

‘The Survival of Tradition’

Gypsy Music in the 21st Century



MA Thesis

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1. Introduction

Due to today's globalized world, which is characterized by an increased transnational interconnectedness, bigger, faster and more dynamic networks have emerged connecting people crossing transnational borders (Eriksen 2007). Within the anthropological discourse of globalization, it was believed that a multicultural society would lead to cultural homogenization. However, this idea has been rejected as reality has shown otherwise (Inda&Rosaldo 2008). Localities have responded in different ways to global influences, and cultural differences were maintained as global influences are not just merely adopted and copied by localities. However, as anthropologists, we cannot escape the influence of globalization as it has an undeniable impact on the social reality of people. To investigate how global changes influence localities, a focus on a micro level is needed.

For my thesis I have questioned how cultural traditions evolve under the influence of global changes in regard to one particular group: Gypsies. Due to their nomadic lifestyle, Gypsies can be characterized as a transnational people unattached to any fixed territory (Martí&Martí 2008). Therefore, Gypsies were always faced with changing environments, demanding a certain level of adaptation to change. Considering Gypsies in general, this becomes especially visible amongst Gypsy musicians. Originally, Gypsies were a nomadic people as are Gypsy musicians whom, due to their lifestyle, were constantly to encounter changing environments, engaging with people varying in ethnicity, nationality and social status (Beissinger 2001). Due to their ever-changing context in which their profession is embedded, a certain capability of adaptation is required in order to continue their profession.

Through the process of social interaction, Gypsy musicians constantly try to position themselves in such ways that the outcome will result most advantageously for them. One attempts to control the impression that others have of them by elevating themselves in order to gain prestige and economic benefits (Beissinger 2001). Besides the positioning of self, the music played is another matter of vital importance within the process of adaptation, as it cannot escape its ever-changing context. Globalization processes have had influence on the development of Gypsy music, as the appreciation for traditional, Gypsy music has changed over the years (Beissinger 2005).

The occupation of Gypsy musicians has lasted over centuries, being passed on from generation to generation. The question is: how do Gypsy musicians deal with their ever-

changing environment, as discussed above, in order to continue their family profession nowadays? To be able to answer that question I formulated the following question which is the research question of my thesis:

“In which way do Gypsy musicians adjust themselves to their changing environment?”

I will answer this question as followed: first, I will provide theoretical background information on three themes: the ethnic classification of Gypsies; Gypsy music; and the occupation of Gypsy musicians. It is necessary to provide this theoretical context in order to get a better grasp on the information that follows these theoretical chapters based on fieldwork. After the theoretical chapters, I will address my field of study and the applied methodology during my fieldwork which I conducted in January and February 2012 in The Netherlands. The two empirical chapters that follow provide data gained by fieldwork in the environment of one particular Romanian Gypsy musician.

My thesis entails both a textual part and a audiovisual part, which is a film. The textual part should therefore be seen as an accompanying entity of the film and the other way around. Throughout the two empirical chapters, references are made to particular parts in the film by means of time codes in order to visualize textual parts in this thesis. In chapter eight ‘Data Analysis’ I will further elaborate on the film, thereby providing information on its scenes; themes; purposes and how the scenes are connected to one another. In the concluding section I will link the theoretical chapters to the empirical data and answer my research question. The information provided in this thesis is based on both academic literature and a case study on a Romanian Gypsy musician and his family. The purpose of this thesis is therefore not to generalize, but to provide an empirical example of how one particular Gypsy musician continues his occupation within his changing environment.

2. Gypsies

I want to start my thesis by presenting a theoretical framework in which my research and research question are embedded by means of providing the necessary contextual information. In this chapter I will address the problematic feature of the term ‘Gypsy’ by means of amplifying the ongoing debate among scholars on the origin and ethnical classification of Gypsies.

2.1 Ethnical classification

Who are Gypsies exactly? Who can one classify as such? And who makes this classification? Within academic circles, such questions are the subject of controversy as it is embedded in the general debate about the construction of ethnicity. The former idea of a ‘melting pot’, during the ’70 in the United States, implicated an inevitable process of ethnic elimination in a multicultural society. This assumption was rejected due to the continuation of cultural, linguistic and religious differences among populations. These differences among peoples, together with the emergence of new ethnic groups, forced social scholars to rethink models of ethnicity in search for a less evolutionary means of understanding (Nagel 1994: 152). This resulted in a model that emphasized the constructive aspects of ethnicity. Fredrik Barth (in Wimmer 2008: 971) pioneered what later became known as “constructivism”: he claimed that “ethnicity is the product of a social process rather than a cultural given, made and remade rather than taken for granted, chosen depending on circumstances rather than ascribed through birth.” This model of ethnicity stresses its dynamic character and its socially constructed aspects: the ways in which ethnic boundaries, i.e. who is ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ these boundaries, are negotiated, defined and produced through social interaction, depending who does the classification. Therefore, the origin, content and form of ethnicity reflects both the choices of individuals and groups as they define themselves and others in ethnic ways, and the ascriptions from others, contrary to studies assuming that it is mainly a matter of self-definition (Nagel 1994; Ladányi 2001; Lucassen 1990).

The constructivist view, as described above, perfectly fits my research question because in both matters, constant change due to a dynamic environment is of crucial importance to understand and explain the constructive side of ethnicity and –in case of my research question- Gypsy music.

2.2 External labeling

Many variants on the term Gypsy can be found in literature such as *Roma*; *Sinti*; *Tzigane*; *Egyptian*; *Gypsy-Traveller*; *Zigeuner*; *Gitano*; and *Yifti* (Gropper 1975; Ladányi 2001). Often, within academic literature a twofold distinction is made between those Gypsies that have settled and those that have maintained a nomadic lifestyle, the later being referred to as *travelers* or *gypsy-travelers* (Bancroft 2005; Gropper 1975; James 2007; Okely 1983). Leo Lucassen (1998) argues that most of the people whom are nowadays defined as ‘gypsy’ were labeled as such mostly after the turn of the 19th century, for he claims it is demographically impossible that a few hundred gypsies swelled to a group of tens of thousands of people by the end of the nineteenth century. He argues that people labeled as ‘gypsies’ were people whose occupations made them wanderers which caused an increased stigmatization throughout Europe. The appearance of Gypsies, according to Lucassen, occurred in a time when the importance of the nation-state had increased and it was particularly this growth in state power that created the category ‘Gypsy’. Bancroft (2005: 17) argues that the development of the internal outsider played an important part in the construction of a strong European identity, which is inherent to the establishment of the nation-state.

Also Judith Okely (Bancroft 2005; Okely 1983) emphasizes the role of the nation-state in the emergence of the Gypsy population in England. She claims that within the transition from feudalism to capitalism, a process which started in the mid-18th century, it may have found useful for people to adopt such a lifestyle, taking on the image of a ‘Gypsy’, in order to gain more freedom and economic opportunities without having to adopt the demands of the modern nation-state. Around the same period of time, the theory of an Indian origin of Gypsies emerged. Okely argues that the extent to which this theory is emphasized depends on the degree of minorities are, and feel, accepted by the dominant society.

Lucassen (1998) claims to have found traces of the increased labeling of people as ‘gypsies’ around the year of 1900 in several countries such as The Netherlands, France, and Germany. He argues that during a wave of nomadic immigrants between 1868-1902 in The Netherlands, the category ‘gypsies’ was first used by the Dutch government to define three groups: Hungarian tinkers, Bosnian bear-tamers and Italian animal-tamers. Until then, the term ‘gypsy’ had only been used in Germany where it was a term loaded with merely negative associations. Within Germany, authorities counted more than 5000 gypsies around the turn of the century. However, by 1926 this number had increased up to 14,000. In France, the number of ‘gypsies’ at the beginning of the nineteenth century was not more than 500, whereas in

1898 more than 25,000 ‘gypsies’ were counted by the French government (Lucassen 1998: 85).

2.3 Evidence of origin

Despite the importance of these perspectives, they have been questioned by others who believe that the origin of Gypsies derives from the dispersal of several groups from within India in the beginning of the tenth century travelling towards Europe, thereby mixing with European and other groups. ¹ Bancroft (2005) distinguishes linguistic, genetic, and anthropological evidence that have been presented by scholars in order to indicate Gypsies’ common origin from nomadic groups whom were believed to have started their migration towards the Balkans, eventually dispersing throughout Europe in the 15th century. The maintenance of these linguistic, biological, and cultural identities (or lack thereof) of Gypsies is influenced both by internal mechanisms and by interactions with the so-called host population (Iovita&Schurr 2004).

In 1763, a theology student at the University of Leiden discovered a similarity between the Gypsy language in a particular district in Hungary and the languages of the Indian subcontinent. After this discovery, philological investigations by several linguistics began that led to the conclusion that the language of Gypsies, *Romany*, is akin to modern Hindi (Gropper 1975). Various historical linguists in the last decades have provided hypotheses that support the theory of the Indian origin of Gypsies, such as Turner; Fraser; Sampson; and Hancock ((Iovita&Schurr 2004). In 1999, for example, Hancock (2000) argues similarly that the Romani language is closest to Western Hindi, which itself emerged from Rajputic, the military lingua franca of the army camps a thousand years ago. In the book *Romani: A Linguistic Introduction*, Yaron Matras (2000) reviews the history of linguistic theories on the origin of Romani.

In order to find genetic evidence that could trace the origin of Gypsies, several genetic studies have been conducted among Gypsies. The history of genetic research on the Roma begins with the National Socialist German programs supported by the ‘Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft and the Race and Population Biology Research Centre’. Genetic and medical research was carried out at the concentration camp in Auschwitz. On the contrary,

¹ http://www.per-usa.org/1997-2007/21st_c.htm

postwar genetic research was mainly carried out to answer questions regarding the claimed Indian origin of Roma populations, their possible relatedness to European populations, and their internal diversity (Iovita&Schurr 2004). Gropper (1975) argues that the most convincing evidence for common genes among Gypsies comes from the study of blood-type frequencies: a comparison was made between blood groups of Gypsies in Hungary; of the dominant population in Hungary; and that of Asiatic Indians. Results showed a closer approximation of Gypsy blood phenotypes with those of the Asiatic Indians than with other Hungarians. A more recent genetic study in 2004 conducted among 1870 subjects, also observes limited diversity between Indian chromosomes and DNA lineages of the studied subjects which had led them to suggest that the European Gypsy population was founded by a small group of related individuals (Morar et. al. 2004). Iovita&Schurr (2004: 270) indicate that studies over the last decade have also resulted in the identification of a number of novel single gene disorders and disease-causing mutations in Gypsies. These biomedical data imply that Gypsies have experienced some degree of isolation from other ethnic groups following their establishment as founding populations in various regions of Europe. Otherwise, one would not expect to observe so many private disease-causing mutations in these groups. Iovita&Schurr (2004) therefore argue that these studies seem to support the theory of Gypsies' Indian origin.

Gropper (1975) argues that cultural evidence of an Indian origin of Gypsies is the least clear, due to the coexistence of different groups in India resulting in cultural exchanges among them. She explains the great cultural discrepancy between settled and nomad groups among Gypsies are a result of their dispersion throughout entire Europe. Hancock (2000) argues that Indian origin of Gypsies is shown today in cultural practices of some Gypsy groups in Europe which resemble elements of goddess-worship, as in the Rajputs' [particular group of Hindi soldiers] worship of the warrior goddess Parvati. Other cultural patterns among Gypsies are still shown such as intergroup marriages; hereditary occupations; family- and household life based on a strong gender division; an own Gypsy language and/or dialect and their own dance and music styles (Gropper 1975). However, Leo Lucassen (1998), who argues that 'Gypsy' is a socio-cultural construct, claims that noticeable distinctive cultural traits among those who are labeled as Gypsies (by themselves or others) are merely a result of the process of their stigmatization throughout Europe which forced them to develop a way in order to survive.

2.4 Struggle for ethnic identity

Bancroft (2005) acknowledges the mislabeling of Gypsies by governments which has facilitated state repression and stigmatization towards people labeled as such. However, Bancroft provides an important concern for the perspective that Gypsies as an ethnic group are merely constructed, therefore getting 'de-ethnicized'. She claims that the consequences of such interpretations can be harmful, since Gypsies mostly lack the power to challenge such scholarly constructions of their origin. Additionally, Ioveta and Schurr (2004) argue that Gypsies lack a written history of their own. Therefore, historical and anthropological accounts of them have come exclusively from scholars whom belong to the non-Gypsy population. The following statement made by the International Romani Union in 2001 during the World Conference against Racism addresses Gypsies' struggle for acknowledgement of a common ethnic identity:

“ (...)When someone speaks of us he would allude to the gypsy people, Romà, romanies, gitano, sinti or nomads as if they were different people linked by common problems. From our organization, we claim respect for the only name for which the gypsies from all the world want to be known and identified which is the term “ROMÀ” – with tonic accent in the “a” as an acute word. ROMÀ is the plural of the nominative “ROM” and it means simply “GYPSIES.” We are the “ROMÀ”, that is to say “THE GYPSIES”. (...) The gypsies from all over the world are making a great effort so that the society contemplates and accepts us as a single town, integrated for more than twelve million people who live fundamentally in Europe (10 millions) and in America (2 million and a half). We are bearers of a common history in their origins and of an identical culture in the fundamental thing. (...) “(Zajda 2008: 59).

To Gypsies, the experienced common culture and history provides them their identity: that of a Gypsy. It provides them a sense of belonging to a group that needs to be acknowledged as such in order to fight experienced feelings of discrimination and stigmatization. It is therefore crucial to not simply deny the existence of Gypsies as a distinct ethnic group, but at the same time it is also important to realize historical events in which processes of discrimination and stigmatization have resulted in increased labeling of 'Gypsies'. I will now address one cultural feature by which Gypsies always have been associated with: Gypsy music.

3. Gypsy Music

In this chapter, the second part of the theoretical section, I will address the origin and development of Gypsy music throughout the years. First, I will discuss the definition of Gypsy music itself, and secondly I will address its development throughout the last century. Due to the fact that the subject of my case study, Giani Linca, is Romanian, I choose to focus on Romania in particular. The development of Gypsy music is closely connected to larger changes in state regimes and policies (Kovalcsik 1987; Beissinger 2005). Based on the biggest transitions of Romania's state regime in the last century, I will address the development of Gypsy music in Romania according to three different time periods, to know: 1900-1944; the period of communist rule, and the post-communist period of democracy.

3.1 Definition of Gypsy music

Franz Litzs was the first author to extensively elaborate on (the definition of) Gypsy music by publishing his book *On Gypsies and Gypsy music in Hungary* in 1859. Within this book, he claims that the music played by gypsies and Hungarian peasantry was rooted in Gypsy music. The music that Hungarians themselves described as Gypsy music and not as Hungarian music was to determine the definition of Gypsy music. A century later, Béla Bartók (1947) reflected on the book saying that the music played by both Gypsies and peasantry in Hungary has Hungarian origins and should therefore be defined as Hungarian music. He claimed that the music played by urban Gypsy bands is nothing but popular art music of recent origin. This Hungarian popular art music is thereby incorrectly called Gypsy music. Béla Bartók thereby excluded the Gypsies from the list of musicians he considered acceptable for any research into an "authentic" folk music strata (Marian-Balasa 2007). Kovalcsik (1987; 2003) also confirms the influence of commercial popular music on Gypsy music in Hungary, but simultaneously emphasizes that Gypsies only adapted a selective part of external musical influences that fit into the structure of their own distinctive culture.

3.2 Pre-war Romania: 1900-1944

In the beginning of the century, Romania was considered a relatively poor country in comparison to other European countries at that time. Almost 80% of labor took place in the agricultural sector, and only 10% took place in the industrial sector. However, during the '30

the industrial labor force showed an annually growth (Chirot 1978). During the 20's and 30's the Communist Party (hereafter C.P.) was rather small, and workers and peasants favored fascist Iron Guard over the C.P. In this period, Gypsy musicians would play traditional Romanian music in public. Their instruments included the violin, accordion, string bass, and the cimbalom (Beissinger 2005).

During World War II, Romania sided with the German. In concentration camps, many Gypsies were executed among which musicians were sometimes kept as slaves to perform for guard staff. In this period, Gypsy music was therefore both a very dangerous expression that would lead to execution, as it also was a means to survive a concentration camp as Gypsy musicians could provide a certain entertainment to the guards, which would postpone their execution (Crotty 2007).

3.3 Communist rule: 1944-1989

Not until 1944 did Romania experience any anti-German movements, until the military, pro-German regime was overthrown by King Michael who saw this as the only way to save the country from Soviet devastation. In 1945 Moscow imposed a Communist government on Romania, but it was not until 1947 that the U.S.S.R. finally imposed full Stalinist rule. A period marked by terror and repression began, which aimed to destroy all forces resisting the Party rule. To get an idea of the rapid growth of the C.P.: their membership entailed a 1000 persons in 1944, whereas this number was increased to 600.000 members in 1948 (Chirot 1978).

Romania's communist period lasted from 1944 until 1989, the year in which the Romanian Revolution took place. Within this period, their music played in public was dictated and monitored by the communist government as they were merely permitted to play traditional Romanian music with native genres (Beissinger 2005: 41). The fundamental philosophy behind the Soviet resolutions was that music should celebrate the directions of the Party, using conservative ideas of melody and harmony. The Party could see certain propaganda benefits of gathering people together to sing the praises of the communist cause, and it established choirs in both rural and urban areas. Folk music arranged for choirs was also allowed and supported by the regime, because it was indigenous and supposedly "free" from outside bourgeois influences (Crotty 2007).

At the beginning of the 60's, Gypsies started playing the guitar like Hungarian youth in general did. The melodies in Gypsy songs began to display tonally functional movements, altered notes and broken chords, due to the influence of dance melodies and the introduction of the guitar. However, the appearance of the guitar among young Gypsy musicians did not imply an adoption of all new musical trends within the Gypsy community. Kovalcsik (1987; 2003) argues that over the years, a certain degree of modernization within the development of Gypsy music was demanded. However, this did not result into fundamental changes as Gypsy music owes its survival to its capability of keeping track with changes at a larger scale, and simultaneously preserve their traditional forms of making music.

During the communist rule, and in particular during Ceaușescu's rule, music and dance repertoires were dictated and monitored by the communist government. Gypsy musicians were instructed to perform exclusively native genres, conforming to the official attempts to control cultural expression by permitting only pure, traditional Romanian music. The constraints placed on music played in public by Gypsy musicians became progressively more severe during Ceaușescu's reign in the 1980's (Beissinger 2005).

3.4 Post-communism: 1989-now

The communist government collapsed in 1989 and former dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu (who had ruled since 1965) and his wife were assassinated. A post-communist political system was put in place in which freedom of speech and the right to travel abroad were reinstated. After the Romanian revolution in 1989, new musical sounds, genres and styles emerged and slowly took over older, traditional ones. Electronic music becomes more widespread as opposed to traditional and acoustic instruments. In addition to the traditional mainstream Romanian music that Gypsy musicians played during the communist period in public, they also performed other Gypsy music in private spaces where Gypsy in-group songs were heard. These songs in particular were increasingly performed by Gypsies in public after the Romanian revolution (Beissinger 2005:41).

4. The Occupation and Identity of Gypsy Musicians

In this chapter I will address the occupation of Gypsy musicians and their rather deviant position among Gypsies in general. Furthermore, I will stress the importance of the survival of this family tradition as the occupation is strongly related to the identity of Gypsy musicians.

The occupation of Gypsy musicians has lasted over centuries, being passed on from generation to generation among Gypsies. The rather deviant position of Gypsy musicians among Gypsies in general was already shown in early history (Beissinger 2001; Cartwright 2006; Bancroft 2005). For centuries long, Gypsies have encountered oppression, stigmatization, exploitation, slavery, and persecution. Amongst the Gypsies who were enslaved in Eastern Europe, starting approximately at the beginning of the 15th century, were Gypsy musicians who were forced to play music by their owners. However, historian Mihai Kogalniceanu (in Beissinger 2001: 29) argues that among slaves, Gypsy musicians entailed a relatively high social status due to the social stratification among Gypsies that was based on both the distinction between settled and nomadic Gypsies and on the level of specialization of their occupations.

Based on fieldwork in Romania among Gypsy musicians, Beissinger (2001) argues that Gypsy musicians still occupy an ambiguous position among Gypsies as outsiders associate them with both highly skilled professionalism and low-status ethnicity. Also anthropologist Susan Gal (1991) notices an opposition, based on her investigation on the East-West dichotomy within Europe, arguing that Romania represents the East: the less developed pole in opposition to Europe. However, within Romania the Gypsies stand for the East, while Romania in this regard stands for Europe in contrast to the Gypsies. She also noticed this opposition across musical tastes in Romania, the elites looking westward and despising the *manele*², which are associated with Gypsies. Gal (1991) therefore argues that Romania's position as a bridge between East and West and equally sensitive to both influences, is reenacted in the ideological battle between *manele* supporters and protesters. *Manele*

² Romanian music style which is often associated with Gypsies

detractors see the musicians who play this music as agents of “gypsification,” where Gypsies embody the negative side of the East-West dichotomy (Szeman).

Beissinger (2001), however, argues that instead to view Gypsies merely as victims and oppressed powerless persons in society, they can also be viewed as actors that influence the social processes of their lives. Beissinger (2001) claims that due to their engagement in a variety of cultural and social difference, Gypsy musicians constantly try to position themselves in such ways that the outcome will result most advantageously for them through the process of social interaction. Although Gypsy musicians view themselves as Gypsies, they often distinguish other Gypsies by emphasizing their skilled profession and their engagement with varied people, thereby elevating themselves above other Gypsies (Beissinger 2001). This could be explained by the ever-present stigma on Gypsies being an unskilled, backward, and closed community. On the other hand, they often find themselves in social situations in which they strongly position themselves as Gypsies in order to gain other benefits. This could be explained by the often presented romantic image of Gypsies as a community which is supposedly born with a special musical talent (Cartwright 2006).

Cartwright (2006) states that romantic outsiders like to think that the musical talent of Gypsies is something hereditary in the blood, which creates certain stereotypes about Gypsies. Based on fieldwork on Gypsies on the Greek-Albanian Border, Aspasia Theodosiou (2007: 156) argues to have encountered the same romantic image of Gypsies: non-Gypsies perceived them as musicians with an essential quality for making music, as music was in their blood after all. However, reality shows that both the occupation and the tradition of intense musical practicing is heredity, not the musical talent itself (Beissinger 2001; Cartwright 2006; Theodosiou 2007).

As described above, this hereditary occupation entails more than ‘just’ an occupation as it also determines a Gypsies’ social status. Due to their ascribed higher social status among Gypsies, the occupation of Gypsy musicians made it possible for them to gain more prestige in relation to other Gypsies. If we look at the current situation of Gypsies, they are still a minority being discriminated and stigmatized. Therefore, the positioning of Gypsies by themselves remains important in order to survive and escape these processes of discrimination and stigmatization. The occupation becomes something related to their identity, to who they are, and how they are seen by others. This is crucial to understand the importance for Gypsy musicians to try and pass on their traditional hereditary occupation to the next generation, as this family occupation gives them a means of gaining a better social position in society in

relation to other Gypsies. Their engagement with people differing in ethnicity, nationally and social status requires a certain capability of adaptation in order to continue their profession (Beissinger 2001). In order to investigate in which way Gypsy musicians nowadays adapt themselves to their environment, I conducted anthropological research on a case study. I will now elaborate on the outcome of my participant observation and in-depth interviews, but first I will address my field of study.

5. Field of Study

In order to conduct research among Gypsy musicians, I searched for a Gypsy musician living in The Netherlands. I use the term *Gypsy musician* to refer to a musician who classifies himself as a Gypsy –not someone who is a musician and plays Gypsy music without regarding himself as a Gypsy. Searching the web, I found Giani Lincan (hereafter Giani): a Romanian Gypsy musician who has migrated to The Netherlands to continue his international career as cymbalist³.

The outcome of my fieldwork research will be presented not only through text, but also through image and sound. Analyzing the text on his website, I found Giani very suitable for my research due to a number of reasons. First, I wanted to conduct a case study on someone that already seemed experienced in giving interviews and performing in front of the camera in order to facilitate the use of film within my research, aware of the little time I would have within my research period. Due to the several videos of Romanian TV performances, interviews and big concerts put on his website, I made the assumption that Giani was quite comfortable to be in the center of attention in front of the camera -at least as a musician. Second, Giani presents himself on his website as an artist who is capable of performing several musical styles, such as authentic Gypsy music, classical music, and Romanian Jazz. This wide range of styles shows that Giani, being a Gypsy musician, is not merely focused on performing Gypsy music, but on a broader musical repertoire. On his website he states that the demands of his audience determine which musical style to play. Due to the fact that Giani performs throughout Europe, his audiences vary constantly which demands a certain capability for adaptation and change within Giani's musical- repertoire and

³ Someone who plays the cymbal: a traditional stringed musical instrument

performance which is linked to my research question as it regards Gypsy musicians' adaptation to their changing environments. However, he does emphasize the ever-present noticeable traces of Gypsy traditions in his wide range of musical styles.⁴ Therefore, the presentation of himself on his website can be considered twofold: on the one hand he is a Gypsy musician holding on to certain Gypsy traditions, but simultaneously he presents himself as capable of change by means of adaptations within his musical- repertoire and performance.

In regard to my research, I have used two sources to gather information: academic literature on Gypsies and a case study on Giani. I choose to do a case study focusing on one particular musician for two reasons. First, the little research time (two months) requires a small focus. Second, Giani provides a good example of a Gypsy musician in an ever-changing environment as is situated in a dynamic context due to his international career performing for a varied audience. Considering my research question, I focus on Giani's life as a musician and not so much on his personal life. Some family members, however, are included in my research as they are musicians themselves and therefore play an important role in the continuation of Gypsy musician's occupation which was and still is mostly hereditary along the male line of the family. To Giani, his grandfather, his uncle and his father were important figures regarding the transfer of musical knowledge: his grandfather introduced him to the cymbal and all three family members taught him several melodies, harmonies, rhythms and songs within folk- and Gypsy music. According to Giani, his mother plays a special role in the transfer of the tradition –as he calls it himself-, referring to the family's occupation, as she was the first to introduce him to Gypsy music. As Giani's father passed away a couple of years ago, she is the one continuing the family tradition as a singer, transferring the musical tradition on her son Giani and on her two daughters Gina and Paula whom both became singers as well. Regarding the continuation of this tradition by Giani himself, his two sons Albert (12) and Florin (16) are important within my research as their daily devotion to music visualizes this process.

⁴ <http://www.lincan.nl/#Home>

5.1 Methodology

My research period lasted from January until February 2012, in which I applied both anthropological research methods and audiovisual methods by means of filming. Prior to this period, I have prepared myself in several ways in order to conduct research. After Giani agreed to take part in my film, I tried to have as much contact with him as possible in order to build *rapport*⁵. I did this by means of (participant) observations in several social situations at home; at music class; and at his concerts. Giani opened up to me more and more as time passed by, and he invited me to stay at his house and to accompany him in several outdoor activities. These activities were not merely part of the preparation, but also of the research itself as I could both derive important information and establish a good relationship. Furthermore, I have read literature on Gypsies and watched films and documentaries with similar subjects (i.e. Gypsies, Gypsy musicians or musicians in general) which provided new conversation topics for me and Giani, and I prepared myself for the use of film by means of practicing.⁶ My research period itself lasted from January till February 2012 in which I have applied the qualitative research methods of (participant) observation; conversations; and semi-structured interviews.⁷

During my research period, I used film to create a final product consisting of both text and film. The technological advances of the nineteenth-century have made visual recording of cultural matters possible and therefore the production of ethnographic films. Within the last century, ethnographic films have shown a great development regarding technological possibilities, due to –for example- the emerge of the digital camera which made the production of film faster, cheaper and accessible to a broader audience. Since 1960, the number of ethnographic films produced increase yearly (Hockings 2003).

Film has it unique quality to capture the multileveled nature of social events, as film can give a complete image in the sense that it can composite image and sound at the same time, thereby transmitting a complete image of a certain situation (Hockings 2003). The transmission of a complete image is made possible because both image and sound can present

⁵ Refers to a sympathetic relationship based on mutual understanding.

⁶ By filming similar social situations preparing myself on the use of space, light, frames etc.

⁷ This included: having lunch and dinner together with Giani's family; sleep over in Giani's house; accompanying Giani to musical activities such as his musical classes; concerts and private music class of his youngest son; discussing the text on his website translating the text into English and Dutch; having informal conversations.

several elements of a particular social situation at the same time. Text, however, can merely describe actions one by one, and not simultaneously. Second, by representing emotions and atmospheres, film has the power to evoke certain feelings among its viewers by communicating –for example- social relations among people and facial expressions, things that are transmitted easier and with more impact by means of film, than by the mere use of written words.⁸

According to the French anthropologist and filmmaker Jean Rouch, the only way of filming should be to walk about with the camera, as is the main characteristic of observational cinema, inspired by Vertov’s theory of the “cine-eye”⁹ and Flaherty’s notion of “participant camera”¹⁰. To achieve this way of filming, Rouch stresses on the importance of teaching anthropology students about the techniques of recording both pictures and sound, as anthropologists –in comparison to other filmmakers- have “the irreplaceable quality of real contact between the person filming and those being filmed” (in Hockings 2003: 88-89).

Although my film cannot be categorized as purely observational cinema, I did intent to film social situations as they naturally occurred, except for my interview parts in the film. What themes and purposes the different scenes of my film contain, I will turn to in chapter six ‘Data Analysis’. In the following chapters, I will address the empirical data, gained by means of fieldwork, which I will link to the previous theoretical chapters in the concluding section in which I will answer my research question. Throughout the following chapters, references are made to particular parts in the film in order to visualize textual parts in this thesis.

6. Being a Gypsy musician: The case of Giani Lincan

The following two chapters, based on fieldwork, are chronologically organized along certain events in Giani’s life. I should make a note here on the selection of events and the division between the data gathered by film and the data gathered by text as the following text provides

⁸ College Ethnographic Filmmaking at University of Leiden 2010-2011.

⁹ Theory of the filmmaker being a mechanical eye that is deliberate from human immobility, being in perpetual motion (Rouch in Hockings 2003: 83)

¹⁰ A notion based on Flaherty’s research in which he showed pictures to his research subjects which made the camera participate in the research itself (Rouch in Hockings 2003: 82)

extra (personal) information that I do not able to shown in the film. In this chapter I will address the development of Giani's career as a musician, and the changes in musical genres in Romania he was confronted with after the fall of the communism which made Giani decide to move to The Netherlands. I will further elaborate on what motivated Giani to emigrate in subchapters 6.4 and 6.5.

6.1 Childhood

The Romanian-born Giani Lincan stems from a Gypsy family consisting of musicians that have passed on their family occupation from generation to generation. Both his parents were musicians, as so were his grandparents. His father Marin Lincan was a violist, but passed away at a young age a couple of years ago. His mother Mioara Lincan was, and still is, a successful singer (00:13:40:06). Born on the 8th of December, 1967 in Bucharest, Giani was raised by his grandfather as his parents were always on tour throughout Romania. *“My grandfather was a cymbalist. I always saw him play at home and I asked him what kind of instrument it was. He told me about the cymbal and I started to get to know the instrument: a beautiful sound, a beautiful instrument, I fell in love with the cymbal and I started to take music class with my grandfather. I was only six years old. I learned nice, beautiful songs from him, we used to play together, it was really beautiful, wonderful, the beginning, and that is how I started to play cymbal.”*¹¹ Giani argues that it was his grandfather who taught him the most important knowledge of both Gypsy music and Folk music. *“This was very important to me. Like this, you train the way you listen to music and understand it. I learned such nice things from him, things that are impossible to learn at school. In this way I got well prepared: I could say he was the one to prepare my talent.”*¹² Besides the daily practice with his grandfather, Giani started to take private classes at the age of eight with famous Romanian cymbal teachers Mitica Marinescu Ciuciu and Toni Iordache.

At the age of 14 he moved back to his parents' place where he grew up together with his parents and two sisters Paula and Gina Lincan. After finishing high school designed for musicians, he was accepted at the Royal Conservatorium George Enescu in Bucharest at which he studied cymbal for nine years thereby also acquiring a degree in professional

¹¹ Giani in a conversation on 12-12-2011.

¹² Giani in an interview on 14-06-2012.

teaching. *“I got so well prepared by my grandfather, that by the time I went back to live with my parents I was ready to perform together with them.”*¹³ As Giani performed with his parents, other family members and friends, he got trained in playing together and remembering music. *“That is the fundamental basis. You have to remember a lot, because within Gypsy music, sheet music does not exist: you have to remember melodies and harmonies. It is so much fun, and also good memory training.”*¹⁴

6.2 Conservatory-trained

In 1988 Giani graduated as professional cymbalist and teacher at the Royal Conservatorium George Enescu in Bucharest at the age of 21. He considers himself lucky he was able to actually study music. *“In the time my grandfather grew up, conservatoriums did not exist. During the Second World War he was captured by the Russians, because he was a Gypsy.”*¹⁵ Giani tells me his grandfather was taken into a concentration camp during several years: *“The only reasons he survived that concentration camp is because of his musical talent. They discovered he was a musician and they made him play in front of the concentration camp guards. Because he could provide a certain entertainment, he was found to be useful and they let him live”.*¹⁶ To get an idea of how relatively ‘lucky’ he was to survive: the Holocaust is believed to have destroyed over one million Gypsies which entails more than half of Europe’s Gypsies (Cartwright 2006). After his grandfather was released, he continued his career as a musician. *“He returned to Romania in 1945 and started playing in the most beautiful cities of Romania, including Bucharest and Pitesti where he met several musicians. It was something private; it had nothing to do with training. But I did learn the basis in folk music from him: the real, deep basis.”*¹⁷

Contrary to the romantic image of Gypsies being born with native musical talent, Giani emphasizes on the importance of studying music on a daily notice in order to become a

¹³ Giani in a conversation on 12-12-2011.

¹⁴ Giani in a conversation on 09-01-2012.

¹⁵ Giani in an interview on 02-02-2012.

¹⁶ Giani in an interview on 02-02-2012.

¹⁷ Giani in an interview on 02-02-2012.

good and successful musician. *“I believe it is very important to actually study music, and to learn how to read notes. If you are not able to do so, you will never be able to play with other great musicians, nor to play or create or combine other music styles.”*¹⁸ He does believe that his grandfather prepared his talent –as stated above- due to the daily practice with him and all the songs, melodies, and harmonies his grandfather taught him. Giani tells me that the intense way of studying music at a very young age is common among Gypsy musicians. Roby Lakatos, a Hungarian-born Gypsy violist and befriend colleague of Giani, started to study music at the age of five: *“To really learn about our music, one’s ears have to be opened as soon as possible. The rest is total immersion, listening and playing night after night until the music and the performer are one”* (Kurzbauer 2003: 1113). Both Roby Lakatos and Giani believe in strict and authoritarian music teachers. Roby Lakatos (Kurzbauer 2003: 1113) explains: *“Thinking about the relaxed way young people approach their lessons nowadays, I am happy that I was a product of a stricter, more conservative approach. Even in the late days of the Communist regime in Hungary, there was an unspoken and total respect for authority figures.”* The same applies to Giani as he tells me he believes a strict teacher will help you study better and therefore become a better musician.

Talking to Giani about his grandfather who “prepared his talent” and the way in which he intensely studied music every day, I assumed Giani thought these two factors combined made him into the talented musician he is today. But then he said: *“Not everyone can become a good musician, because not everyone is blessed with talent. I was lucky to be blessed by God with my talent. Only God can decide who gets this blessing.”*¹⁹

6.3 Career

As described above, Giani started to play music at a very young age, as well as performing in front of audiences together with friends and family starting at the age of 14. After his graduation he was free to move around the country to go on tour as a musician, and eventually travel outside of Romania to perform internationally. In these years he gained experience as a musician by playing both as a soloist and as a member of several orchestras. In Romania, he played together with big orchestras such as the military ensemble ‘Doina Armatei’ and

¹⁸ Giani in a conversation on 21-02-2012.

¹⁹ Giani in a conversation on 12-03-2012.

‘Ciocirlia’. Together with several orchestras he travelled throughout Romania to perform and got in contact with different audiences and different musicians. In this period he started to create a big network of fellow musicians whom he still plays with nowadays. As his network started to expand, his career took a more international direction and he started to perform on different podia, festivals and concerts in Europe. However, his home basis was still Romania, where he would still perform the most –also together with his family.

6.4 From communist rule to a democracy

As stated before, the communists in Romania gained control in early 1948 and continued their communist rule until 1989. The state’s agenda of total control and centrally planned policy has had a big influence on music. Music needed to be controlled by the state to prevent it from going into an international and commercial way (Crotty 2007). Giani tells me it was very different being a musician under communist rule compared to now: *“Everything used to be controlled by the state, you got commission, and it was really beautiful. Now it’s not like this anymore, these kinds of things do not exist anymore. Now, such freedom exist you can play whatever you want, it does not matter if it’s good or bad, as long as it’s commercialized. And I find that hard, because in these times you cannot make real music anymore. It is very difficult to let people understand what you feel.”*²⁰ Giani talks about the communist regime with a lot of nostalgia, as he would love to go back to that period in which everything was state-controlled. He feels folk-, and gypsy music was much more appreciated in that period and that due to the change from communist rule to a democratic state in 1989, a lot has changed for musicians.

After 1989 new musical styles emerged, often based on electronic music as opposed to traditional music. Giani detested the new musical genre, which he describes as a kind of “dance music”, but nevertheless he could hardly escape from it. *“I wasn’t satisfied at all. In that period I was asked all the time to perform this new music style, but if you don’t like it you shouldn’t do it and so I didn’t. After that I was asked to play together with symphony orchestra and like that I met other orchestras with whom I played different music than I had played before in Romania: classical music, and especially café concert. It was beautiful, wonderful, and I was well trained to play this. It was in this moment I decided I needed to*

²⁰ Giani in an interview on 14-06-2012.

*change and play different music styles, for a different audience than the Romanian one and I decided to move to the Netherlands.”*²¹

6.5 The Netherlands

In Romania he got married to his wife Silvia. They met because their families used to play together, as both families consisted of musician. Silvia stems from the Turcitu family which is, like Giani’s family, a Gypsy family existing of musicians since several generations. Silvia’s father is an accordionist and had moved already to The Netherlands in order to realize a career outside of Romania. Giani and Silvia immigrated to Zoetermeer in 1996, where their two sons Florin and Albert were born (00:01:55:22). Together with his escape from the new musical style that had emerged in Romania, Giani was in search of new audiences as he argues that Romanian people are “*fun, but totally crazy*” and that Dutch are “*more rational, calmer*”. Giani talks about his first period in the Netherlands with a lot of enthusiasm and joy, especially when referring to the Dutch audience. “*The Netherlands had – and still has- a great audience for multicultural things. This is the fundamental difference when you compare Dutch to Romanian people: the Dutch understand other cultures very well and I was very pleased because I felt like people understood me: what kind of music I was playing and where it came from. Thus, people also understood the history behind the music, which was amazing, I was so trilled: I am in a country in which people understand everything. This made my movement to The Netherlands very easy, because I got appreciated; I got success, which makes you feel good about yourself. It was great, amazing*”²² (00:17:05:06).

In the year of 2000 he founded the Lincan Ensemble with whom he still performs at many national and international podia (00:11:30:23). To create this ensemble, he put together what he thinks are great, high-quality musicians with a broad experience in playing Gypsy music. In the same year he got in touch with record companies and he recorded his first CD.

²¹ Giani in an interview on 21-03-2012.

²² Giani in an interview on 14-06-2012.

6.6 Family life

In the same year of their arrival, Giani and Silvia got their first son Florin (whom now is 16) followed by their second son Albert four years later (who now is 12). During my research period I noticed a strong gendered division of labor.²³ Daily conversations among the family members vary, but music always plays a central role. This is due to the fact that both sons grew up with instruments as well starting from a young age, and are now getting prepared to be accepted at the Royal Conservatorium in The Hague. Albert (12) and Florin (16) were asked by Giani to pick an instrument of choice. *“At the age of 6 and 8, I gave them the freedom to choose their own instrument. Florin wanted to play piano, and Albert wanted to play the violin, and so I let them.”*²⁴ Within Giani’s family, the choice of instrument is often being passed on from one generation to the next along the male line of kinship. This is shown between Giani himself (cymbalist) and his grandfather (cymbalist); between his brother-in-law Marian Mexicanu (accordianist) and his son Edy Mexicanu (accordianist); and between his cousin Mihai Turcitu (violist) and his son Andrei Turcitu (violist). However, his sons are an exception to the rule as they did not follow their father’s footsteps, and choose to play a different instrument than cymbal.

Giani claims that his sons were not only free to choose their instrument, but also *if* they wanted to play music at all. *“It is no obligation. If you feel you want to make music, then you should do it.”*²⁵ Now both sons do play an instrument, Giani takes their musical education very seriously. Besides the daily practice at home, Giani wanted his sons to take private classes as well (00:07:04:08). *“I spend over a thousand euro a month so that both my sons get private music class every week.”*²⁶ They both attend high school of the Royal Conservatorium in The Hague, in preparation to be accepted at grad school of the same

²³ Giani is the main provider of income, and Silvia is responsible for the household, which entails cleaning; grocery shopping; and cooking. Of the many times I saw her, I might have seen her sit down once as she was always busy with either one of the above mentioned tasks. Besides running the household, she earned money as a cleaner in evening hours outside the house.

²⁴ Giani in an interview on 21-03-2012.

²⁵ Giani in an interview on 14-06-2012.

²⁶ Giani in an interview on 21-03-2012.

conservatorium. Their homework entails two to four hours of practicing every day, besides the homework they are asked to do by their private teachers.

When talking to Giani about the piano teacher of his son Florin, a female teacher from Russia, his perspective on this matter becomes clear: “*She is an excellent teacher, and very strict as well. But I think this is very good. I even told her that she can hit him [Florin] if he doesn’t listen or didn’t study well enough*”.²⁷ While saying this, Florin just laughed the matter away, giving me the sincere impression that he did not mind the comment of his father. Often, when I would talk to Giani we could hear Florin practicing on the background, being upstairs in his room. To me, it did always sound great and I would often compliment Florin on his play. Giani always remained neutral in these situations, giving him suggestions and tips to improve his play. Without Florin in our presence, I asked Giani once if he was proud of his son, which he convincingly affirmed. I asked him then if he does not feel the need to show this to his son, and he answered: “*It’s not good to show that you are proud. They always need to think they can do better, and study better, otherwise they get lazy.*”²⁸ Sometimes he does practice himself with his sons, to help them with their (musical) homework from school or tasks from their private lessons. Also in these moments he believes in a certain manner to teach his children (00:09:53:02).

7. Survival of Tradition

In this chapter I want to address Giani’s family tradition as musicians, how he tries to maintain this tradition through the transfer of knowledge; and how he therefore needs to adapt himself in order to deal with changing environments. The later also entail new environments of which Giani makes profit. First, he deliberately moves to The Netherlands in order to search new audiences that appreciate other musical styles, as described above. Second, The Netherlands do not only provide Giani of new environments, but also his sons whom get conservatory-trained in classical music.

²⁷ Giani in an interview on 21-03-2012.

²⁸ Giani in a conversation on 30-01-2012.

7.1 Born in the Lincan family

Giani presents himself as a Gypsy: he is a Gypsy, because he comes from a Gypsy family. When asking Giani about his Gypsy background, he explains me about the different Gypsy ‘races’ among Gypsies in general: *“Among Gypsies in Romania, several Gypsy races exists. As for me and my family, we stem from the Gypsy race of musician. Our family occupation has lasted for generations and that will always remain as such. We, our race, are hard workers, not like some other Gypsies”*.²⁹ Mihai Turcitu, cousin of Silvia and professional violist (00:15:47:07), also stems from a Romanian Gypsy family of musicians and tells me his personal experience on the perceptions of non-Gypsy (or *gadje*³⁰): *“During high school I was never really perceived as a Gypsy by others. It didn’t really matter where I came from. This changed as I started to play music in public. Suddenly it became important to emphasize the fact that I was a ‘Gypsy’, and people started to act different towards me.”*³¹

As Giani talks about different Gypsy ‘races’, he indirectly states that Gypsies need not to be seen as a homogeneous group in which no internal differences exist. But not only does Giani as a Gypsy musician distinguish himself from other Gypsies, this process also works the other way around as Mihai Turcitu explains: *“Me and Giani, we are Gypsies, but sometimes we encounter other Gypsies blaming us for not being ‘real’ Gypsies. They argue that we, as musicians, adapt ourselves too much to other non-Gypsies, thereby neglecting certain very important Gypsy traditions such as speaking the Gypsy language instead of the general Romanian language.”*³² However, Giani refutes this experience by arguing that only some Gypsies react like this, but that in general no real struggle exists among Gypsies. *“If you have lived in the Netherlands for almost 15 years, or even longer, the moment you go back to Romania you are no longer known by the people in there. But just a few people have such a mentality [referring to Mihai’s described experience above] but you are always welcome as long as you do not forget where you came from.”*³³

²⁹ Giani in a conversation on 12-12-2011.

³⁰ Slang for Non-Gypsy people.

³¹ Mihai during a conversation at the Breda Jazz Festival on 18-05-2012.

³² Mihai during a conversation at the Breda Jazz Festival on 18-05-2012.

³³ Giani during a conversation on 10-01-2012.

Giani does acknowledge that he misses Romania from time to time: *“Lately I’ve been playing a lot in Romania, if it was for my career I would move back to Romania. But, my children need to finish their studies in here, they were born in here (...) they feel at home. So I am obligated to life here.”*³⁴ He laughs and continues: *“No, I am joking (...) sometimes, when I’m in Romania I tell my mother: mom I’m going home. She replies: this is your home, and I’d say: no, in there is my home. It becomes a battle which country my home is, Romania or the Netherlands, but I do feel at home in here (...).”*³⁵ No matter what country feels more like his home, he will always be a Gypsy, so he says. *“We don’t have a country, so we can live wherever we want. And it’s fun to be a Gypsy, but a good one, not a bad one”.*³⁶

Giani talks with great pride about his family, as this is the most important matter to him in life: family. He tells me his family is one of the best families that play Gypsy music and folk music. According to the large number of TV appearances of different family members I could conclude that Giani’s family does appear to be known and rather successful as they get a lot of media invitations over the years. As described before, Giani claims it was for his grandfather that he is the talented cymbalist he is nowadays. However, also both his parents and his uncle played an important role in maintaining the tradition of the family occupation. Both his parents and my uncle are specialists when it comes to Gypsy- and folk music. *“They taught me the tradition. They are composers, and they have created nice music based on Gypsy music. Now, this generation must continue, we can even improve music. Some songs are modernized, but the basic always lies within Gypsy music, and one shouldn’t change too much otherwise it’s not Gypsy music anymore.”*³⁷

7.2 Gypsy Music

I asked Giani many times if he could make me understand what Gypsy music exactly is, but in words it seemed hard for him to explain. Gypsy music as a particular music style has its own melodies, harmonies and rhythms which a specialist would recognize (00:13:29:14). *“It’s*

³⁴ Giani in an interview on 14-06-2012.

³⁵ Giani in an interview on 14-06-2012.

³⁶ Giani in a conversation on 30-01-2012.

³⁷ Giani in an interview on 11-03-2012.

*a music style in which you can improve a lot (...) I think it is such an open music style that everyone can understand it, everyone can play along, you just have to feel it”*³⁸ Giani explains. I figured I’d ask his son Florin as well to explain me, since he had just started to learn to play Gypsy music as he has always been studied classical music until now. Florin explains me that “(...) *in Gypsy music you play based on your emotions, and on what you hear. Within that there are certain rules like within classical music, but when you play classical music you stick to the music sheets whereas with Gypsy music you don’t.*”³⁹

Based on their comments it seems that improvising is a crucial feature of Gypsy music, and this improvising is based on emotions as Giani adds: “*Gypsy music is played from the soul. It is no strict music, it comes from within. Like this, you can transfer your emotions to someone else (...).*”⁴⁰ To be able to play from the heart, Giani says you do not need to be a Gypsy. According to him, everyone can learn to play Gypsy music. However, not everyone is blessed with musical talent. This is up to God, as Giani stated above. Giani claims that music to him is a way of life. “(...) *If you know music, you get a totally different character, another mentality. You determine your life in a different way. Music is beautiful. I think a world without music is nothing, totally nothing. Music is very important, and beautiful.*”⁴¹

7.3 Transfer of knowledge

During my period of fieldwork, Giani kept emphasizing on the importance of the transfer of musical knowledge. The stereotype of Gypsy music being passed on from generation on generation, played by heart and not from sheet music, still persists (Cartwright 2006). Asking a Dutch Gypsy musician –and excellent guitar player- about this, he answered: “*I learned to play guitar on the camp [trailer camp] when I was around five years old. I used to hear a song, and then I would repeat it on my guitar. This is how I still learn to play a song. Sometimes, before a concert of performance with important musicians, I am too embarrassed to say that I cannot actually read any notes.*”⁴² Giani believes it is a waste not to learn to read

³⁸ Giani in a conversation on 18-02-2012.

³⁹ Florin during a conversation on 18-02-2012.

⁴⁰ Giani during a conversation on 18-02-2012.

⁴¹ Giani during an interview on 14-06-2012.

⁴² Anonymous Gypsy musicians during a conversation on 23-11-2011.

notes, in particular for the purpose of the transfer of musical knowledge Giani believes the study of sheet music is of vital importance. *“Look, 70% of all Gypsies cannot write or read musical notes. I think that’s a shame, because if someone dies, his music dies with him. But if you have left compositions on paper, someone else can continue your work”*⁴³ (00:06:40:09).

Giani’s mission is to continue the tradition of Gypsy music and to transfer the right information, as he calls ‘high quality’ music, to the next generation. With the later he refers to both his sons, but also to the next generation in general. Not only does he study and play music, he also composes own musical pieces himself to pass on new, creative musical pieces to the next generation. He owns his own studio built in the attic in his house, where he composes music with the newest technical equipment (00:02:07:08). Different musicians send in musical samples which he then composes to one musical piece. To be able to do this, Giani argues one does not only need to study one particular style of music, but different styles of music so that you create a basic knowledge. *“(…) like this you can compare music, and create your own identity within the music. Then, you can always create, you can write compositions down, you can document music, and you can leave it behind for the next generation.”*⁴⁴

7.4 Change and Adaptation

In his surroundings as a musician, Giani has noticed a lot of changes. An important issue to him is the negative influence of the current financial crisis on his career, about which he would repeatedly talk. In one of our first conversations he even suggested me to call my film ‘Where is this world going?’ To fight the crisis he says: *“I need to create projects myself, I have to be very good, make a lot of calls, make myself known (…) you have to be very active, otherwise you don’t achieve anything”*⁴⁵ (00:10:40:23). During my fieldwork I indeed saw him calling a lot of musicians; theaters; festivals to try to arrange performances or musical collaborations. He is among other things the founder of the cimbalom festival in The Netherlands of which the first edition took place in 2011 (00:11:15:04). In order to organize this, he arranged several cymbalist players and other musicians from all over Europe to come and play. Furthermore, he has performed (and performs still) in a large number of national

⁴³ Giani during an interview on 14-06-2012.

⁴⁴ Giani during an interview on 21-03-2012.

⁴⁵ Giani during an interview on 14-06-2012.

and international festivals and podia such as: Gipsy Festival at Tilburg; Jazz Festival at Breda; The Dutch Gipsy Road Show; Festival International de Patrimoine in France; and the Sziget Festival in Hungary. Last July 2012, he went to Romania to perform together with his mother. (00:13:56:18) He seems very conscious of the fact that an active attitude and effective publicity is necessary nowadays. He even asked me during my fieldwork if I wanted to come and work for him after graduating as a concert booker, in exchange for a certain percentage for each booking I would make.

As globalization involves the “shrinking” of space and the shortening of time, it consequently results in the intensification of the compression of time and space (Inda&Rosaldo 2008: 6). This makes it easier for Giani to reach other, international, musicians, but also to join festivals and podia in other countries. First of all, he is able to use both The Netherlands and Romania as platforms for his musical career. As described before, 15 years ago he moved to The Netherlands in order to find new publics for his music, and to escape the new arisen dance style in Romania to which he didn’t want to conform himself. However, he has noticed a change in The Netherlands. Whereas before it was easy to find sites to perform, and theaters and festivals to cooperate, now, in 2012, this has become a lot harder due to the financial crisis. *“In this moment, it is easier for me in Romania with media, because I get asked a lot by different TV- and radio channels to perform. There [in Romania] is more attention for Gypsy- and folk music. We [the Linca family] have been invited a lot by TV channels (...) In the Netherlands more rules exist: music comes in second, and other, more important things get priority.”*⁴⁶ Last December 2011, he went to Romania for a month during which he performed several times on Romanian TV. He also promoted his latest CD on several channels.

The improvement in electronic technology makes it possible for Giani to use advanced equipment to compose music on his own without the presence of other musicians by using sent samples, putting them together in order to create new musical pieces. However, in contrast to the advantages of globalization and the improved technology it entails, a fact remains that Giani plays a traditional instrument: the cymbal. This rather large instrument is difficult to move, let alone bring on a plane. This still limits him from playing at podia far away where there is no cymbal present.

⁴⁶ Giani during an interview on 21-03-2012.

Another change in the last decennia that Giani refers to is the commercializing of music. He argues that the increased power of media is to blame for this, in his eyes, negative development in the world of music. *“The problem is that media selects cheap, bad music resulting in bad music being played on TV stations, radio channels, concerts and other nice platforms for musicians. This is a very big mistake, because within media no specialist exist, nor people with a musically educated background whom themselves understand what orchestras play, or appreciate what musicians play, or are able to divide the bad from the good.”*⁴⁷ As he finds it very important that Gypsy music continues to exist and high quality music in general, he does not want to change too much in his musical repertoire. However, he does acknowledge that he needs to adapt himself in the music he makes and performs. *“I’m obligated to adapt myself to the new world, otherwise I cannot play anywhere, but I do not always like it (...) I have to change, but not too much. I try to preserve the traditional music as much as possible, especially Gypsy music”*⁴⁸ (00:12:42:24). He does, however, play several musical styles: Gypsy music; Jazz; Gypsy-Jazz; classical music; traditional music; and folk music. His most current project entails the composition of a new Jazz CD for which he puts several samples of international musicians together. He has chosen the direction of Jazz as this genre is rather popular at the moment; he likes to play Gypsy-Jazz; and he argues that the cymbal is a very suitable instrument to play this genre (00:15:30:16).

7.5 Positioning of Self

Despite the sometimes difficult demands of his changing environments, Giani argues: *“As musician we are especially skilled in adapting ourselves to different social environments: we perform for various audiences, from criminals to elite, which makes us capable of adapting ourselves to all layers in society”*.⁴⁹ In this process of adaptation, the way Giani and his family present themselves becomes very important. The fact that Giani is aware of this becomes visible in several ways of which I will give three examples. First, in an interview his mother gave during a TV performance in Romania, she was asked why she still looked so good and beautiful to which she answered: *“(...) I have to maintain a “high class” standard,*

⁴⁷ Giani during an interview on 12-03-2012.

⁴⁸ Giani during an interview on 14-06-2012.

⁴⁹ Giani during a conversation on 12-12-2011.

*otherwise Giani will correct me. For as long as I'm able to, I want to meet his wish by being representative for Giani and the rest of the family.”*⁵⁰

I have noticed Giani, when performing in The Netherlands, emphasizing his Romanian- and Gypsy roots towards the public. He always tells his audience where he is from and what kind of music he plays. At a concert in The Hague he welcomed his audience by saying he just got back from Romania and that he was going to play Romanian music, but simultaneously emphasized it was going to be ‘modern’ (00:15:02:14). At the Jazz Festival in Breda, he introduced his Romanian cousin by saying he just flew in from Romania especially to play at that concert. However, I know his cousin actually permanently lives in Houten. He also told the audience that Gypsy music is never rehearsed based on improvising. When he gave an interview on Romanian TV last December, he did the opposite: whereas in The Netherlands he often emphasizes his music is ‘modern’, on Romanian TV he seems to defend his adaptations in his musical styles: *“We play a combination of traditional music rooted in Romanian culture, and old and new forms of Jazz (...) It would please me a lot to find people whom appreciate this music (...) We want to bring something new and civilize the Romanian population through the power of music and our knowledge of it.”*⁵¹

8. Data Analysis

In this chapter I will further elaborate on the film that forms a part of this thesis. I want to discuss the different scenes, thereby addressing its most important themes; describe what happens in the scenes and link the scenes to one another.

Scene	General themes?	What do you see?	Purpose of scene?	Connecting to previous scene?
1	Cymbal, Giani	Giani stems his cymbal before playing it.	Serves as an introduction of the film: the way he prepares his instrument indicates a beginning of	

⁵⁰ Mioara Lincan on ‘Etno TV’, a Romanian TV show, on 22-12-2011.

⁵¹ Giani on Romanian TV on 27-12-2011.

			something, similar to the beginning of my film.	
2	Cymbal, Giani	Giani plays cymbal in his studio.	Serves as an introduction to Giani, to the cymbal, and to his music.	In between these two scenes, the title appears on the screen, to indicate the start of the film.
3	Cymbal, Giani, Romanian	Giani is guest at a Romanian TV show. The presentator talks about his cymbal full of praise.	Serves to show Giani is from Romania, and how he and his music get received in there on national TV.	This scene continues on the cymbal, but takes the setting to Romania.
4	Cymbal, Giani, Change	Giani shows how he composes his own music, mixing different musical samples in his own studio at home.	Serves to show what musical activities Giani undertakes. It also serves to show that due to technological developments (better equipments, time-space distance smaller) Giani is able to do this.	This scene contradicts the previous one, as this scene takes place in Zoetermeer.
5	Cymbal, Giani, Romania, Change	Giani plays Romanian Jazz at a Romanian TV show. The presentator welcomes them, praising their talent.	Serves to show Giani plays Romanian Jazz –a modernized musical style based on Romanian music. Furthermore, I want to show how he gets welcomed on Romanian TV (full of praise).	To continue the alternation between Romanian and Dutch images, this scene again contradicts the images from Zoetermeer.

6	Giani, Continuation, Transfer of knowledge	Giani sits in his living room and talks about his mission in life (to continue and pass on music) and the importance of reading and writing musical notes.	Serves to show Giani's mission to continue music in which he emphasizes the importance of studying musical notes in order to transfer musical knowledge. It thereby distinguishes Giani from musicians whom didn't study music.	It links Romania to his Gypsy background (as he talks about Gypsies' illiteracy).
7	Giani, Albert, Continuation of music	Albert gets private musical class playing the violin. Giani accompanies him and watches.	Serves to introduce his youngest son. Serves to show Giani passes on music to his son. Also, the fact that his son gets private class shows how important it is to Giani that his sons study music seriously.	His son studying music is an example of how Giani tries to continue and pass on music to the next generation –his mission he was talking about in the previous scene.
8	Giani, Albert, Florin, Transfer of knowledge	Giani sits in his livingroom, his two sons are standing in there. They wait before to go to the concert. Giani practices with Florin on the piano. Interview: about crisis and its	Serves to introduce his eldest son. Serves to show (how) Giani practices with his son. It shows Giani's authoritarian way of dealing with his sons when it comes to music. It also serves to show the influence of the crisis on the continuation of the profession as a musician.	It connects both sons and Giani together. The quietness in the beginning of the scene serves to create calmness in relation to previous scenes.

		influence on his sons.		
9	Giani, Change, Adaptation	Interview continues, Giani sits on couch about crisis and adaptation.	Serves to show how Giani talks about the current crisis and how he adapts himself to it.	The interview in the end of the previous scene continues, but now with the image of its natural habit where it took place.
10	Giani, Adaptation, Cymbal	Cymbal festival	Serves to visualize the previous discussed adaptation to the crisis, how Giani deals with this in daily life.	It visualizes what Giani talked about in the previous scene.
11	Giani, Cymbal, Change, Adaptation	Giani plays in studio, audio about change and adaptation.	Serves to show Giani is aware of the fact he needs to make changes in order to adapt himself to the modern times.	Giani talked about change and adaptation before, but he adds that he tries to be careful with that.
12	Giani, Change, Adaptation, Gypsy music	Interview continues, Giani sits on couch talks about adaptation and preservation of Gypsy music.	It shows that Giani is very conscious about <i>how</i> he adapts himself, and that he wants to preserve Gypsy music as much as possible.	The interview in the end of the previous scene continues, but now with the image of its natural habit where it took place.
13	Giani, Giani's	Giani plays while mother sings on	This scene shows Giani's Romanian Gypsy roots as	This scene continues on the Gypsy music

	mother, Gypsy music, Romania	Romanian TV	he plays Gypsy music with his mother in Romania. It thus shows <i>what</i> he wants to preserve and continue.	as you can see and hear Giani and his mother performing Gypsy music in Romania.
14	Giani, Romanian identity, Change	Giani sits on couch talks about Romanian identity.	It shows that his Romanian identity is important to him –and for others to know the Romanian roots of his music. It also shows how he uses (and therefore changes certain elements of) this music in other musical styles like Jazz.	As the previous scene showed his roots, now he talks about the importance of it to him.
15	Giani, Romanian Jazz, Adaptation, Change	Giani presents himself at a performance at the Regentenkamer in The Hague. Then they play Romanian Jazz.	It shows Giani lets the audience know he comes from Romania and that his music is based on Romanian music but that he adapts himself by changing his music to something ‘modern’.	This scene visualizes what Giani said in the previous scene: he makes clear he is from Romania in his introduction and then they play Jazz using elements of Romanian music, as he talks about in the previous scene.
16	Giani, Teaching, Transfer of knowledge	Giani sits on the couch talking about teaching as a profession. Patience,	Indirectly, Giani argues he has the patience, knowledge about music and people, and experience to be able to	There is no direct link to the previous scene, but it continues on the theme of transfer of

		knowledge and experience are needed he says.	teach. Furthermore, teaching is another way of transferring musical knowledge (part of his mission).	knowledge by means of teaching.
17	Giani, Teaching, Transfer of knowledge	Giani teaches his class. He laughs when they make mistakes and tries to explain them how to do better.	It shows his patience and how he tries to explain his students about music.	This scene visualizes what Giani talked about in the previous scene. It is also contra dictionary as the quality of the music played differs from the music in the previous scenes.
18	Giani, Music, Continuation	Giani sits on the couch saying his life is nothing without music.	It shows how important music is to Giani, it has become his life. This scene serves to end the film, underlining the importance of the continuation and transfer of music to Giani.	This scene is part of the end of the film and can be connected to all previous scenes as it underlines the importance of continuation.
19	Giani, Music, Family	Giani plays with family. Final concert	The end scene shows what Giani's life is about: playing music and enjoying this.	To see Giani play connects image to the words of the previous scene.

9. Conclusion

As discussed above, the questions of who Gypsies are and if their ethnic identity as such even exists are ambiguous ones. Within literature, the claim that Gypsies' origin as coming from one demonstrable ethnic group in India is based on linguistic, biological and cultural evidence (Bancroft 2005; Matras 2000; Gropper 1975; Lucassen 1990; Okely 1983; Hancock 2000). However, together with the switch to a less evolutionary means of understanding ethnicity, the constructivist view was adopted which argues ethnicity to be a dynamic notion with socially constructed aspects. From this point of view, the ethnic classification of Gypsies can be explained by both external labeling and internal mechanism. The importance, however, to acknowledge the existence of Gypsies as an ethnic group, not merely being a product of external labeling, becomes clear in the experience of identity as a group. Within their historical context of discrimination, stigmatization and oppression as a minority, the experienced common culture and history provides Gypsies their identity: that of a Gypsy. It provides them a sense of belonging to a group that needs to be acknowledged as such in order to fight experienced feelings of discrimination and stigmatization.

To Giani the matter is simple: he *is* a Gypsy because he was born in a Gypsy family. Therefore, to Giani, being a Gypsy is a matter of family inheritance and therefore comparable to evidence provided by biological scholars. However, the process of external labeling becomes clear in the experience told by Mihai Turcitu (Giani's cousin) in regard to his Gypsy identity. Social interaction in daily life with both Gypsies and non-Gypsies shapes their 'Gypsiness' as boundaries between Gypsies, non-Gypsies and Gypsy musicians become emphasized by certain members of these groups, as Mihai was suddenly labeled as 'Gypsy' when he started to perform music in public whereas before his Gypsy background was never the subject of conversation.

Amongst Gypsies, Giani distinguishes different Gypsy 'races' based on the particular profession certain 'races' occupy. He comes from the 'race' of Gypsy musicians whose has lasted over centuries, being passed on from generation to generation through the male line of kinship. This is also shown in Giani's family as their profession as musicians has lasted over generations. However, not only the male members of Giani's family play a role in the continuation of their profession: also his mother plays an important role in this process as she was the first to introduced Giani to Gypsy music, and she is considered a rather successful singer of Gypsy- and folk music in Romania.

Beissinger (2001) argues the rather deviant position of Gypsy musicians among Gypsies in general was already shown in early history due to their combination of highly skilled professionalism and low-status ethnicity by which they both got associated. Giani's awareness of the stigmatized reputation of Gypsies in general shows when he makes a clear distinction between 'good' and 'bad' Gypsies, in which he considers 'bad' Gypsies to be lazy, not-working criminals. Being a hard-working Gypsy musician, Giani categorizes himself as a 'good' Gypsy, and he therefore does not seem to suffer from any feelings of discrimination, stigmatization of oppression as he seems to blame Gypsies themselves for this to happen nowadays. He also clearly elevates himself together with his family as they –as musicians- are capable of adapting themselves to all layers of society, something which he clearly highly values. Also other Gypsies in regard to Giani use the matter of adaptation to put boundaries between themselves and certain Gypsy musicians, as they told Giani and his cousin Mihai that they could not be considered 'real' Gypsies anymore since they adapted themselves too much to others, thereby neglecting Gypsy culture in regard to language and music.

Gal (1991), who investigated the East-West dichotomy, argues that Romania represents the East, the less developed pole in opposition to Europe, and that within Romania the Gypsies stand for the East, while Romania in this regard stands for Europe in contrast to the Gypsies. However, this is only partly the case in regard to Giani: he does not merely elevate himself above other Gypsies; he also elevates himself above other Romanians being a skilled musician. This becomes visible when Giani announced Romanian Jazz on national TV in Romania, saying he wants to 'civilize' the Romanian population with this new, modern musical style. However, when playing the same musical style in The Netherlands he presents himself in a different way, addressing his Romanian roots but similarly emphasizing they won't play traditional music, but modern music instead. Exactly this 'modern' music he wants to implement in Romanian society, thereby unconsciously following the East-West dichotomy in which The Netherlands represent the more modern West, and Romanian the East.

Becoming aware of the deviant position of Gypsy musicians among Gypsies in general helps us understanding the function of their profession and therefore the importance of its continuation. As gypsies are still a minority suffering stigmatization, discrimination and exclusion, the family occupation of Gypsy musicians gives them a means of gaining a better social position in relation to other Gypsies. The family profession in this case becomes more than just a profession, as it also provides group identity and social status.

Having addressed the importance of the continuation of Gypsy musician's profession, the question remains how they actually accomplish that in daily life, being the subject of changing environment. Within Romania, shifts in state regimes have had a major influence on Gypsy musicians and their music. In Giani's case, this especially shows in the time period of the fall of the Communist regime in 1989. New musical sounds, genres and styles emerged and slowly took over older, traditional ones and due to the emerge of a new musical dance genre in this period of time, Giani decided to move to The Netherlands in order to find new audiences that appreciate other musical styles. Particularly in this period he started to mix different musical styles together, creating for example Romanian Jazz.

Due to processes of globalization, and its technological developments, it is possible for Giani to maintain an international career, being able to fly to other countries and to collaborate with international musicians through send samples which he composes in his own studio into musical pieces. However, the global financial crisis has had a negative impact on his career, as it caused a decrease in consumer spending and state investment in the cultural sector. In order to deal with the crisis, Giani argues he needs to have an active attitude which entails networking; making publicity; and using as much platforms as possible by maintaining an international career. He also adapts himself in his musical styles: he plays many different musical styles, depending on the audiences' wishes, but simultaneously he tries to preserve melodies and harmonies of traditional Gypsy music. As his mission is to continue and pass on music to the next generation, the study of music plays a very important role. Contrary to the majority of Gypsies of which, according to Giani, 70% is illiterate, and to the romantic image often displayed in literature of Gypsies having musical talent in their blood, Giani is conservatory-trained and composes his own music. According to him, writing music is the most important way to transfer musical knowledge to the next generation.

He passes on his family tradition to both his sons, whom study classical music on a daily basis, but is aware of the changing times. Due to the crisis he makes his sons not merely focus on becoming a musician, by also studying something else besides music.⁵² This could lead to a severe rupture in a family tradition that has been passed on over generations for decades. Reality has shown that despite the fact that Gypsy music and Gypsy musicians have always been subjected to a changing environment, their cultural tradition has survived by means of adaptation. However, if adaptation seems to be a core feature of Gypsy music, can

⁵² Florin has chosen to study ICT.

we still speak of the survival of a cultural 'tradition' as it is always subjected to change? What elements of Gypsy music survive and what do not? In order to conduct further research on the survival of Gypsy music in the 21st century within its broader context of the survival of cultural traditions nowadays, I would highly recommend these questions to be considered.

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11. Appendix I: Reflection on Fieldwork

Reflecting on my period of fieldwork period, it has left me an overall positive feeling. First, and most importantly, I was able to establish a good relationship with my main subject of research, Giani Lincan. The first time we spoke on the phone he kept his distance and came across a bit hesitant about our meeting and my wish to make a film about him. However, when we met face to face, we talked the entire afternoon after which he insisted on me staying for dinner with his family “*because that is how us Romanian do it, you don’t come just for coffee, you stay for dinner as well*”. I immediately felt comfortable around Giani, his wife Silvia and their two sons Albert and Florin.

Among the family members, Romanian was the primary used language, a language I hardly understood except for some expressions or words that are familiar with Italian. In my presence, they would mostly speak in Dutch. However, I am aware of the fact that due to this language barrier I probably missed out on useful information during my participant observations. If my research period had lasted longer it would have been necessary to study the Romanian language.

I already noticed from the beginning that Giani is not very punctual when it comes to appointments. He had forgotten our second appointment which became clear when his son opened the door and told me Giani was still sleeping (this being at 1 o’clock during the day). Every Monday I would accompany him to his music classes which lasted from 8 o’clock until 9:30 pm. When arriving he always needed to smoke first and drink coffee, and consequently the class always started 20 minutes late. His students seemed to have accepted this, commenting on him while laughing: “*He is a really nice guy, but also a real gypsy*”. When asking them what exactly they were referring to using the description of ‘real gypsy’ they’d name his lack of punctuality of time, and his disorganized way of teaching meaning no structure, no music sheets prepared etc. But I could see they were sincerely attached to him, and when the time passed by I became to understand why: Giani is a very warm-hearted, calm and hospitable person who likes to laugh and enjoy life, and mostly share life with the persons he cares about most. However, this side of him made it hard to be dependent of him for my research and film, because it was often difficult to make appointments with him.

I also discovered Giani had a rather authoritarian position within his family. He would rarely contribute to household tasks, and he was always being served by his wife and his children. They would get him food, coffee, cigarettes etc. When his wife was present, she

made me lunch, dinner, and coffee. But Giani himself has never offered me anything. Once, after I stayed the night, I woke up in the morning and I went downstairs to sit with Giani in the living room. He never had breakfast, and he started to eat around 2 o'clock when his wife would prepare him a warm meal. However, it was already 12 o'clock and I was starting to get really hungry, but he would not offer me anything and I felt it would be impolite to ask for food and so I didn't. His wife returned from work around 1 o'clock, and she finally offered me to make lunch.

His way of controlling his life, and making his own decisions also influenced the way he was towards me when making the film. He tried to decide for me which situations I had to film and how. For example, he was very conscious on how he came across in the film. Therefore, in situations in which he wasn't properly dressed (according to his own opinion) or when he was smoking, he preferred not be filmed. It became very hard to show on film how he was in real life, as he was constantly thinking of what information he wanted to give through this film. I think in order to break this controlling factor, I'd need more time with him. Also in this case it becomes clear how important time is, and how much patience you need to have in order to conduct productive fieldwork.

Another difficulty I faced when I talked to Giani about religion. I knew from the start he was orthodox, and that I am atheist. As Giani didn't mention the role or influence of religion in regard to his musical career in the first couple of conversations we had had, I decided then to leave the matter out of my research as much as possible in order to prevent us from discussions or painful disagreements on religious matters. However, in practice this appeared difficult to avoid and the following situation occurred: I sat in the car with Giani and Florin, his eldest son, going home from a concert after which I would stay the night. Giani suddenly asked me *where* I was baptized, implicitly ruling out the option of me not being baptized at all which was in fact the case. For a second I doubted: should I be honest or not? I wanted to be honest, and so I answered that I wasn't baptized at all. He looked at me as if he couldn't believe what I just had said, and he didn't because he answered: "*I'm sure you remember wrong, ask your mother, she will tell you*". His reaction only encouraged me to emphasize even more that I really wasn't baptized. He concluded that this was a very bad and dangerous thing, as I was living my life without the protection of the angels. He wanted to take me to church to baptize me after all; he's even offered me to become my godfather to make sure this would happen. I tried to laugh the matter away and fortunately he had to stop at a gas station and the conversation ended. However, at home the worst part came when he

started to 'argue' that homosexuality was a disease which needed to be cured. To me it was very difficult to try and stay neutral while I personally am very against people with such fundamentally religious beliefs that don't respect all human beings.

The social interaction during fieldwork took a lot of energy, and I noticed that every time I left his home I often was exhausted. During fieldwork you need to multitask a lot which was harder than I thought. Even more so when I had to film as well, thinking about all the technicalities such as focus, white balance, frames etc. However, my fieldwork made me enter a world that was completely new and unknown to me: the world of Gypsy music of which I didn't have any knowledge before starting my research. It made me aware of the beautiful music and passion this world entails, and the importance of this family tradition to continue, despite its changing context.