

## Unconventional Settings for Formerly Conventional Musics

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### Abstract

This essay represents an example of applied ethnomusicology, as well as of cultural anthropology, which is analytically and interdisciplinarily turned towards marginal (often despised) facts, which are to be found on the "external" thresholds of the arts and economics. Roughly said, this paper has two distinct-but coherent and mutually supporting-sections. The first discusses the phenomenon of performing music inside the subway network in Bucharest (Romania), while the second presents the "musical map" and use of a specific touristic place in Budapest (Hungary). Common to these is the fact that public spaces are always turned into fluent and spontaneous anthropological events, which were completely ignored by urban designers, and give new significations both to urban landscape and to citizens' existence. Since before ] 990 to perform music outside the well-established forms of state show-business was forbidden; now it is extremely fascinating to see how the use of subway facilities, by more or less begging musicians, has developed during these last years. In order to stress the anthropological complexity of the phenomenon, four cases are briefly presented herein. Then, I analyze the Budapest downtown, only, at the end, to return to a Romanian case, that of the last hurdy-gurdy player. This case illustrates that some old, traditional musical customs die out nowadays because marginal performers do not see the perspective that the modern world would be able to provide for their survival. While in center of Budapest a hurdy-gurdy player succeeds in making his living, the one in Bucharest is giving up his family tradition for good. This, I reckon, is because he belongs no more to the urban life, style, and landscape. While, during the colloquial presentation of this paper the picture of the subway musicians was backed by a video recording, the image of Budapest will be illustrated through a photographic display.

### Part I Introduction

This is a paper based almost exclusively on personal field observation and recordings, as well as on individual reflexive search. Since I have not been able yet to consult Marc Auge's works "Un Ethnologue dans le Metr6" and "Les Non-Lieux," perhaps many of my findings and suppositions lack granted solutions, data and theories. And, therefore, I thought that the only thing left to me was to dedicate this paper to the French anthropologist. Thus:

To M. Auge,  
 Who, perhaps, might be capable of improving  
 my own endeavor through his-specific-works.

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Everywhere in the world the subway appeared as an element and proof of a great civilization, utility and prosperity, as a special and particular territory adored and respected by all citizens. "Lave tes mains, on va aller au metro," or "on va prendre le metro" (wash your hands, we'll go to take the subway) used to be said, at the beginning of the century, in Paris. The idea of a specific "consecration," of dedicating the subway as a select, majestic and impressive space was and still is exemplarily preserved at the subway network in Moscow. Begun in 1932, under Stalin, and inaugurated in 1935, the subway has entrances, stairs, stations, and platforms that compete with the cathedral style and spirit. (Only for exemplifying its grandeur, I shall mention the fact that in 1941, during the war, the Majakowsky station, at forty meters underground, hosted the formal celebration of the Bolshevik revolution, with the full presence and attire of the state government). In the Moscow underground, the granite and marble, the mosaics, sculptures, stucco and majestic frescos on the walls or ceilings, turned the local subway into a museum, the most frequented, secular museum-since seven million people use it daily. Even if the initial idea-still obvious today-was its (underground) erection as a monument of the victory and glory of socialism, thus immortalizing the red epoch and people, the Moscow subway remains a palace. Its stations boast haughty (art) galleries; inside, everything else aside of the preciousness and usefulness as transportation and means of human circulation would have been banned. The street art and the beggary have not yet pervaded the Moscow subway; these phenomena are also forbidden in China's subways. I do not know of such restrictions in any other places in the world. In Stockholm, the subway is non-hospitable because of the excessive water infiltration and leaks. In 1994, in the Budapest subway I heard the sounds of violin and accordion. One-and-one-half years later, I was told that the local administration forbade ambulant musicians to access and stop inside the stations for the purpose of performing and collecting money. But that attempt failed; some local colleagues confirmed that such marginal musicians continued to populate the subway network.

Besides such exceptional situations, as far as I know and in accordance with my direct observation, in every subway network worldwide, street artists step in and take hold-in the sense of offering artistic "services" for commercial purpose and interest. The subway was also discovered as a profitable source of income by some marginal categories of East European people. In the West, the subway's reality seems to me to be simpler than in the East. Here, in the East, apparently one has to deal only with a kind of (semi-) beggary artistic performance. But the facts are much more complex.

Inside western subways the phenomenon of performing music is mature and already set within, if not institutional frames, at least within well-known, routine, popular, and almost regular (and regulated) manners-see the subway in Toronto, where places allowed for performance are sign-posted with a lyre, ~ or in Paris, where prior to using the subway all musicians have to pass an audition test and must first receive a license. It is in the West that things , became somehow simplified. Only here, in Eastern places, the reality under discussion is still complex and complicated, since it has just begun, and is still navigating among not-yet crystallized forms and trials. From an anthropological point of view, the subway, as the railway station, is equally an open and a closed space. It is a place that both offers and conditions, gathers and spreads away. Characterized by a continuous human flow, it represents an opportunity and serves as a market to those people eager to speculate it by offering the goods of the entertainment. Nobody thought, at first, when designing the space, that a subway, and public spaces in general, would ever obtain functions such as hosting live performances, artistic exchanges, or begging practices. But, to the original functions, the informal social super-(or infra-) structure has added new dimensions-in fact, "functions"-as I said earlier, thus making space to become being, urban planning to become abstraction, human presence to be turned into an unpredictable, metamorphic event. A preliminary systematic/scientific approach and the introduction to a musical anthropology of the subway have already been launched. Prior to this paper I drafted the project of a comprehensive research, dedicated to the marginal performing arts and the complex convergence between the free and informal show business of the street art, and the non-formalized, public entertainment forms (Marian-Ba]~a 1995). In fact, premises for such a large-scale study of the phenomenon have been already set by a multitude of essays, field observations, and recordings, as well as case or monograph studies, which generously filled the bibliography of marginal, economically oriented, popular performances. (For instance, see bibliographies accompanying genre/topical studies, such as Noll 1992. Only the Romanian literature has remained...pretty virgin; see the minute mention upon what happens in Bucharest's subway in Constantinescu 1995).

I have personally dedicated several years to systematic observation, field recording and research work on public, open-air or closed spaces, streets and subways that were capable to host artistic performances. And whenever I happened to encounter such places and opportunities I tried to watch and make professional observations. The many facts and observations specific to other numerous urban places, both from West and East, completed the huge information and outlook of whatever I might have learn from the reality in Bucharest. Hence, similarities and variables, forms and conjectures, differences and common points have been recorded. To the concrete corpus of

data as to the theoretical, analytical, and interpretative findings close to the named topic, I have contributed, publicly, so far, twice (Marian-Bal~a 1995; 1999). The whole body of a monographic study, itself part of a larger and encyclopedic work on the relationships between folk creativity and economy, remains stored in the Archive of the Bratololu Institute (Institute of Ethnography and Folklore) in Bucharest.

The second above-mentioned article of mine is concerned mainly with the contemporary ventures of a specific eastern European repertory as this is to be encountered in Bucharest's subways and streets. The theoretical draft published earlier comprised and stressed the interrelationships between economics and performance, urban landscape and its "functional" reshaping, through the presence of the performing artists. I consider that both essays have tried to forward a few more "active" and synthetic ideas on how to handle the issue of (free-lance) artists giving peculiar, full- or half-artistic functions to the urban environment and to the human flow of passersby. By "handling" this issue, I actually mean both applied and theoretical approaches towards the phenomenon, in a holistic as well as a creative epistemological way.

#### The Musical Anthropology of the Subway

Manipulating, or at least taking advantage of, the human crowd or flow, of the mass people using public spaces, walking in the street, waiting in public transport stations, seems reasonable to all kinds of (free-)sellers, including artists, performers, acrobats, entertainers. Some of them offer useful, needed goods; some just ask, beg while giving nothing in exchange; and some give more or less satisfactory compensations, or pleasing/appealing artistic messages. People in this last category exhibit themselves and try to enjoy the citizen-passers-by, walker, passenger-either by satisfying (i.e. entertaining), or by raising sheer compassion. Within this sociological set, the marginal, nomad, wandering street artists form a particular "class." Their presence in the midst of the human crowds or walking passages, as well as in the most common or specific areas of the urban landscape, forms an anthropological phenomenon and causes anthropological events. These are of a very particular importance, significance and resonance, identity and value. Beyond any doubt, this must be studied. But beyond doubt also is the need and possibility for a multi-perspective study, which is the approach that takes into consideration not only the economic, sociologic, or artistic contents, but also the significance and value of the urbanscape, of the human flow, and the redefinition of the public place once it has been marked by art events. An integral, modern study achieves or fulfills itself when-like in the case of any art performer in the public place-the mental attitude and the psychology of those people just using, consuming, or at least confronted with the spontaneous art offer in an unexpected place and time is known, discussed, and analyzed as well. Upon this subject I shall insist herein just a little bit.

I had the opportunity to keep under surveillance the flourishing of the whole package of the marginal art set to gain money as this happened in the subway of Bucharest. I say "flourishing" because, as it is well known, prior to the political changes in 1989-90, going out in public spaces in order to sing and get money was officially forbidden, and only beggars or annual carolers were customarily allowed to do it. That is why what happened especially in subways, trains and railways stations since 1990 might be called a local birth of a universal phenomenon, but also a surprising growth, blow up, and exaggerated. Immediately after 1989, when all restrictions were thought to have ended—since this was the first impulse to understand democracy—, among all sorts of things, it also happened that: the rural, old, traditional, folk customs that implied collecting or getting goods or money in exchange for their performance/rendering, "aggressively" revived, were reborn, and spread, conquering the urban life and settings; on the one hand, some of these genres and repertoires increased and became generalized, and, on the other, their use extended: from the original period of one, two, six, or a maximum of twelve days to one full month, and even to three or six months (see concrete examples in Marian-Balaşa 1999); a huge number of people in need, unemployed, beggars, cripples, orphans, sprang like mushrooms and concentrated themselves in public spaces, from which the subway world seemed to be a privileged, or most exploited/populated one. They were taking marginal and minimal, underdeveloped or spoiled, repertoires of romances and begging songs, developing and enriching them with new lyrics and tunes, mingling them with Christian prayers, invocations, and begging formulas; and finally diversifying them to such an extent that those numerous and various pieces became capable of defining repertoires proper, specific oral species and genres; also unexpected, non-predicted, and, more precisely, previously unseen people, like pupils, students, unemployed, or just losers/unhappy chaps, have started to populate jammed places like the subway corridors, halls and platforms, singing or playing instruments to earn money. Some started doing it only to ease their living; but many remained professionally close to it, always postponing their quest for something else and something better.

The profession of public space artist, within the framework, aspects, appeal, and market principle known in West, was born; and this was quite new to the Romanians. Therefore it was very interesting to observe the way in which the ordinary people reacted, since they "suddenly" turned into virtual clients and consumers of such a live art and trade. It is wholly justified to say that Romanians got acquainted and became familiarized with the phenomenon

of meeting daily subway performers progressively and with difficulty, as time passed. Numerous mental "difficulties," hindrances, or conflicts had to be overcome. To most passersby and passengers the phenomenon looked like (and acted as) disguised beggary. In fact, it mostly appeared as such, in the quality of the performances, as well as in the ways that the specific carriers/performers looked: rags, bared feet, dirty faces, filthy bodies. The listeners/audience heard songs or carols of begging, recited prayers, and heart-rending texts of self-introduction either full of mercy or embalmed in spitefulness. These latter two feelings, or rather options, were the poles between which, naturally, the innumerable nuances of the human casuistry ranked forth. People's attitudes varied largely. On one side, there was religious pity, materialized in paying back not so much the performance itself-in fact, often with no respect and interest in what was performed-but rather like offering alms. The people on the other side were either refusing silently to notice those children who were doing their best to impress and get some coins, or looking unhappy, or sometimes, more and more rarely, accusing the children loudly. All of these years, while riding the subway, one could notice, like in a diagram, how people became more tolerant, and learned to withstand the social reality of daily life as they were urged to help the suffering, the beggars, the abandoned (or monitored) little Gypsies, the talented youngsters, orphans, or unemployed who colonized the public transportation facilities.

And through all these years one could also observe the way in which the specific professionalism refined itself. Some bands became quite good-as far as technical skills, rendering quality, and pieces performed were concerned. In Bucharest there are two orchestras formed and educated in an orphanage. Those five to twelve teenagers, who master quite well mandolins (three to eight), guitars (two to four), and the double bass (one or two), are continuously enriching their repertory with popular hits, as well as their virtuosity, harmonies, accompanying patterns and chords, and polyphonic or rhythmic passages. Some of the bands have been promoted by television and radio programs, and five such instrumentalists, who formed the group "La strada" (The Street) recorded and released a successful audio cassette in 1998, which contained popular international hits.

Four Cases Compared to Western cases, where public spaces are frequented by musicians and other types of performing artists that did not find room inside the official, socially and institutionally established system of show business, most of Romania's subway performers have discovered and started their public performing positions from the very beginning. I mean by this that they first discovered the generosity of the space, the fact that the specific space provides opportunities for meeting a lot of people without special effort, and only then did they think to exploit this opportunity by performing something

enjoyable or rewarding. They found their possible role and profession simultaneously with discovering the openness and generosity of those peculiar places. Most of the individuals started their new, specific positions from the very beginning, as, for instance, the panpipe player Ilie Mercan, who found

~ inside the underground stations like "Universitatii" and "Unirii" the perfect rehearsal room he never could have at home or elsewhere. He turned to music only when the subway platforms became available to him. His motivation was not so much the money, which was welcomed anyway, but the ambition of being capable to play with his mates, as for instance with his violinist brother from Holland. His previous musical education was rather nonexistent; in 1990, he knew nothing about music or playing an instrument. For the first two years he just repeated, lousily and clumsily but patiently, formulas and musical phrases; and many passersby mocked him. Progressively, he became better. And from the subway platform he acceded to play, in 1996, even at a USA embassy party. In 1997, even if he was in the subway less and less, his melodies were quite impressive, skilful, full of intonations, nuances, and technical effects. He was still focusing mostly on keeping the beat, i.e. on agogical aspects, because he knew he had problems with "sticking to the rhythm" and hence with fitting into the eventual ensemble playing. Since 1998, I have no longer seen this guy playing in the subway, which does not mean that he never stepped back there, but rather that indeed he found some other opportunities to play music for money.

To a paralyzed young woman in a wheelchair (Daniela T., aged 28), the personal motivation was different: to feel that she was useful and to ease her domestic budget. She had never played music before. But she suddenly had the idea to do something like this on the subway platform. Though heavily affected by her illness, she was given an electric mini-organ, started to take lessons, and for almost two years she could be seen playing that organ, often while also reading musical scores. Of course, her performance, her music proper, was minimal, symbolic. This was, in fact, a peculiar way of stressing, of making obvious her presence, of signaling it. To the young woman, playing those musical pieces was really fun, playful; but to the passengers/audience, her music was just a message and sign of a smiling and fighting person, yet also a pitiful human presence. Once, in spring 1997, a television story covered her case, and, perhaps as a result, something may have changed in her life, since she could not be found on the "Unirii" subway platform anymore. (No more, I thought and wrote here, believing that radical changes can occur also in the marginal world of street and subway musicians. Two years have passed, consolidating my faith in this. But suddenly ... I was professionally, epistemologically surprised when, just few days ago, precisely on May 20, 1999, I noticed the girl's musical presence in the same underground station).

Marin Vasile, a one-handed man, aged 42, is still found in the

subway, and also in the North Railway Station, his daily working place.

Addicted gambler, he got close to entering jail and had to give up his job as an accountant, becoming unemployed. This was the circumstance he remembered that when younger, aged 13, he once handled a panpipe. He searched for an instrument, and started again, from zero; and shortly afterwards he succeeded in making a very good living this way. In winter 1997, during my interview with him-it was two years after he started playing the panpipe in public spaces-he bragged that he was getting the sum of 200.000 lei per day, virtually five to six million per month, thus six to ten times more than a state salary. And he said he was planning to go for the winter feast periods in other cities, like Timișoara, where "people are richer and much more generous." Actually, to passersby it was of course his handicap and evident prosthetic arm that increased the impact of his musical presence. And what to say about the incredible case-I say incredible by reason of the large ambit of aspects involved-represented by the caroler Vasile Ardelean from Sighet-Maramur~? .. It is a case that clearly demonstrates the complexity and immediacy of an anthropological survey, which should be applied to the concrete social, political, economic, intellectual, and customary context and circumstances. The minstrel V. Ardelean (see his presentation and tune in Marian-Bîlăș 1999: 302-305) alone deserves a comprehensive case study. This is because the guy is not just a caroler taking advantage of a traditional winter custom to make money, but a fund-raiser proper, of a highly efficient class. And he not only demonstrates that confronting communism could have a spiritual, political, and social role and merit, but also that it is worth doing from a very material, i.e. financial point of view. Since he started his profession pushed by a revenge spirit against communist laws and ideology, and continued to practice money-collection to compensate for the state's incapacities (like those of helping calamity victims and of supplying schools in Republic in Moldova with Romanian books), these facts prove that political options, attitudes, and social, religious, missionary feelings blend together and sketch a very special portrait or entity. An entirely capitalist mind and final product, but born out-and continuing to make use-of a very traditional, peasant, ancient custom, repertory and arsenal: a winter-solstice song, a picturesque rural costuming, the ornamented star-cross. I invoked these four cases just to emphasize the complexity and generosity-to the intellectual search-of the matter/phenomenon I am proposing as a special topic, chapter or field, which is the musical anthropology of the public spaces. Because, in fact, one cannot imagine the anthropology to have as task and object something other than analyzing human behavior and the very ways it relates to its surroundings, which comprise the urban as well as the social environment.

. As already seen, on the one hand, a "musical" anthropology is basically anthropology proper, but just improved, broadened by the multitude of connections; it is thus an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach,



both an applied and a theoretical/gnoseologic/noematic approach. On the other hand, as proposed here, the many relationships involved in performing for money in subway and other public space make a whole world. In between performing arts and private individual economics, mimicry and skill, beggary ~ and entertainment, hard need and accidental pleasure, folk customs and modern circumstances, social-political demonstration and humanitarian attitude, scorn and compassion, marginal profession and urban environment (and so many other aspects), unaccountably minute nuances make room for endless cognitive/gnoseologic suggestions. Consequently, to anthropological research, the performing arts of the public space represents a field and subject ranging from interesting to fascinating.

## Part II

### On the Competences of the Space

"Street art," as a conceptual term for all kinds of performances that take place in open, public spaces, creates new dimension, function, and meaning to the urban space itself. Although such performances offer well-known or even poor-quality products, it is the unconventional, unpredicted and unmastered feature of their presence that surprises. It is the surprise of meeting, i.e. hearing, something where it is least expected that sets people to make the choice between either becoming audience and consumer or refusing to pay attention, i.e. rejecting such manifestation.

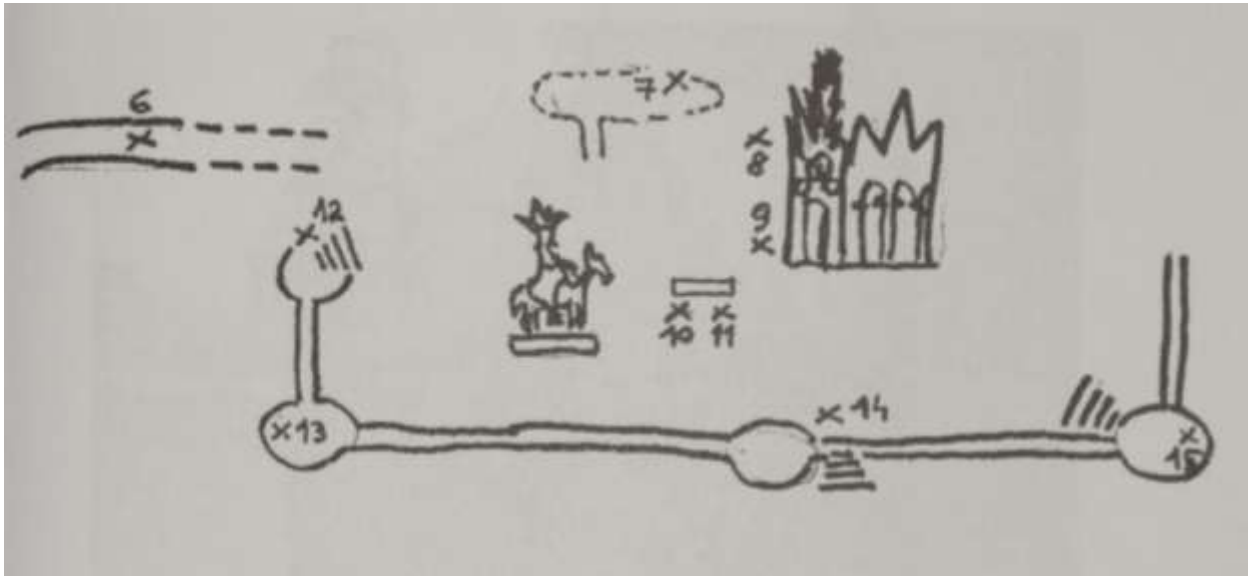
It is interesting to notice that in the case that the art performed/offered is somehow similar, or appropriate, to the architectural context, it might have a bigger impact on the passerby or the visitor that encounters it. Such a "matching" music enlivens the surrounding, emphasizes or underlines it, enriches it in supporting, illustrating, or (informational) cumulating ways. To the passerby who was transformed into a consumer, this art appears as a prolongation or a gift of the environment itself, as a mutual maximization of the capacity for communication of both elements: art and environment. But the respective match/adequation is always limited, and the human flow is similar to the street: it permits anything, "hosts" everything, provides clients with whatever is offered.

People might find it a curious or, moreover, inadequate presence to see a Japanese man, in a Chicago subway, singing the Italian "O Sole Mio" (as I observed on the fifteenth of August 1992). Even stranger might seem the presence of a carol singer, to whom the customary Christmas star became an original and gigantic cross, during a performance of the traditionally winter custom during the full spring and summer equinox. This is the case of the above-mentioned Vasile Ardelean, who wanders in Bucharest and all over Romania, collecting money that was not only for himself but also for people in despair, and for the purpose of buying Romanian schoolbooks for children in Republic of Moldova.

### The Map of a Monumental Site

In general, spaces of touristic value and interest are exploited by street artists, for there the human flow-throughout the multitude of psycho-spiritual attitudes and cultural options implied-provides the existence of some interest towards any form and repertory professed. In this sense, there is an eloquence to the area that is situated between the circa 650-square-meter patch that is marked by the Mattyas church, the statue of the homonymous king, and the Fishermen's Bastion in the historic center of Budapest (Hungary). As it was revealed to me during my continuous observation between the eighth and the fifteenth of September 1994, the reality that is illustrated in the photographic series numbers six through fifteen (pictures taken during these same days) could have been seen daily, with small variations. At least one accordionist, performing pop music hits, romances, and pieces from the international repertory of light, popular pieces, the hurdy-gurdy player, the folk player with his zither, and the one with his bagpipe and Voice, were part of the landscape from early spring to late fall. Sporadically, one or two other accordionists (with or without vocals), as well as a sax player, also showed up there.

The drawing below represents the first map of the re-semantization of the urban and touristic space by the street musicians. Marked are the main elements of the historical monuments in the Budapest center, the figures next to them indicating the photographic images that should be correlated, integrated within the respective space.



The passage in front of Keleti railway station, where a group of neo-Protestant missionaries were sermonizing, backing themselves up with a very sonorous background and with religious pieces performed, and amplified, by their band.



The facade of Saint Stephen cathedral; on the stairs, sitting down, the Scotch man in a kilt did not dare to take his bagpipe out from its box.



A Polish student, tourist, in front of the same cathedral, a little bit later did dare to take out her blockflute and to play Irish, Jewish and Ukrainian folk pieces.



Under the Buda Castle's vaults, a student performs Bach partitas.



By a corner of the same Castle (National Museum), the spectacular fountain of the haunting knight (Lajos Kutya), in front of which the couple plays Hungarian folk songs and medieval court pieces on cello and violin.



On the main street, Orsaghaz, which leads from the Buda Palace towards the Mattyas church, the folk-costumed couple (zither and mandolin) is “renting” the place for the whole summer season.



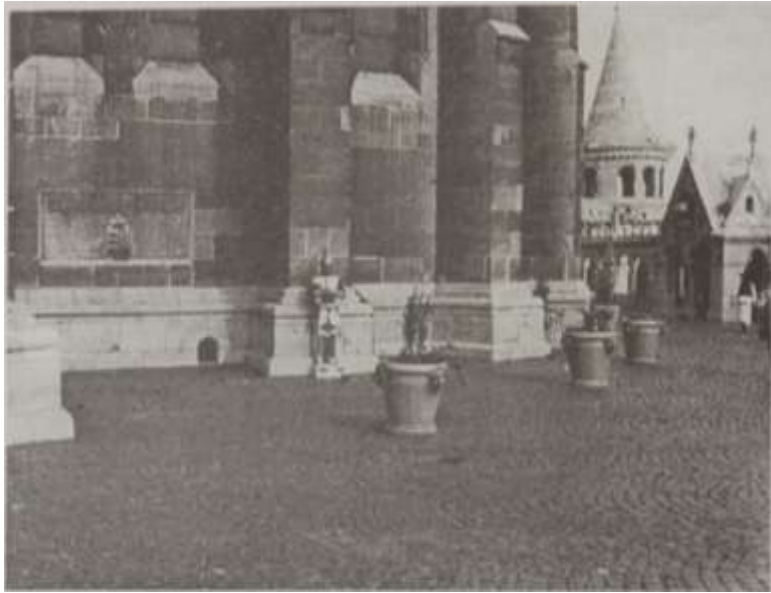
Further up, in the inner courtyard or the “Fortuna” galleries passage, the carillon from the roof-tower of a handicrafts store signals musically on every hour and half-hour.



By the right tower of magnificent cathedral Mattyas, the instrumental trio performs enthusiastic folk and Gypsy dances. During the cold December of 1995, exactly on the same spot only one Gypsy duet of average musical talent would dare to play, shivering, with gloved hands.



Next time if the architectural abutments of the same monument, the knight in armor offers himself as a photographic prop. In front of him lays a metal pot, for the change of those immortalizing his posture.

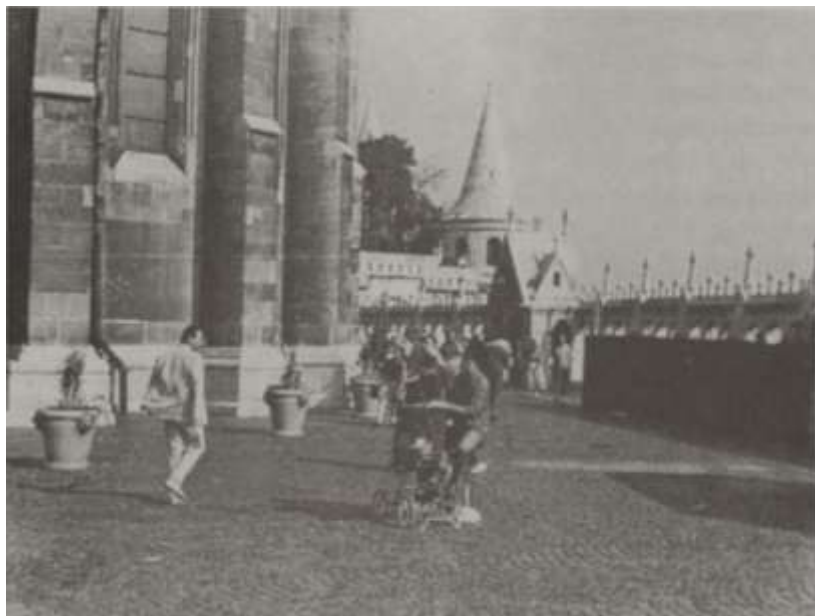


The daily hurdy-gurdy player (notice the plush parrot by his instrument!), at the western end of the cathedral.





Downstairs at the gate, to the cliff-wall of the Fishermen's Bastion-the site of the most beautiful panorama of the Danube, bridges and the half of the city called "Pest"-one of the spot's accordionists.



Further on, upstairs, on the alley between the Bastion's crenels and in the first watchtower, another accordionist, not only playing undisturbed by the other accordionist's sonorities, but also helped very much by the amplifying and resounding space of the vault.



Exactly behind the Mattyas church, in front of the corridor with columns, arches and carved ornamentation, a Hungarian folk song player with his sither.



Photo 15: Bagpipier on the final railing of the most impressive watchtower of the Fishermen's Bastion. For collecting money, at his feet there is a violin box in miniature.

When studying the variability and level of unpredictability enjoyed by the artistic anthropology of a site, one should take into account also the physical and cultural time-I mean both climate whims and calendric events. The use of the touristic space, by performers as well as by the human flow, is

~ at its peak during the sea on corresponding to the touristic action, and only accidental-however, less lucrative-can be its exploitation during another season. For instance, between December 10-18, 1995, which means winter, the same aria of Budapest illustrated above was very much changed. In a period of one week, on the Belvedere wall of the Fishermen's Bastion, I noticed only twice the appearance and performance of an accordionist. In front of the equestrian statue of King Mattyas a single saxophone player dared to blow chilly breaths in her instrument, a short time before a concert of organ and religious carols was to start inside the cathedral. The girl improvised jazz even after the indoor concert started, but was asked to stop. At midday, by the left corner of the facade of the same cathedral (where photo number eight was shot), a Gypsy couple, whose violinist was wearing mittens and whose double bassist had leather gloves, was performing enthusiastic csardas pieces and hits from the international Gypsy repertoire. But they were taking also long breaks, hardly warming their limbs, and were performing only when a more numerous foreign tourist group appeared there. In other words, the musical ornamentation of the most important touristic spot in Budapest fades substantially, and naturally, during the cold season.

But during the same time, beyond the Danube, in Pest, on the entire pedestrian street Vaci, which is also the commercial space of highest concentration, elegance and preciousness, the municipality organized a kind of commercial festival, where the presence of musical performances also played a main role. Evening by evening and night by night, folk, country, jazz, pop, and genuine folklore bands, and even choral ensembles, performed in front of passersby and legions of consumers to be met there for the traditional Saint Nicholas, Christmas, and New Year's Eve shopping. And even if everything was well-organized and monitored by the administration and commercial firms involved, here and there the presence of some accordionist or guitarist-with the box for public donation in front of him-also showed up.

The alleys devoted exclusively to pedestrians, as well as the walking passages, enjoy a fully special generosity. I do not refer to the commonly sensed generosity toward the human flow, presence, and concentration, or towards commerce, but towards the possibility of permitting, favoring and hosting artistic performances. In Bucharest, there is no such a permitted space

. in the sense I that am analyzing here. There is, in Romania' ~ capital, an area known as "Lipscani," where there are some (auto) vehicle restrictions. But the afferent streets still constitute a territory much too dominated by the content and atmosphere of an overcrowded, tensed, untidy, noisy, and suffocating-somehow "inhuman"-bazaar. There is no elegance proper there; black

marketers, smugglers, and street gangs dominate this space, therefore no individual, isolated artist would take the risk of exposing him/herself there. In winter 1995, on Budapest's Vaci street, "taking refuge" there, it was possible even to see persons who expected to be given money only because they were showing puppies to passersby, which called automatically for sympathy. At least within brackets, I must say that such a gesture constitutes a less "formalized"-I mean less ceremonialized and consecrated-version of customs related to traditional winter time and feasts: the caring and showing of the luck-bringing lamb in Eastern Europe (in Romania this is called Vasilica), or the caring and showing of the little pink-bowed pig in Western Europe. These customs are associated with recited/scanned verses and wishing formulas, are based on financial motivations, and are performed by Gypsies. In rural East Europe, Gypsies also perform a unique custom, consisting of walking with a pig head, well-ornamented, and singing a specific, half-epic carol. In Romania this is called Vasildi. The old, possibly India-based sacrificial custom backing this performance goes far beyond the (apparently) "innocent" live animals exhibited in civilized cities. But the ritual pattern of showing, exhibiting, sharing a peculiar image-be it alive, however: theofanic-is common to all. What is largely ritualized in villages, becomes "lay" and is minimized in towns. If, in rural areas, with the beheaded pig there are, as said, collectively shared ceremonial contexts, songs performed, and presents offered; and if with the simply shown little lamb or little (living) pig there are greetings and requests spoken, as well as money given; with behaviors such as keeping one's own puppies outside only for passersby to feel sympathy and to pay, we reach, on the one hand, a last level of secularization. This latter case is on the edge of beggary proper. But is it at random that many street children, performing the beggary, in Bucharest as well as in oriental countries, are often accompanied by little dogs? The presence of the small baby animal is meant, on the other hand, to raise, to reveal, and to wake up the basis, or the starting point, of religiosity. Because, actually, in front of the (more or less) ceremonialized presence of the animal, we find in the background, surviving, the feeling that first grounded and backed up the religious shaping and creativity.

Returning to the significance of the urban space itself, I would say that downtown pedestrian streets like those in the center of Budapest (or Paris, Stockholm and so many other cities), are very open and generous to the tendency of marginal people to exploit the human flow and crowd in a commercial sense and with their own particular tools. These people, most of the time of arguable proficiencies, and on very different levels of artistry, are actually on the edge of beggary proper and offer impalpable services. The passersby who accept the services become audiences and set themselves on the edge of giving alms and of receiving some immaterial, minute satisfaction. However, in urban surroundings, the city inhabitant is also confronted with deep religious attitudes and actions, be they tiny, obsolete, and forgotten.

### The Last Hurdy-Gurdy Player

The previous discussion creates the context for another particular case. And I shall suggest that, from a theoretical point of view, this case is revealing in the sense that genuine survival of old traditions (mentalities,

~ customs, arts, musical instruments etc.) are difficult to join with new, urban contexts. Only after the original cultural situations die out, revival movements or gestures could make better and adequate association between surrounding and tradition, actual occasion and past actions. And within the context of the modern town, only organizations, powerful, managerial investments or supported professions can also undertake the continuation of some old, liberal, once individual or small-guild artistic occupations.

The case under discussion is that of "the last Bucharest's hurdy-gurdy player," as I called Nea Marin Fl~netarul ("Uncle" Marin The Hurdygurdist), first inquired and recorded by me on 8th of November 1993. At that date, in front of the Municipal Museum in downtown of Bucharest, he was the last bizarre display-from a long-lost world of town outskirts and fairs-who was performing his specific "art." It was that Gypsy practice of syncretism from {, fanner decades: (1) the turning of the lever in order to fill out and to swell up the bellows that push air through the pipes of the machinery, (2) the loud voice calling for people to know about the "planet" of foretelling and mediating good luck, (3) the presence of the two appealing parrots, and their use for choosing the horoscope message and picking it up with their beaks. In brief: this was a mantic service offered over a musical background which was supposed to attract people. In many places in Bucharest, especially parks, but also in Sunday flea-markets, one can see several old Gypsies behind small tables on which the pair of parrots pick up, from a box passed by under their beaks, slips of paper on which small fortune-telling texts are written, no one else, besides Nea Marin, also still has a hurdy-gurdy. But Marin claims that the "planet," as the whole gearing is called in Romania, is not complete, but even false, without the music box. In his youth, he states, all such parrot carriers should have had some mechanical organs, too. Marin Fl~netarul (the Hurdygurdist), as he is known in his world, belongs to a family tree in which he lists: B~Hranul (The Old) Sandu-a picturesque guy who also played the role of his own real character in the artistic movie Fram, ursul polar (Fram, the polar bear), as a hurdygurdist, with his own instrument; Ion Mutu, Baboi, Toma Fl~netarul, Dochita (a woman), Anton (with no legs), himself, Marin, and, at the end, his nephew, Dobre Leontin. All these were, or still are, hurdy-gurdy players, and the now old Marin asserts that under the communist regime they all suffered from restrictions and abuses by the militia. Each of them had at least one instrument confiscated and burned by the police. Nowadays, since the old, authentic and amusing fairs had completely disappeared, the man goes out with his hurdy-gurdy (I mean "planet") less and less often. Only on Sundays he continues to come, stopping somewhere around Unirii Square and University Square in downtown.

From June 1-8, 1996, the society "D'ale Bucure~tilor" organized the carnival Bucharest in the year 1900. On this occasion, in the space marked by The Medieval Royal Court and the Lipscani zone, the society tried to restore and actualize something from the scenery and life from the turn of the century in the Romanian capital. The idea of a romantic epoch was simulated by many actors, costumes, shops, stalls, posters and signs, theatrical stagings, and outdated crafts. On this occasion, Marin the Hurdygurdist was also contacted, employed, and paid by the organizers to be present daily in front .of The Manuc's Inn (an old inn building), practicing his "art" and thus contributing to the achievement of an old-town atmosphere. But this time our man's participation was only physical, and mute, since the hurdygurdist's mind and soul had already abandoned his relationship with his past and familial profession. The little parrot, extracting fortunes and letters foretelling future destinies, was the only element of Marin's performance that was still functioning effectively. Marin's hurdy-gurdy was no more used as a musical instrument, and this was due both to the indolence and bored mind of the hurdygurdist himself and to the ignorance of the passersby (virtual and actual clients), who did not know and hence did not request its sonorities. Only after insisting was I able to obtain his performance, turning the instrument and playing music. Even if such an occasion could suggest the idea of re-evaluating his position, the hurdygurdist did not feel comfortable, did not fit the carnival, did not belong there.

That last time, in 1996, Marin the Hurdygurdist confessed he decided to put an end to the professional genealogy he had represented. Already in 1990, he had sold, for two hundred thousand lei, a musical box as big as a wardrobe, together with cylinders and discs of multiple (mechanical) musical "scores." Then he took a job, after which he became convinced that going out with the hurdy-gurdy-more exactly, with the "planet" with the parrot extracting fortune-telling notes-became unprofitable. The last instrument that was still in his relatives' house just became irreparable, and the one he would have with him on the official carnival days was destined to be sold as quick as possible. His address (30 A vram lancu Street, by the Traian Market) was given to me with the purpose of promoting the instrument's availability to the ear of some potential buyer. The solicited price was three million. And if he was not to succeed in finding a client for the instrument, he had decided to try to take it out of the country himself, in view of offering it to some antiquity shop in the West. Definitely, Marin's employment and involvement in that 1996 summer festival perhaps constituted his last public performance, this time also a passive, decorative and unprofitable one.

Let us observe now that the Hungarian hurdygurdist, in Budapest's historic and touristic center (photographs 10 and 11), had both a plush parrot and a perfect musical instrument, in continuous working order. This man was aware of his function of environmental bizarreness, urban decoration, and touristic attraction; and hence, he knew how to take advantage of it. The poor

hurdygurdy in Bucharest, on the other hand, proceeding on the natural, degenerating path of his semi-beggarly function—that of offering the ridiculous service of selling fortune and horoscope notes picked up by his live parrot—never realized that he could function, too, as a surprising and

~ satisfying environmental ornamentation. And he almost completely forgot about the capacity of his mechanical box to emit those strange but pleasant,

rare and old-fashioned musical pieces. His former commerce fell naturally, not only because the old fair life passed away. Further on, his failure for good was also due to the fact that the man did not see the possibility of adjusting/adapting himself, and thus resurrecting together with his profession of a hurdy-gurdy player proper. This latter alternative could have occurred only through the improvement of his musical behavior and through his positioning in the midst of a more commercial and touristic urban space, of a place that would benefit from a different human expectation and "competence." References

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