lamented by his friend Clara Schumann. After being unrequitedly infatuated with Clara’s daughter Julie and having to witness her marriage to another man, Brahms wrote the moving *Alto Rhapsody*. A surprisingly understanding Clara was deeply affected by this work. The piece expressed Brahms’s anguish over losing any chance with Julie. Clara wished he could express himself so naturally in words, but he was apparently able to do so only in music.\(^{12}\)

Even more remarkable is Brahms’s emotional expression in the *Hungarian Dances*. Biographer Jan Swafford writes: “Friends remembered his flashing eyes when Brahms played his dances, the rhythm darting and halting, his hands all over the keyboard at once . . . . [He initially] resisted writing them down . . . [because] he felt unsure how to capture that protean freedom in


\(^{10}\) Herzog, “Aspects of the *Style Hongrois*,” 65–70.

\(^{11}\) From a letter to Clara Schumann, 11 October 1857, quoted in Swafford, *Johannes Brahms*, xiv.

\(^{12}\) Swafford, *Johannes Brahms*, 351.
Further testament to Brahms’s emotional performances of the *Dances* is an Edison cylinder recording of a portion of the Hungarian Dance No. 1 with Brahms at the piano:

> The syncopations are done very emphatically, with an agogic accent and a loud punch . . . . The runs are taken at a distinctly increased tempo . . . ; this, too is a dashing effect, and the best moment in the whole cylinder is the cadence at the end . . . , which is tossed off with a fiery snap, faster yet than the tempo of the runs.¹⁴

Partly because of his collaboration with Reményi and Joachim, Brahms’s use of the *style hongrois* was grounded in personal experience with Hungarian music, not solely based on hearing itinerant Gypsy musicians in Viennese restaurants. But the latter was nonetheless a habit close to his heart. He often sat for hours at the *Café Czarda*, listening to the Gypsy fiddlers who seemed especially inspired when Brahms was present.¹⁵ And what an impact that music must have had! Though Brahms evidently enjoyed it, hearing Gypsy musicians was such a powerful experience that other listeners were overwhelmed. An eighteen-year old Samuel Barber recounts his feelings upon hearing such a performance:

> [The Gypsy orchestra] began playing some violins, and viola and bass, with a [cimbalom]. It swept me off my feet; for it was not music; it was a [release] . . . of an expression too naïve, too naked and living to be music. It is something I shall never forget, and I left Budapest early for I did not wish to hear it again.¹⁶

In contrast to Barber, Brahms appears to have been identifying with the Gypsy “Other” in his supposed wildness and freedom. In other words, the *style hongrois* may have provided Brahms with a powerful emotional outlet. In the course of this document, I will show how

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¹³ Ibid., 343.


Brahms’s use of the *style hongrois* in his *Hungarian Dances* is a construction of the “Other” and a recipe that can be broken down into specific musical ingredients.

As an effective tool for emotional expression, the *style hongrois* in the *Hungarian Dances* encourages Brahms to use passionate juxtapositions of material, widely varying tempi and moods, exotic melodies, and effervescent dance rhythms. To quote biographer Malcolm MacDonald, “It is hard to imagine anything less like the manners of a well-behaved sonata movement, but is it abundantly clear [Brahms] . . . enjoyed writing against his own habits of logical and conscientious development.”\(^{17}\)

Nevertheless, Brahms was reluctant to *publish* the *Hungarian Dances*. The pieces had been accumulating since the 1850s, rarely notated on paper, usually performed at social gatherings. Solo versions of these works also appeared on Clara’s programs during the 1860s.\(^{18}\) The first known complete performance for piano four-hands of the first set of ten dances was in the summer of 1868 with Brahms and Clara at the piano.\(^ {19}\) Simrock published the set for piano four-hands in 1869. In 1880, for a celebration following the presentation of a monument at Robert Schumann’s grave in Bonn,\(^ {20}\) Brahms and Clara performed the second set of *Hungarian Dances*; these eleven pieces were published later that year.\(^ {21}\) Because of the Dances’ popularity, Brahms made solo piano versions of the first ten in 1872. Nos. 1, 3, and 10 were orchestrated by Brahms. The remaining pieces of the first set as well as Nos. 17–21 from the second set were

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\(^{17}\) MacDonald, *Brahms*, 193.

\(^{18}\) Ibid., 192.

\(^{19}\) Ibid., 137–8.


\(^{21}\) Ibid., 459.
orchestrated by Brahms’s friend Antonín Dvořák. Joachim arranged both sets for violin and piano.

A brief commentary on the musical sources of the *Hungarian Dances* is necessary, although not the focus of this study. Brahms thought of most of the *Dances* as arrangements. Research suggests that only Nos. 11, 14, and 16 were entirely of Brahms’s creation. The others he insisted be published as “arranged by” Johannes Brahms. Most pieces were inspired not by Hungarian folk tunes, but by Hungarian popular music, especially *csárdás* tunes. Reményi voiced concern that some of the financially profitable *Hungarian Dances* plagiarized his own melodies. It is more likely, however, that Brahms remembered many of the violinist’s tunes and a score of others from other settings and later transcribed them from memory, thus carefully publishing the *Hungarian Dances* as arrangements. Brahms may not have known that these melodies were not folk songs. It is even possible that he was unconcerned with the exact nature of the musical sources, whether Hungarian folk or popular Gypsy music, choosing to focus on the musical qualities he liked in this material, and appreciating the inspiration the material offered him.

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26 Swafford, *Johannes Brahms*, 344.


28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

fashionable, and we can suppose that Brahms was not averse to employing this practice himself.\textsuperscript{31} The source study issue aside, Brahms did imbue these “arrangements” with his own style and forms.\textsuperscript{32}

The second set of the \textit{Hungarian Dances}, though it is the one containing some wholly original pieces by Brahms, seems to be even more Hungarian-Gypsy in character than the first set. As historian Michael Musgrave writes, this set displays “what Brahms regarded as Hungarian in his own music . . . [H]e draws on his own rich vein of ‘gipsy’ feeling, drawing various of the characteristic surface idioms into a seemingly instinctive expression.”\textsuperscript{33}

This “instinctive expression” manifested itself through specific musical characteristics of the \textit{style hongrois}. Instrumental, rhythmic, melodic, harmonic, and other musical devices typical of the style afforded Brahms the tools for his emotional, personal depiction of the Gypsy “Other.” To better understand the specifics of this style, we turn to individual \textit{style hongrois} traits in the next chapter.

\textsuperscript{31} Swafford, \textit{Johannes Brahms}, 38.

\textsuperscript{32} MacDonald, \textit{Brahms}, 193.

\textsuperscript{33} Musgrave, \textit{The Music of Brahms}, 61.
Chapter 4. Tools of the Trade: Specific Style Hongrois Gestures

A list of style hongrois traits along with examples and explanations is found in Jonathan Bellman’s seminal book on this topic, The Style Hongrois in the Music of Western Europe.¹ The present document is indebted to Bellman’s lexicon and categorization of style hongrois gestures. All of the musical descriptions of these gestures are derived from the Bellman chapter cited above, and I have not found any more such gestures than Bellman collected. Many of these gestures are found in Hungarian folk and popular music and the Gypsies’ performance style of this music. My contribution has been to provide and discuss examples of these traits in excerpts of Hungarian folk and popular tunes as well as Szabolcsi’s transcriptions of Gypsy performances of this music (all these examples are found in Szabolcsi’s A Concise History of Hungarian Music).² In short, the musical description of style hongrois gestures is Bellman’s, and the musical examples are Szabolcsi’s. My other contribution consists in highlighting the relationship between these style hongrois features and Gypsy stereotype attributes, be they real or fictionalized, as Brahms and his contemporaries may have perceived them, or rather, as they chose to interpret them. Relating musical gestures to Gypsy “traits” will thus set the foundation for my own analysis of the Brahms Hungarian Dances, found in Chapter 5.

With a few exceptions, according to Bellman, most style hongrois traits fall into four categories: 1) instrumental techniques of Hungarian derivation or associated with Gypsy bands, 2) rhythmic gestures common in Hungarian folk tunes or popular dance, 3) melodic traits, including both historically recognizable Hungarian gestures and colorful intervals used simply

for exotic effect, and 4) harmonic devices that provide much of the immediacy of feeling associated with the style.

**Instrumental techniques:**

Violins were particularly important to Gypsy bands; consequently, these fiddle techniques were translated into music for other instruments. One such technique entailed using small, noisy ornaments (perhaps a carry-over from the Turkish style) especially in fast tempi. Brahms’s friend Elizabeth von Herzogenberg was enchanted by the *Hungarian Dances*; she wrote to the composer, “This medley of twirls and grace-notes, this jingling, whistling, gurgling clatter is all reproduced in such a way that the piano ceases to be a piano, and one is carried away right into the midst of the fiddlers.”³ This lively sound, perhaps depicting the stereotypical dangling jewelry of the enticing Gypsy maiden, is exemplified by the busy grace- and thirty-second-notes in Example 4.1.

*Example 4.1.* Márk Rózsavölgyi, two movements from *First Hungarian Society Dance* (1842), “Dreamy dance,” mm. 9–16, and “Spirited,” mm. 1–8.⁴

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Another fiddle technique was meant to mock the Gypsies’ untrained style of playing. Wide leaps to lower notes supposedly imitate the performer scraping the strings or struggling with tuning. Notice the quick repeated leaps in m. 15 of Example 4.2 and the pervasive accented, syncopated leaps in Example 4.3.

*Example 4.2.* Antal Csermák, *Slow Magyar* (from the series “Magyar Nóták Veszprém Vármegyéből”), 1826, mm. 9–21.⁵

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⁵ Ibid., 153.
Pizzicato imitation is often part of the *style hongrois* and, according to Bellman, was probably a technique used even before the Gypsies’ arrival in Hungary. Whether borrowed or original, this technique was a recognizable part of the Gypsies’ performance style. Sometimes pizzicato established a flirtatious, inviting character, other times it showed the performer’s virtuosity in fast tempi. In Example 4.4 the staccato passages could have very well been played pizzicato.

*Example 4.4. Rákoczi’s Lament* according to the publication of Gábor Mátray (1826) and Ede Bartay (1860), mm. 24–34.7

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6 Ibid., 155.

7 Ibid., 160.
Gypsy bands also had striking rhythmic freedom in their performances and an ability to stay together without a conductor. Liszt enthused about the ensembles’ uncanny talent to let a soloist’s imagination soar, support him only when necessary, and catch him at the end of each peroration:

The orchestra is so electrified by the fire, or, it may be, the melancholy of its chief, that, when the latter has come to the end of his explorations . . . they never fail to share his emotion. When, therefore, the moment arrives for receiving him into their arms they do not allow him to reach the earth, but sustain him, [and] aid him to rebound.8

This spontaneous flexibility is difficult to capture in the rigidity of notation. Example 4.5 is a good approximation, however.

Example 4.5. Rákoczi’s Lament according to the publication of Gábor Mátray (1826) and Ede Bartay (1860), mm. 1–23.9

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Notice the *ad lib* in the top (“solo”) part of m. 11, an improvisation which, one can assume, will be continued through the next two measures to the *fermata* and *ritenuto* of m. 13. The frequent embellished perorations against thin left-hand (“ensemble”) accompaniment, though notated strictly, can safely be interpreted as a mere guide to a more freely realized interpretation (see mm. 3–5). Such extraordinary liberties reinforced the Europeans’ stereotype regarding the Gypsies’ love of freedom and their fierce independence.

The rhapsodic embellishments seen in Example 4.5 constitute another trademark of Gypsy musicians, who were famous for their imaginative ornamentation of slow, melancholy melodies. Another instance of such embellishments appears in Example 4.6, a transcription of a *verbunkos* performance by János Bihari, a famous Gypsy fiddler.

*Example 4.6.* János Bihari, Hungarian dance or “verbunks” 1804 (Ede Bartay’s accompaniment, 1860).10

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10 Ibid., 152.
Bihari uses scalar subdivisions, grace-notes and decorative triplets to add to the melody, keeping the listener mesmerized by the intricacies of this musical Gypsy tale.

The next two *style hongrois* traits imitate other instruments besides the fiddle. Gypsy musicians’ use of bagpipes went out of fashion before the heyday of the popular nineteenth-century Gypsy bands. Nevertheless, as Bellman points out, some characteristics of the instrument were retained, including the use of drone fifths, usually played by the double bass in the Gypsy ensemble. Example 4.7 demonstrates such fifths sprinkled among more typical chordal accompaniment. Though not exclusive to the *style hongrois*, used along with other features of the style drone imitations bring an earthy, rustic character to the music, fitting for a people whom the Europeans considered dirty, disgusting, and barely human in their supposed simplicity and lack of intelligence.

*Example 4.7. Ignác Ruzitska, Farewell and Quick Magyar (1832), mm. 17–24.*

Very frequently, composers wrote *tremolo* passages to imitate the cimbalom, a “malleted string instrument . . . of Hungarian derivation and . . . central to Gypsy bands.”

\[\text{Example 4.5} \]

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11 Ibid., 155.

presents many harmonic tremolos, passionately heightening the intensity of the rhetoric while filling in harmonies. Such cimbalom virtuosity strengthened the Gypsies’ excellent musical reputation.

The style hongrois’s approximation of vocal techniques is unusual because a vocal soloist was rarely part of the Gypsy ensemble. Nevertheless, pleading, expressive double thirds and sixths suggesting vocal doublings are ubiquitous to the style. Both Example 4.8 and 4.9 show “crying” double thirds. This technique, in conjunction with the slow tempo and minor mode of both excerpts, convincingly portrays the heart-piercing grief and sorrow of the “black-blooded” Gypsy.

Example 4.8. József Kossovits’s Slow Magyar with the text adapted by Csokonai (To Hope, 1794; after the Viennese publication in 1803), mm. 1–4.\(^{13}\)

Example 4.9. Ignác Ruzitska, Farewell and Quick Magyar (1832), mm. 13–16.\(^{14}\)

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\(^{13}\) Szabolcsi, *A Concise History of Hungarian Music*, 149.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., 154.
Rhythmic gestures:

Some rhythmic gestures are highly characteristic of the *style hongrois*. The spondee, “a metric foot consisting of two longs,”\(^{15}\) often serves to slow the motion at the beginnings or ends of phrases and coincides with the foot-stomping of Gypsy celebrations. Example 4.10 shows an early appearance of the *verbunkos* dance with spondees marking the cadences of both phrases. In Example 4.11, this recognizably Hungarian rhythm happens three times within the span of eight measures, opening both phrases and also helping to close the passage.

*Example 4.10.* Dance from the Esztergom and Sepsiszentgyörgy manuscripts (1750–1760).\(^{16}\)

![Example 4.10](image)

*Example 4.11.* József Bengráf, *Hungarian dance* (*Ballet Hongrois*, in the publication “Trois Divertissements,” 1786), mm. 1–8.\(^{17}\)

![Example 4.11](image)

Bellman describes another common rhythm of the style, the choriambus, a long/short/short/long figure in which the second short is meant to be shorter than the first. Also according to Bellman, this metric foot is characteristic of Hungarian folk music, perhaps because

\(^{15}\) Bellman, *The Style Hongrois*, 112.


\(^{17}\) Ibid., 144.
of a relationship with the Hungarian language. Example 4.12 shows a folk melody employing the choriambus in m. 7.

Example 4.12. Hungarian folk melody from Kodály’s collection, mm. 1–10.\(^{18}\)

While the first dotted-eighth-sixteenth figure of m. 7 is not unusual, it is the addition of the sixteenth-dotted-eighth on the second beat which completes the choriambus, a rhythm common in the \textit{style hongrois} but rare in other styles. And it is precisely on the second beat sixteenth-dotted-eighth rhythm that the linguistic connection becomes clear. The word \textit{magyar} is pronounced with an accented but short first syllable, virtually demanding a short/long rhythmic setting.\(^{19}\) As known excellent interpreters of Hungarian music, the Gypsies retained this rhythm in their performances, thus the appearance of the choriambus in the \textit{style hongrois}.

Two other rhythmic figures also common in the \textit{style hongrois} have an impetuousness about them which suits the supposedly wild, impulsive Gypsy. The first is the accented short/long figure. Again, there is a connection with the Hungarian language. The pronunciation of Hungarian words accents each word’s first syllable; thus, this rhythm abounds in folk tunes\(^{20}\) (see Examples 4.13 and 4.14).

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\(^{18}\) Ibid., 136–7.

\(^{19}\) As a native Hungarian speaker, I present this specific linguistic connection here.

\(^{20}\) Ibid.
Example 4.13. Folk melody from Ádám Pálóczi Horváth’s collection (1813–1814).\textsuperscript{21}

Example 4.14. Folk melody from S. F. Stock’s publication (Leipzig, 1814).\textsuperscript{22}

Second, the Hungarian anapest (accented short/short/long) was seen in Example 4.10 as mm. 1, 3, and 4 each start with this rhythm. Example 4.15, one of the sources of Kodály’s 
\textit{Dances of Gálanta},\textsuperscript{23} shows abundant occurrences of the Hungarian anapest, particularly in m. 9, which presents two consecutive such rhythms.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 136–7.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{23} Szabolcsi, \textit{A Concise History of Hungarian Music}, 147.
Example 4.15. Dance from the series Originelle ungarische Nationaltänze (ca. 1800), mm. 9–16.\textsuperscript{24}

The alla zoppa (literally, “limping”) rhythm is ubiquitous to the style hongrois.\textsuperscript{25} Its most common appearances consist of eighth-, quarter-, eighth-note figures or quarter-, half-, quarter-note rhythms. Used melodically, the alla zoppa “syncopation marks itself for attention by virtue of the sudden stop.”\textsuperscript{26} Also according to Bellman, when used accompanimentally, especially in fast tempi, the alla zoppa gives rise to the effervescent, foot-tapping dance rhythms often associated with Gypsy entertainment. Notice the use of this rhythm in Example 4.16.

Example 4.16. József Bengráf, Hungarian dance (Ballet Hongrois, in the publication “Trois Divertissements,” 1786), mm. 17–36.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{25} Bellman, The Style Hongrois, 114.

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 115.

\textsuperscript{27} Szabolcsi, A Concise History of Hungarian Music, 144–5.
The frequent syncopations are particularly striking given their appearance within a profusion of running sixteenth notes. Accompanimental *alla zoppas* occur in mm. 2 and 4 of Example 4.17, contrasting with the straight eighth-note rhythms of mm. 1 and 3.

*Example 4.17. Márk Rózsavölgyi, “Dreamy dance” movement from *First Hungarian Society Dance* (1842), mm. 1–4.*

The use of dotted rhythms and ornamental triplets is common in the *style hongrois*, but also frequent elsewhere. Thus, while these two rhythms are certainly a part of the *style hongrois*, they cannot convincingly identify this style without the presence of more exclusively *style hongrois* gestures such as Kuruc fourths (discussed below) or cimbalom imitation. Nevertheless, dotted rhythms were often used by Gypsy entertainers to lend an alluring sway to melodies.

Using dotted rather than straight rhythms also contributes to the Gypsies’ unpredictable character stereotype. Pervasive use of dotted rhythms was already seen in Example 4.2, and again appears in Example 4.18. Decorative triplets could lend a special poignancy to melodies, especially in a slow tempo and minor mode, or, in fast tempi, could conjure up the ornate, busy imagery of an exotically attired Gypsy temptress. The former case can be seen in Example 4.6, along with more dotted rhythms. The latter instance applies to Example 4.18 and the busy upbeats of Example 4.19.

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28 Ibid., 156.
Example 4.18. Antal Csermák, Slow Magyar (from the series “Magyar Nóták Veszprém Vármegyéből (1826)), mm. 26–33.29

Example 4.19. Dance of Marosszék, as performed by a Transylvanian Gypsy violinist, recorded by Bence Szabolcsi30

Melodic gestures:

The famous bókázó figure provides a fitting transition from rhythmic to melodic style hongrois gestures because it embodies both. Melodically, the bókázó is a turn starting on the upper neighbor tone and is often encountered at cadences. As Bellman explains, the origins of the bókázó dotted rhythm lie in a traditional heel- and spur-clicking figure important in the folk dances of the Hungarians, a formerly equestrian, nomadic people. Example 4.18 provides two

29 Ibid., 154.
30 Ibid., 143.
instances of the bókazó: one is in the second half of the first measure, and the second, a slightly more embellished example, occurs at the end of the excerpt. Further appearances of the bókazó can be seen in Examples 4.1 and 4.7.

A melodic figure long associated with colorful Gypsy performances (though not exclusively) is the use of the exotic augmented second. János Bihari’s performance in Example 4.6 gives us two instances of this interval within the first eight measures. Even more strikingly, the anonymous Gypsy fiddler in Example 4.19 uses the augmented second no fewer than nine times throughout this short melody.

Another melodic feature that lends an exotic sound to the style hongrois is the use of the raised fourth scale degree in the major mode. As a leading tone for the dominant, it also gives the dominant more emphasis. As seen in Example 4.20, the raised fourth strongly draws attention to the dominant A, by spicing up the melodic line twice within the third and fourth measures of the excerpt.

Example 4.20. József Bengráf, Hungarian dance (Ballet Hongrois, in the publication “Trois Divertissements,” 1786), mm. 9–12.31

The Kuruc fourth is as clear an indication of the style hongrois as possible. The highly recognizable gesture consists of an alternation between the dominant and the upper tonic. Nationalistically Hungarian, it harks back to the musical heritage of the Kuruc warriors of the seventeenth century. This force led a successful Hungarian revolt against Hapsburg rule; as Bellman points out, the Kuruc fourth has since invoked feelings of patriotism for Hungarian

31 Ibid., 144.
listeners. This figure opens the famous Rákóczy Song, the forerunner of the even more well-known Rákóczy March, and was pervasive both in Rákóczy settings of the nineteenth century, as in Examples 4.21, 4.4 and 4.5, and other popular music as well, as in Example 4.22. As excellent performers of Hungarian music, Gypsies adopted the Kuruc fourth into their performance style, thus further facilitating the figure’s inclusion in the style hongrois.

Example 4.21. Rákóczy Tune from the József Lufasi manuscript of Máramarossziget (1800–1848), mm. 1–9.32

Example 4.22. Márk Rózsavölgyi, “Recruiting Music” movement from First Hungarian Society Dance (1842), mm. 1–8.33

Harmonic devices:

More difficult to codify, but just as recognizable, are the style’s harmonic features. Often, chords were not used functionally, but rather coloristically. Sudden harmonic shifts also surprised nineteenth-century listeners. Another destabilizing trait was the Gypsies’ tendency to

32 Ibid., 158.

33 Ibid., 157.
stress the dominant as much as the tonic. Some Europeans argued that, as untrained musicians, Gypsies made unfortunate and ignorant departures from “proper” harmonic procedures. Others insisted that the distinguishing features of the Gypsy style (including exotic intervals such as the augmented second) lent themselves to a different harmonic treatment than that adhered to by art music composers. Or, it is possible that the Gypsies’ unpredictable choices were used for emotional effect alone. Whatever the explanation, the Gypsies’ harmonic choices were often seen as improper, incorrect, as something impermissible and irreverent. Such attitudes are not surprising given Europeans’ views about Gypsies as a cursed, pagan people who allegedly often lapsed into criminal behavior, i.e., committing (morally or legally) impermissible acts. Departures from the norm in music, however, while frowned upon by many, delighted many more, certainly lending the Gypsies’ performances an unmistakable character.

In the Kuruc-fourth excerpts (Examples 4.4, 4.5, and 4.21), the fifth scale degree is emphasized just as much as the tonic, or perhaps more, since the dominant receives the longer note value. Example 4.23 presents some unexpected harmonic choices, which can be ascribed functional roles only uncomfortably and are better explained as coloristic effects. The music progresses from A minor to G Major, the VII chord (albeit via a secondary dominant). Then it strikingly arrives on E minor, the minor dominant key, with no preparation, before sliding into an unprepared A Major in m. 5. In Example 4.5, mm. 2 and 6 presented a disturbing Major-minor clash between the firm D-Major left-hand tremolo along with F-sharps in the right hand, and the strong B-flats flanking the right-hand run which would indicate D minor. The aural surprise is strong, and the harmonic tension evident.
Example 4.23. Antal Csermák, *Slow Magyar* (from the series “Magyar Nóták Veszprém Vármegyéből (1826), mm. 1–8.\(^{34}\)

A common harmonic device in many popular Hungarian pieces of the nineteenth century is the unprepared shift in keys in the second section. The shifts usually progress to a relative key or another third-related key (even the chromatic mediant). Sometimes the shifts are more unpredictable, however. In m. 4 of Example 4.6 we saw an abrupt shift to C Major after three and a half measures of established A minor. Even more startling is the fact that the appearance of C Major is on the second beat of a measure, with a *crescendo* leading to it, but with no transition or modulation whatsoever. While the music shortly returns to A minor via an E dominant seventh chord, the one-and-a-half measure unprepared C-Major excursion is no less aurally striking. Example 4.24 cadences categorically in E Major at the second ending, only to nonchalantly continue on an F-sharp Major chord as if no preparation for this tonicization was needed.

\(^{34}\) Ibid., 153.
Example 4.24. Márk Rózsavölgyi, “Dreamy Dance” movement from *First Hungarian Society Dance* (1842), mm. 5–12.\(^{35}\)

Miscellaneous:

Another *style hongrois* trait that shows the Gypsies’ “improper” playing (and the influence of Hungarian folk music) is the use of irregular lengths of phrases. Folk tunes, such as Example 4.14, lack the periodicity of art music. And while many Hungarian popular pieces and Gypsy performances contain the expected four-measure phrases, others do not. See the five-measure phrasing of Example 4.25 and the three- and six-measure divisions of Example 4.2.

*Example 4.25. Magyar*, from István Gáti’s manual of piano teaching, 1802, mm. 1–10.\(^{36}\)

\(^{35}\) Ibid., 156.

\(^{36}\) Ibid., 150.
Along with the harmonic shifts discussed above, sudden changes in texture and/or mood further contributed to the stereotype of Gypsies as unpredictably moody, gliding from melancholy to celebratory, whimsical to passionate with no preparation at all. For instance, the three sections of Example 4.26 contrast between a poignant, highly embellished and thick-textured *Slow Magyar* in D minor, a pleasant *amabile* starting in F Major, and an energetic, much leaner-textured *Quick Magyar* in a bright D Major. Such contrasts are typical of much of this music, which draws on the emotional, ornamented *lassú* and the bubbly *friss* sections of the *verbunkos*.

*Example 4.26. Ignác Ruzitska, Farewell and Quick Magyar (1832).*

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37 Ibid., 154–6.
This compendium of style hongrois musical gestures, with firm roots in Hungarian folk and popular music and branching out through Gypsy performances, has clear connections to the multi-faceted Gypsy stereotype of the nineteenth century. The appearance of these gestures in Brahms’s Hungarian Dances, as we shall see in the following chapter, does more than place these pieces within the well-known style hongrois category of art music. It sketches a series of portraits of the Gypsy people from the perspective of nineteenth-century European society, with Brahms as its representative.
Chapter 5. Musical Kaleidoscope: Facets of the Nineteenth-Century Gypsy Stereotype
Illuminated by Brahms’s Hungarian Dances

Chapter 4 considered specific style hongrois traits and how each of these musical characteristics can be connected to one or more of the five facets of the nineteenth-century Gypsy stereotype explored in Chapter 2. The pieces in the two sets of Hungarian Dances display style hongrois gestures which can be translated into Gypsy attributes. Usually, the Gypsy traits attributable in this manner to each piece fall mainly into one of the five categories listed above, lending each particular piece a strong overall leaning towards one of these five “personality types.” All of the pieces, however, contain traits from one or more of the other categories as well. Thus, just as an attempt at a clear categorization of Gypsy traits would surely fail, the musical complexity of the Hungarian Dances also escapes a strict classification. We can attribute most pieces to one of the five categories that it resembles the most, while also touching upon each movement’s other traits. In this manner, each piece should emerge as an aspect of the Gypsy stereotype, rendered multi-dimensional by each piece’s complexity of musical traits, and consequently, its wealth of Gypsy attributes.

1) The Gypsies’ sensual, fascinating manner

Three pieces of the Hungarian Dances contain more fascinating, sensual traits than any other: Nos. 6, 7, and 19. No. 6, a high-spirited adventure, paints a picture of an exotically attired dancer as the busy ornaments of mm. 22–42 (seen in Example 5.1) and again mm. 101–123 recall the noisy jewelry of a Gypsy temptress.¹ The rhapsodic subdivision ornamentation of the Molto sostenuto section further enforces that image. Yet another exotic detail is the strong use of the sharp fourth scale degree in major, colorfully evident here in its many occurrences in mm.

22–42 (notice the G-natural in Example 5.1, mm. 22, 24, 28, 30, 32, and 34–9) and identical instances in mm. 101–123. Several traits of this piece, while not as powerful as the seductive features, point to the emotional side of the Gypsy stereotype. There are sudden shifts in harmony, texture and mood, especially evident in the Molto sostenuto middle section, which slows the tempo considerably, and starts in an unprepared G-sharp minor after a cadence of D-flat Major in the previous measure. A few alla zoppa rhythms enliven the atmosphere, while some Hungarian anapests and many spondees add impetuosity and the wild energy of a Gypsy celebration. The extreme rhythmic flexibility of the opening 21 measures—a section repeated later starting at m. 59—suggests the Gypsies’ love of freedom. And the abrupt leaps, as the one in m. 40 of Example 5.1, point to a mocking of Gypsy fiddlers by society—as untrained violinists, they supposedly clumsily scraped the strings sometimes or had difficulty with tuning.

*Example 5.1. Hungarian Dance No. 6, primo, mm. 22–42.*

Nonetheless, the whole of No. 6 points to the wild, alluringly fascinating dance of a colorfully dressed Gypsy maiden, entertaining the crowd in her stereotypical emotional way, accompanied by fiddlers who could exert a foot-stomping reaction from the audience.

Nos. 7 and 19 fit the stereotype of the “free-loving” Gypsy. While exhibiting many flirtatious features, they also show a tremendous leaning towards independence, thus embodying
the fictional Gypsy as an attractive, but fickle, character. No. 7 is filled with flirtatious pizzicato effects and mesmerizing ornamentation in grace-notes, sixteenths, and thirty-seconds (see Example 5.2).

*Example 5.2. Hungarian Dance No. 7, primo, mm. 1–9.*

Enhancing the allure are the tempo variations, including several *molto sostenuto* and *ritardando* markings within the opening thirty-two measures alone. These tempo fluctuations establish the yearning for freedom at the same time, however, and speak of a fear of being tied down, even by a steady tempo. And as usual, the talent of the Gypsy violinist shows in frequent virtuosic leaps and double stops (here translated as quick double thirds).

No. 19 establishes a similar image to No. 7. The charming pizzicato effects abound once more (as seen in Example 5.3), here joined by the alluring sway of dotted rhythms in mm. 9–13, 17–21, and similarly in the repeat of this A section at the end. The contrasting middle section in faster tempo presents many celebratory spondees, but it is the charm of the outer sections which dominates. As in No. 7, the tempo fluctuates often, seemingly indecisive between the frequent *sostenuto* and *in tempo* markings. Once again, the nineteenth-century member of society is presented with a Gypsy who entices but will never truly be “tamed.”
2) The Gypsies’ wildly emotional behavior

Though the previous three pieces had some characteristics of the wildly emotional Gypsy stereotype, more overwhelming proof of these unpredictable sentiments is offered in the next group of pieces, by far the largest of any of the five categories of traits. The first two pieces mentioned here, Nos. 3 and 11, provide an easy transition from the previous category because they retain some alluring characteristics.

No. 3 has an innocent but enticing charm, abounding in gurgling ornaments and pizzicato effects (see Example 5.4). Unexpected shifts to the brooding relative minor in m. 7, as well as a desperately celebratory fortissimo Vivace middle section show emotional instability. Dancing alla zoppas and impetuous Hungarian anapests impulsively complement this instability. And to add to the complexity, the three-measure phrases of the entire piece break Western norms of four-measure phrasing, lapsing into one of those “impermissible” yet attractive breaches of etiquette for which Gypsies were known. In No. 3, the innocent charm of the opening is interrupted by the anxiety of the minor mode, possibly depicting the Gypsies’ bleak reality in nineteenth-century Europe.
Often considering the Gypsies to be subhuman, Western Europeans could not always grasp the depth and sincerity of Gypsy emotions, finding less than profound characteristics even in the most genuine, emotional Gypsy statements. No. 11 is a prime example of this situation. One of the most beautiful—and painful—utterances of the twenty-one Hungarian Dances, this piece’s primo part is cast almost exclusively in crying parallel thirds and sixth, aptly portraying the heart-piercing grief and sorrow of the “black-blooded” Gypsy. Most of the example is in Dorian mode, again going against Western music norms of the time. Yet despite the genuinely heartfelt sentiment of this piece, we can still distinguish traits Europeans deemed alluring and dangerously sensual—see the dotted rhythms and exotic augmented seconds of Example 5.5; society was not able to allow for a thoroughly sincere, non-threatening Gypsy emotional statement. The frequent use of the choriambus in No. 11, as in mm. 45, 49, and 53 of Example 5.5, shows Brahms’s knowledge of how well Gypsies absorbed Hungarian musical traits into their performing style, using this rhythmic characteristic of Hungarian folk music even in a most personal expression of sentiment.
Example 5.5. Hungarian Dance No. 11, primo, mm. 33–53.

The overriding aspect of Hungarian Dance No. 1 is its use of throbbing, tumultuous double thirds for much of the melodic material in the A section and its return at m. 93. Other emotional aspects include the impetuous uses of the choriambus in m. 73 and 77 and the impulsive, wild sixteenth-note rhythms of Example 5.6, measures 49–51, and 53–5, which resemble the short/short/long of a Hungarian anapest.

Example 5.6. Hungarian Dance No. 1, primo, mm. 49–60.

Yet No. 1 has a tinge of the “impermissible” about it too, in the use of unorthodox six-measure phrases in the A section, and the dizzying lilt of the dotted rhythms in the opening.

The emotional affect in No. 2 is entirely different than in No. 1, as the former relies on celebratory, energetic devices for its mood-setting. This piece is filled with effervescent *alla*
zoppas and heart-pumping spondees, as evident in Example 5.7 (see alla zoppas in mm. 3–4 and 7–15 of the secondo and spondees in mm. 4, 8, 10, and 14 of the primo).

Example 5.7. Hungarian Dance No. 2, secondo and primo, mm. 1–16.

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The cimbalom imitation in the secondo opening, which recurs six more times during the excerpt recalls the Gypsies’ virtuosity on Hungarian instruments. And several instances of the exotic augmented second add the color and spice necessary for a successful party.

No. 4 is one of the most famous and beloved of the Hungarian Dances, and deservedly so. Its opening intense double thirds, with shuddering cimbalom-like tremolos establish depth of passion from the onset (see Example 5.8).

Example 5.8. Hungarian Dance No. 4, secondo and primo, mm. 1–18.
The secondo also contributes to this mood with piercing alla zoppas, here providing aching punctuation marks rather than the effervescence they lend to fast tempi. The return of this section at m. 49 adds special poignancy with decorative triplets in the primo.

But as Gypsies were depicted to be, this piece is perhaps one of the most unpredictable of the twenty-one in its emotional content, abruptly changing moods, texture and harmony. The longing opening starts off in F minor, only to plunge into a fiery, foot-stomping Vivace beginning on an E-flat Major chord in m. 33. The return to the opening mood in m. 49 again establishes F minor and cadences there in m. 65. Brahms surprises us yet again in m. 66, however, by propelling us into F Major and completely dispelling the passionate atmosphere with a whimsical, circus-like section further complicated by three-against-four rhythms between the primo and secondo. To provide unity, Brahms returns to the opening passionate yet melancholy F minor. Jonathan Bellman writes about this wild, unpredictable Gypsy:

Perhaps it is here [in abrupt harmonic and mood shifts] that much of the power of the Hungarian-Gypsy idiom really comes into focus. The allure was not merely the titillation of shocking harmonic changes, or that the dance rhythms were a veritable command to get up and move. Those attractive aspects were certainly there and were no doubt sufficient for many listeners. But on a deeper level, one could look at societal outcasts performing this music and hear an almost too desperate celebration, a bottomless grief and wild, kaleidoscopic shifting between moods with no attempts at (or desire for) transition between them. This music came to suggest the condition of those who played it and thus was a constant reminder of society’s mixed feelings about the Gypsies, of the fear and revulsion, envy and attraction.2

As complex personalities always have details that linger hidden under the surface, so too the unpredictably emotional character of No. 4 does not completely overwhelm other traits present in its pages. The whimsical Molto Allegro’s profuse ornamentation (Example 5.9) again brings to mind the visually enticing trinkets of the Gypsy temptress, while the tempo fluctuations of the A section—including sostenuto, ritardando, espressivo, animato, and stringendo

2 Bellman, The Style Hongrois, 127.
markings—reinforce the stereotype of the Gypsies’ independence. But the Gypsies’ talent as performers—as illustrated by virtuosic pizzicato violin and cimbalom imitations—served to often redeem this supposedly wild people in European minds.

*Example 5.9.* Hungarian Dance No. 4, primo, mm. 66–73.

No. 8, much like No. 1, establishes an atmosphere of turbulent feeling (see Example 5.10), as the primo’s parallel thirds and sixths in the A section are mirrored by the secondo on the offbeats in a stormy pulsation in *Presto* tempo.

*Example 5.10.* Hungarian Dance No. 8, secondo and primo, mm. 1–26.

The second return of the A section is accompanied by even more metrically destabilizing triplets. Also as in No. 1, the melodic parallel thirds and sixths are set to sinewy dotted rhythms. In the second contrasting section starting at m. 105, Brahms’s use of clattering decorative triplets conjures up visions of the Gypsies’ exotically ornate dress. But this superficial allure is fleeting, as the final return of the impassioned A at m. 121 leaves the last impression upon the listener. Aside from the shuddering emotion of this piece, the irregular phrase lengths in the A sections
cross yet more boundaries of acceptable behavior; such manifestations clearly depict why Europeans were both fascinated and frightened by the Gypsies.

The depth of emotion in No. 20 is first announced by the heavy-hearted opening melody in E minor. The Vivace at m. 25 breaks in unceremoniously, however, with a sudden shift to E Major and clattering grace-notes in the melody (see Example 5.11).

*Example 5.11.* Hungarian Dance No. 20, secondo, mm. 25–36.

The stereotypically emotional Gypsy returns to the bitter despair of the beginning as unexpectedly as (s)he left it, again manifesting mercurial mood changes. The energetic Vivace does more than provide tempo contrast, however. Its dotted rhythms are more impetuous than alluring; its phrases spin out for seemingly unending lengths, and its quick pace seems to announce a celebration cut off all too abruptly by the return of the sorrowful opening melody. There are some instrumental effects too, with leaps and pizzicato imitations, again suggesting the craft of the Gypsy fiddlers. This piece is a good example of society’s view of nineteenth-century Gypsies—melancholy and sorrowful about their harsh fate, they still break into celebration, rebelliously fighting against an all-too-bleak reality.

No. 16 also presents strong, unpredictable contrast between the moods of separate sections; in this piece, however, instability of sentiments is joined by unorthodox musical practices, once again showing Gypsies removed from the mainstream (in this case, the musical mainstream). The piece begins with a poignant F-minor melody in narrow range, with a startling
augmented second in the very upbeat. Clear uses of the choriambus in mm. 11, 12, 19, and 20 show connections with Hungarian folk music and the Hungarian language (see Example 5.12).

*Example 5.12.* Hungarian Dance No. 16, secondo and primo, mm. 1–14.

Another folk connection is the folk-like circular melody in the primo part in mm. 9–12.

Brahms’s choice of a harmonic progression here is perhaps used as much coloristically as functionally. Measures 9–11 progress through i, III 6/4, VI, a passing tone, iv, i6 and V7/V, the latter only resolving to V and then i in m. 12. A rowdy *Presto* shatters the sadness and is followed by a graceful *Poco meno presto*, only to return to its *Presto* ebullience at m. 81. The poignancy of the beginning never reappears. Some aspects of this piece step outside normal boundaries of nineteenth-century musical practice. An unusual trait is the six-measure phrasing that appears in the *Poco meno presto*. Also, Brahms’s use of drone fifths in the secondo (mm. 45–48 and 51–54) establishes a rustic, earthy character, easily related to Europeans’ view of Gypsies as dirty, criminal, even subhuman. The Gypsy in No. 16, then, is a stereotypically emotional one, whose use of “low-brow” (musical) practices only garners more ostracism from society.

3) The Gypsies’ love of freedom and fierce independence

Perhaps the most difficult trait to capture in music is the Gypsies’ supposed love of freedom. Many of the *Hungarian Dances* present rhythmic flexibility and tempo fluctuations,
either in a flirty, capricious way, or establishing a fierce independence. But nowhere is this flexibility and love of freedom more startling and more convincing than in the famous No. 5. Other Gypsy traits also appear, certainly. The earthy drone grounds the *Vivace*’s secondo part at m. 49; three-measure phrasing also adds to the unusual quality of this section. The outer *Allegro* sections present foot-stomping spondees and lively *alla zoppas*. But it is the shocking flexibility of mm. 61–76 of the *Vivace* that provide the most lasting effect of this piece.

*Example 5.13.* Hungarian Dance No. 5, secondo and primo, mm. 58–83.

As seen in Example 5.13, there are *poco ritardandos* and *in tempos* every two measures throughout mm. 61–76. Gypsy bands had striking rhythmic flexibility in their performances and an ability to play together without a conductor. This passage depicts that talent. In mm. 61–62 the right hand of the primo part shows a soloistic slowing of the music with light, offbeat accompaniment, while in mm. 63–64 we are plunged into a fuller ensemble texture as the Gypsy band rejoins its leader. These extraordinary liberties not only showcased Gypsies’ uncanny musical gifts, but also reinforced Europeans’ stereotype about Gypsies’ love of freedom and a life unshackled by society’s conventions.

4) The Gypsies’ alleged immoral, criminal, even subhuman behavior

The next three pieces to be discussed, Nos. 9, 12, and 14, involve *style hongrois* gestures that can be associated with the criminal, immoral, subhuman category of traits of the Gypsy
stereotype. No. 9 employs earthy drone fifths in its *Poco sostenuto* middle section, conjuring up images of “primitive,” debased Gypsy camps. The harmony is unpredictable and not always functional, categorically challenging some rules of Western harmony. For example, the opening eight measures slide through the chords of E minor, D Major, A-sharp diminished, B minor, A Major, A minor, E minor, D-sharp diminished, and E minor. And while the overall arch from E minor to A Major and back to E minor is perfectly standard, some chords—like the unexpected, surprisingly colorful D Major in m. 3—are used for effect only (see Example 5.14).

*Example 5.14.* Hungarian Dance No. 9, primo, mm. 1–11.

Some glittering ornamentation in the *Poco sostenuto* as well as hopping spondees and *alla zoppas* in the outer sections lend the piece a tinge of the typical Gypsy festive air, but the overall effect of No. 9 is characterized by the startling twisting and turning departures from the musical norm. This is an unsettling Gypsy image, perhaps not quite threatening, but certainly foreign to Europeans.

No. 12 also paints a picture removed from the mainstream. Rustic drone fifths figure prominently in this piece (though played as a melodic rather than harmonic interval). The *dolce Poco meno presto* at mm. 61–76 and 85–93 employs broken drone fifths both in the secondo and primo, effectively imitating the hobbling of “low-brow” music (see Example 5.15).
Example 5.15. Hungarian Dance No. 12, secondo, mm. 83–94, and primo, mm. 84–94.

Even cimbalom imitations as in mm. 31–32 and later similar instances seem to complete the rustic image in this case. Some impulsive Hungarian anapests and a few alla zoppas, coupled with the Presto tempo of most of the piece help to lighten the earthy effects discussed above and establish enough of an entertaining dance atmosphere to be less unsettling than No. 9. This Gypsy image is easier for Western Europeans to swallow than that of No. 9, because the foreignness here is wrapped up in a fun-filled, effervescent party garb.

No such “excusatory” aspects exist to tame the unorthodoxies of No. 14. Though one of the three Hungarian Dances believed to be entirely of Brahms’s creation, No. 14 is perhaps the one piece that is the most shockingly removed from the musical mainstream (see Example 5.16). Here, the talented Gypsy musician (recognized in cimbalom-like tremolos) bases most of the music on two characteristics: 1) completely irregular phrasing—one is hard pressed to recognize any clear beginnings or ends of phrases: the thoughts follow each other and mingle without evident stopping points; and 2) very unusual harmonies and a joltingly fast harmonic rhythm. This latter characteristic is the most aurally recognizable in No. 14 and leaves the strongest impression upon the listener. Case in point, this piece, arguably in D minor, starts on a tremolando borrowed G-Major chord, shattering any sense of harmonic expectation from the
very beginning. In No. 14, Brahms is depicting the facet of the Gypsy stereotype that was perhaps most difficult for Europeans to understand: shockingly removed from typical practices, this piece portrays the foreign side of Gypsies that Europeans treated with fear, revulsion, and ostracism, because they could not (and would not) understand it.

Example 5.16. Hungarian Dance No. 14, secondo and primo, mm. 1–15.

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5) The Gypsies’ “inborn,” bountiful musical talent

But Gypsies could be tolerated and their presence even enjoyed at celebrations mainly because of their musical talent. Nos. 10, 21, and 15 depict the Gypsies’ musical abilities. No. 10 characterizes Gypsies as rude, untrained musicians, who were nevertheless able to incorporate traits of Hungarian music into their popular performance style. There are some leaps in virtuoso fiddle style, as well as spots of cimbalom imitation and occurrences of the Hungarian nationalistic Kuruc fourths.

Through musical gestures discussed below, No. 21, as the grand finale to the set, establishes perhaps the most accepted side of the Gypsy stereotype, that of the talented Gypsy performers riling up the crowd at a feverish party (see Example 5.17).
Example 5.17. Hungarian Dance No. 21, primo, mm. 1–14.

Pungent \textit{fp}, \textit{sf}, and accent marks punctuate the \textit{Vivace} tempo from the onset and deliver that rhythmic kick needed for a fervent dance. Virtuosic use of pizzicato abounds, as well as rousing cimbalom imitations when the whirling dance reaches climactic levels in the \textit{Più presto} at m. 49. The music intensifies the attraction of the celebration with jangling ornaments. The Gypsy band also contributes to the party atmosphere with heart-throbbing wild Hungarian anapests and stomping spondees, rhythms that represent an undeniable command to jump up and move. This is the facet of the Gypsy stereotype most accepted by Europeans, a conveniently fictional Gypsy whose emotion and musical talent simply, but effectively, livened up a feast.

No. 15 also presents aspects of the Gypsies’ musical talent, but its other traits make it more difficult to clearly categorize. Its many leaps, cimbalom gestures (Example 5.18) and virtuoso pizzicato effects speak of performers at the peak of their art. But the frighteningly unpredictable emotions of the Gypsies are evident here once again, especially in the shifts of mood, texture, and harmony. The opening \textit{Allegretto grazioso} is a whimsical whirl in B-flat Major. The \textit{animato} at m. 19 presents a more emotional utterance and turns abruptly dark and brooding with a B-flat minor twist at m. 35, along with thicker texture in a lower register.
Measure 47 brings in a broadly passionate chordal melody, with thick tremolos supporting it (again see Example 5.18).

*Example 5.18.* Hungarian Dance No. 15, primo, mm. 47–57.

Finally, at m. 69, the B-flat Major *animato* idea returns, in a faster tempo, with complex triplet accompaniment in the secondo, and builds to a feverish tempo before flirtatiously slowing, teasing, and finishing off with three giggling snaps.

While an attempt at classification has served acceptably well so far, the next two Hungarian Dances present such a mixture of traits that they are impossible to ascribe with certainty to any one category. No. 18 alternates some flirtatiously ornamented quick dance gestures with static, drone-like sections. It also presents a variation on the nationalistic Kuruc fourth in the primo’s opening measures (see Example 5.19). The piece thus leaves a mixed impression of rustic Hungarian peasantry and alluring Gypsy celebration.

*Example 5.19.* Hungarian Dance No. 18, secondo, mm. 1–11, and primo, mm. 1–8.
No. 13 is a more complicated mix as it mingles notions of Gypsies as sensual, emotional, foreign, but musically talented people. Dotted rhythms slide seductively and pizzicatos appear flirtatious and inviting in the opening and closing *Andantino grazioso* (see Example 5.20).

*Example 5.20.* Hungarian Dance No. 13, primo, mm. 47–59.

Later, the pizzicatos turn virtuosic in a fiery *Vivace*. Gypsies’ talent at interpreting Hungarian music is shown in the use of the choriambus (with its Hungarian folk music connections) in the *Vivace* as well. Its consistent use of three-measure phrases in the outer *Andantino grazioso* sections is unusual compared to standard four-measure Western phrasing. And the unexpected shift of mood (from graceful to violent), texture (from spare to busy) and key (from D Major to B minor with no transition) depicts a wildly emotional Gypsy.

Such a rich mixture of characteristics serves to lend the Gypsy stereotype more detail. Especially plentiful in detail is the beautiful No. 17, which I have saved for last because of its unsurpassed complexity and wealth of *style hongrois* gestures. Employing over a dozen separate *style hongrois* traits, this piece is a veritable compendium of such features, and in translation, of Gypsy attributes. The seductive Gypsy side is depicted by the jingling ornaments in the *Vivace*. This allure is reinforced by the mesmerizing, rhapsodic ornamentation of the opening melody (compare its two statements in Example 5.21).
Example 5.21. Hungarian Dance No. 17, primo, mm. 1–8 and 24–34.

mm. 24–34

Dotted rhythms sway sensually, and the colorful use of the sharp fourth scale degree and the augmented melodic second further enriches the exoticism of the piece. And while alluring, all these seductive features were also threatening to mainstream society, which often associated promiscuity and polygamy with the Gypsies’ seductive features. Some performing talent is implied in No. 17 as well, not only by the craft of beautiful melodic embellishment mentioned above, but also by virtuoso pizzicato and double-stop effects implied in the Vivace starting at m. 35. Tempo variations abound—between an opening Andantino (marked espressivo), a Vivace, a Meno presto (marked grazioso) containing a sostenuto and an in tempo, and a return to the Vivace—once more portraying Gypsies’ supposed love of freedom (heard here in the freely shifting tempi).
And finally, the irrationally emotional side of the Gypsy stereotype is bountifully exemplified. Parallel thirds and sixths in the opening section deliver a heart-wrenching cry. Accented short/long rhythms and Hungarian anapests catapult forth with impulsiveness. Fiery spondees dance and laugh with joy. Triplets decorate the texture poignantly. And kaleidoscopic mood shifts twirl from heart-broken to rowdily festive to gracefully restrained and back to rebelliously celebratory. Thus, this piece is perhaps the most complex example of Brahms’s characterization of Gypsies in the *Hungarian Dances*. But throughout all of these pieces, the composer’s masterful depiction aptly portrays the multi-faceted Gypsy stereotype held by nineteenth-century society.
Conclusion. Brahms’s Other Works in the Style Hongrois: Glimpses of the Nineteenth-Century Gypsy Stereotype

The focus of this document has been the Hungarian Dances, which present an abundance of style hongrois traits and thus convincingly depict the Gypsy “Other.” Brahms composed other works in the style hongrois, but none of these comes close to the striking and unrelenting “Gypsy” emotion of the Hungarian Dances. His other works in the style certainly offer style hongrois traits, but these gestures are few and far between and are fully absorbed within Brahms’s own compositional language. For these reasons, these works do not sound as “Gypsy”—except for a few isolated moments—and their style hongrois features offer Gypsy allusions at best. These glimpses do not measure up to the unflinching portrayal of the Gypsy “Other” provided by the Hungarian Dances.

A criterion that could delineate the difference between a style-hongrois-induced “Gypsy” sound and a Western sound (aside from the frequency and consistency of style hongrois traits) is the choice of specific gestures. For example, while some characteristics such as the Kuruc fourths, cimbalom imitations, and spondees can convincingly and single-handedly indicate the style hongrois, other characteristics—such as decorative triplets, dotted rhythms, and even pizzicato effects and augmented seconds—are not exclusive to the style and can be interpreted (aurally and scholarly) as indications of other musical styles as well.¹

The Variations on a Hungarian Song, Op. 21, no. 2 include many style hongrois traits, and although they do not sound so throughout, they nevertheless present some convincing “Gypsy” moments. Some of the style hongrois features here include spondees, Hungarian anapests, parallel thirds and sixths, pizzicato imitations and many grace-notes. Some of this

ornamentation, as in variation 3, sounds convincingly “Gypsy,” as do the crying double thirds in variation 5. The piece alternates 3/4 and 4/4 meters every measure of the theme, variations 1–8 and the last nine measures of the coda; this alternation is probably rooted in the origins of the theme, a Hungarian folk song. But the unpredictable shifts of character and key in the coda are typically *style hongrois*. Measure 116 starts in a bright, assertive D Major. The music then shifts to D minor in m. 124, back to D Major in m. 146, then at m. 157 into a B-flat Major dolce section with only a repeated B-flat octave as a transition. Measure 177 brings in a clattering *ben marcato* in B-flat minor only to dissolve into another dolce B-flat Major at m. 189. D Major breaks in unceremoniously at m. 217 and closes the piece in a profusion of sixteenth-notes and brash closing chords. Yet despite the apparent *style hongrois* features, overall, the piece gives the impression of Western music with exotic touches.

The same is true for the *Rondo alla Zingarese* finale of the Op. 25 Piano Quartet. *Style hongrois* features include many spondees, Hungarian anapests as well as jingling grace-notes and virtuosic use of pizzicato in the strings. Also, the Rondo subject is sometimes accompanied by drone fifths, and the fairly frequent rhythmic and tempo fluctuations could recall the stereotype of the Gypsies’ love of freedom. But some of these traits could be explained in a non-Gypsy idiom as well. The spondees and some poignant decorative triplets certainly sound “Gypsy,” but just like in the Variations, Op. 21, no. 2, these tinges only serve to add exotic highlights to a Western-sounding movement.

The finale to Brahms’s Violin Concerto, Op. 77 has some Gypsy allusions. Virtuosic thirds and double stops abound, and the opening theme establishes a dance atmosphere. There are some grace-notes and triplets and even a teasing slowing of the tempo right before the last chords of the movement. But all of these traits can also be found in works that do not use the
style hongrois, so the Gypsy connection here is tenuous at best, perhaps no more plausible than any other interpretation.

The Zigeunerlieder, Op. 103, are based on the texts (not music) of some Hungarian folksongs translated in German by Hugo Conrat.² Despite their title of Gypsy Songs, they sound Western, again weaving their style hongrois characteristics into Brahms’s compositional language. Some instances of the style hongrois are the frequent dotted rhythms, spondees, as well as some Hungarian anapests and alla zoppas. The phrasing is sometimes irregular—as in No. 1’s six-measure arrangement and the four+five- or four+six-measure phrasing of No. 3. The cimbalom imitation in the piano part of No. 10 is one of the few convincingly Gypsy traits. Many of the others easily sink into the Western fabric of these songs without drawing particular attention to themselves. Case in point, while most of the Hungarian Dances exhibit at least six different style hongrois characteristics in each piece, the Ziegeunerlieder, Op. 103, usually present only one or two such characteristics per song, with four traits being the maximum encountered in any piece.

Similarly, the Zigeunerlieder, Op. 112b, also lack a distinctly “Gypsy” sound. Many spondees do appear, along with a few alla zoppas and some seductive dotted rhythms. The phrasing is sometimes irregular here too, especially in Nos. 2 and 3, which often deny a clear beginning and end to their phrases. And once again the cimbalom imitation (in the piano part of No. 1) is the most assertive style hongrois trait in these pieces. The “Gypsy” idiom in both sets of Zigeunerlieder, displayed in but few style hongrois gestures, provides more of a stylized allusion to the fictional Gypsy rather than the clear view offered by the Hungarian Dances.

The Clarinet Quintet, Op. 115, presents some moving style hongrois traits in its second movement. Set in ABA form, this Adagio reserves most of its “Gypsy” feeling for the

rhapsodically ornamented middle section. The outer sections offer some poignant slow triplets, and the return of the A sets the first violin and clarinet in crying parallel sixths at m. 118. The *Più lento* B section is dripping with *style hongrois* traits and does sound “Gypsy” at many points—more so than any other Brahms work with the exception of the *Hungarian Dances*. The mesmerizing intricacies of the clarinet ornamentation complement this section’s slow *hallgató* style (see page 21 for an explanation of the term). The capricious dotted rhythms accentuate the drama at mm. 54–5, while the strings come in with tremolo cimbalom imitations. Other *style hongrois* traits include cello *alla zoppas* and some virtuosic leaps and crying thirds in the violins. Also, the rhapsodic ornamentation of the clarinet with complex string accompaniment suggests a Gypsy band leader soaring in imaginative flights of fancy, confident that his band will have the flexibility to stay with him and the inspiration to support him in his creativity. This moving movement literally drips with the *style hongrois*.

In these works of Brahms, save for the *Adagio* of the Clarinet Quintet, the “Other” appears in fleeting moments, as the Gypsies often appeared in nineteenth-century European life: aspects of their existence (and especially their music) sometimes popped up in Westerners’ lives, but rarely managed to have an overwhelming effect on mainstream society. Similarly, in the works discussed in this conclusion, *style hongrois* traits appear at times, but cannot override the many Western gestures of these pieces. In contrast, the *Hungarian Dances* are a concentrated statement of *style hongrois*. Are they an aberration in Brahms’s output? Are they “exceptions” or “excrescences” as the “passions” that Brahms wanted to “hunt out?” Or are they a gloriously personal emotional utterance, an outpouring of feeling impossible for Brahms to release without the aid of the *style hongrois*? Perhaps the distinction is irrelevant. Either way, in the *Hungarian Dances* Brahms portrays the Gypsy people as stereotyped by European society, through a
depiction as convincing in its musical effectiveness as it is in its characterization of the fictionalized Gypsy “Other.”

Balacon, Dan. Interview by author, 7 May 2005, Hicksville, Ohio.


