

FOLK MUSIC AND COMMERCIALIZATION IN *DANUBIAN TRANCES* AND *BOHEME*

— FEATURE ARTICLE —

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ABSTRACT

Hungary participates in the Central European narrative of rejuvenation and renewal through EDM, but the commercialization of remixes has disturbed that account. Hungarians debate the meanings of two different CD projects: Deep Forest's 1995 album *Boheme* and Károly Cserepes's 2003 album *Danubian Trances: mikroworld-ambient*. Hungarian fans praise *Danubian Trances* as an elegant update of national sensibility. *Boheme*'s remixes of Hungarian and Romani folksong have earned a very different response, from shock at the cuts that Deep Forest made to folk song recordings to anger about cultural appropriation. Hungarians have reflected that *Boheme*, like many West European firms, extracted a resource from the country. By contrast, they view their own remixing of folk music from the peoples of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire as having continuity with other genres that elevate folksong. I argue that where commerce encounters a previous practice of elevating music aesthetically and morally, it may further marginalize that practice but it does not change its character.

KEYWORDS: Hungary, Roma, Gypsies, appropriation, postcommunism

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INTRODUCTION

A sense of rejuvenation, renewal and communalism through electronic dance music (EDM) extends from Central Europe into Hungary. However, the commercial success of some EDM remixes has disturbed this atmosphere. Hungarians have debated the meanings of two different CD projects: Deep Forest's 1995 album *Boheme* and Károly Cserepes's 2003 album *Danubian Trances: mikroworld-ambient*. Both projects sample Hungarian and Romani (Gypsy) folksinging. The two projects take different approaches to their material; one broadly showcases the unique expressions of folksinging from Hungary and the other processes its sound in a highly detailed way. Hungarians had contrasting responses to the two projects. They viewed their own remixing of regional folk music as an extension of communal participation initiated generations earlier by such musicians as Béla Bartók. By contrast, many in Hungary felt that *Boheme* had extracted a resource from the country and prevented their native efforts from finding a large audience.¹

The Hungarian debates illustrate tensions between creativity and inequality that characterize cultural appropriation in general. At the same time, the debates infuse a history that is particular to Hungary and to East-Central Europe. Remixes of folk and local sounds have spurred creativity in local music industries as well as in noncommercial arts scenes (see Greene and Porcello 2005; Madrid 2008). In one sense, these projects just use a common technique of musical quotation. However, global commerce changes the power relationships in such efforts. As Jacques Attali argues, the imitation or copying in mass production overwhelms the source's expression (1985: 32, 87–9). In addition, musical appropriation can carry out racism or ethnic exclusion. Perry Hall, writing on African American music, identifies a cycle of exploitation (1997). The white mainstream initially rejects African Americans' vernacular creativities, but then adopts and changes these same folk expressions. If the mainstream finds "economic value", then the adopted form occupies the public sphere and excludes the original form (Hall 1997: 38). Yet Hall finds that this very marginalization provides space for African Americans to claim and create new idioms.

Hall's comments address the recurring debates over appropriation in major styles of popular music from rock to hip-hop. Digital sampling of folk music into global hits, including in EDM-derived styles, has extended the "basic inequity" and "negative caricature" of the exploitation cycle into many cultures, even as it romanticizes the transcultural (see Feld 1996: 27; Frith 2000). Considering interactions between Balkan Roma, West Europeans, and Americans, Carol Silverman argues that the main question is not whether appropriation takes place, but "who benefits from these exchanges" (2013: 274). In this case study of *Boheme* and *Danubian Trances*, I consider the fact that Hungarians have their own history of appropriating folk music into art music. Elevating folk music in this way has enabled them periodically to gloss over ethnic exclusions, especially of the Romani people (see Brown 2000), yet this elevation also supplied a communal framework from which citizens of Hungary including Roma could discuss and try to counteract commercial appropriations that extended to them in the postcommunist era. I argue that where commerce encounters

a previous practice of elevating music aesthetically and morally, it may further marginalize that practice but it may not change its character.

CONCEPT AND SOUND IN *BOHEME* AND *DANUBIAN TRANCES*

Boheme is a project by the Deep Forest producer duo consisting of the Frenchmen Eric Mouquet and Michel Sanchez. Together with Dan Lacksman, they produced their first eponymous album in 1992. *Boheme* was their second effort, this time just by the Mouquet-Sanchez duo, released in 1995. Both albums were extremely successful as pop music; in 1996 *Boheme* won a Grammy award for best world music album. Deep Forest conveyed exotic adventure with their projects.

Boheme's jacket notes set the idea of revealing a hidden and faraway world (Taylor 1997: 12–13). Deep Forest's *Boheme* project samples Hungarian, Romani, Russian, Native American, Taiwanese and other folksong. However, the title *Boheme* singles out a trope of the nomadic and freedom-loving Gypsy as presented in the 19th century by Franz Liszt (whose book about Romani instrumental music was entitled *Des Bohémiens et leur musique en Hongrie*).² Thus, like Liszt, Mouquet and Sanchez juxtapose Hungarians and Hungary's ethnic minority the Romani people. *Boheme's* two main sampled records are *Rom sam ame!* (We are Rom) and *Musiques de Transylvanie* (Musics of Transylvania), both from the Belgian label *fonti musicali*. *Boheme's* notes juxtapose Romani and Hungarian within a metaphorical adventure. Paraphrasing the album notes of *Musiques de Transylvanie*, *Boheme* outlines a journey into the forest, led by the voice of Hungarian singer Márta Sebestyén, "bird of good omen on our Bohemian wanderings" (Deep Forest 1995: 2).

The two main sampled records are from the communist era and represent two different sets of people. *Rom sam ame!* is a compilation of recordings that Claude Flagel, Lou Flagel and Hungarian ethnographers had made in the 1970s of Romani singers in the Hungarian countryside.³ The recordings on *Rom sam ame!* are all vocal and the singers are bilingual in Romani and Hungarian. *Musiques de Transylvanie* is a record that Budapest folk revivalists and the French Claude Flagel made in 1988–9 to protest and publicize the dictator Ceausescu's program to depopulate and even raze the villages of ethnic Hungarians living in the neighboring country of Romania. Much of the music on *Musiques de Transylvanie* symbolizes mourning for lost village culture. The album contains a significant number of solo laments, prayers and other songs. By the time that Deep Forest licensed the record for sampling just a few years later, the protest message of *Musiques de Transylvanie* was a historical relic. Although *Boheme* credits the albums it sampled, only Sebestyén and one other revival singer, Kati Szvorák, are credited by name. One number on *Boheme*, "Bulgarian Melody", is a studio collaboration between Mouquet, Sanchez and Sebestyén.⁴

Boheme is a mixture of segued and separate numbers, some of them purely instrumental but most with song samples as melody layers. The *Deep Forest* album of 1992 included many overlapped short samples (vocalizations by the forest people, or Pygmies, of central Africa drew the most attention). *Boheme* mostly samples full phrases, although those phrases are

not necessarily from the beginning of a given recording. Whereas the samples of *Deep Forest* had undergone some electronic processing, the samples for *Boheme* have just occasional layering, splicing and reverb. Hungarian and Romani language, the unique timbres of the singers, and the melismas and glissandi of the folksong performances provide unusual sonic qualities analogous to effects processing. “Bohemian Ballet”, for example, has clearly defined layers including drum, bass, hi-hat, a clap track, synth lines and two melodic samples, one from *Rom sam ame!* and the other of undefined origin.⁵ This and most of *Boheme*’s other numbers build layers, reach a tempo of 120bpm, move to a break, reintroduce a regular beat, and fade to a solo loop.

Danubian Trances is a project by the Hungarian composer and producer Károly Cserepes. In the 1970s and 1980s, Cserepes was a member of the acoustic folk-inspired group *Vízöntő* (Aquarius). He began incorporating electronics after he was able to import a Roland Jupiter 8; the instrument was very rare in the communist country. He collaborated with notable rock singers and folk performers such as Márta Sebestyén; under their performances of folksongs he created a bed of synthesized sounds and magnetic tape loops. He moved to digital sampling in the 1990s. Through his eldest daughter, an event organizer who ran the *Cökxpön* ambient zone at Hungary’s Sziget festival, Cserepes then became interested in ambient music, EDM and “the spatial dimension of sound”.⁶

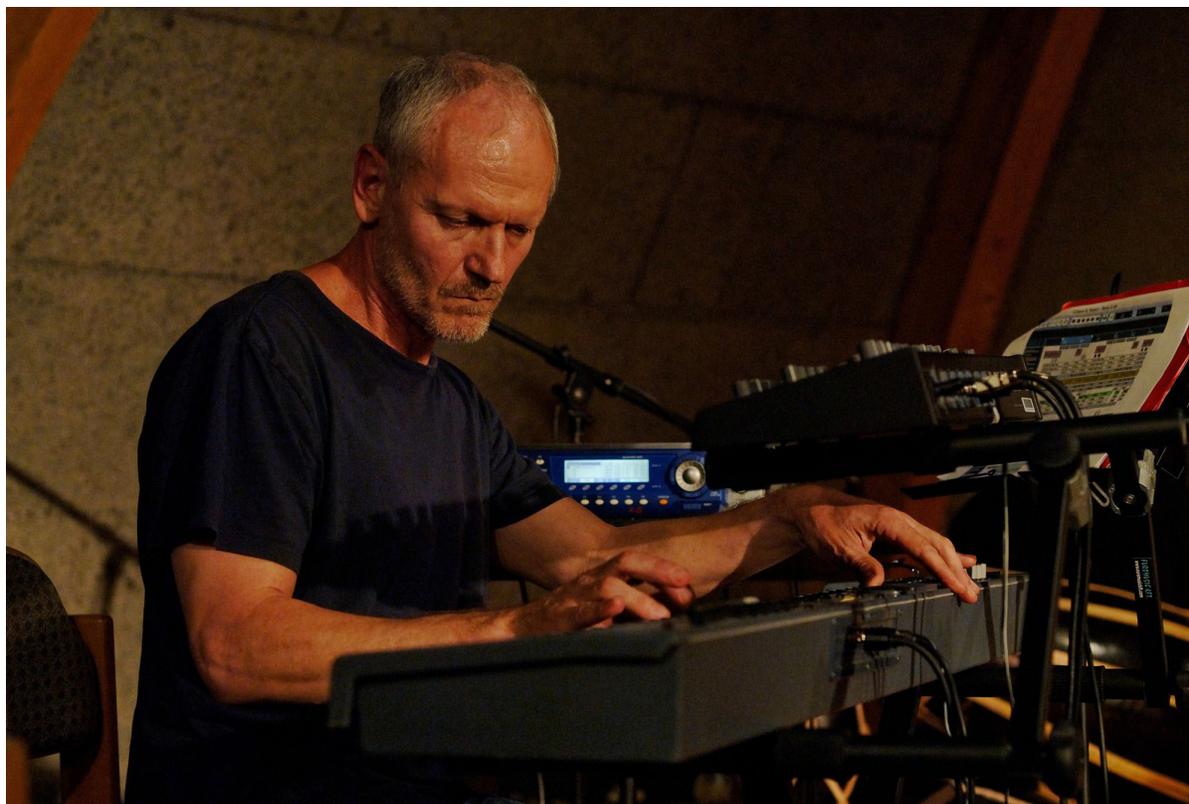


FIGURE 1. KÁROLY CSEREPES, IPOMEA LIVE PROJECT, BUDAPEST, HUNGARY. PHOTO CREDIT: LÁSZLÓ GAJDOS (2009).

Cserepes's 2003 album *Danubian Trances: mikroworld–ambient* envisions dreamlike communion with a lost world. The CD's cover graphics reproduce the Lajos Gulácsy painting *Az ópiumszívó álma* (The Dream of the Opium Smoker) and the notes "invite you to take a psychedelic journey along the Hungarian Danube" (Cserepes 2003). Cserepes explained that the philosopher Béla Hamvas's essay *Az öt génusz* (Five Genius Loci) had inspired him. Hamvas "divided the country into five parts according to character".⁷ Right-wing nationalism in Hungary also cultivates an intense mysticism of place, but Cserepes took care to explain to me that his exercise was meditative and did not have right-wing implications: "It's true that inside a small country the even smaller areas have a microclimate, a spiritual microclimate. . . . for this you have to live here. It doesn't have an ideological significance at all, it is an emotion (*érzelem*)".⁸

The folk samples on *Danubian Trances* include historical recordings of very elderly folksingers, children's folksong, zithers, bagpipes, hurdy-gurdy and reed flute. There are samples of birdcalls, the fluttering of birds' wings, rustling reeds and crickets. The samples are mostly short fragments and they infuse all layers including breakbeats. They are processed with tempo modification, rapidly switched channels, echo, panning and other techniques. Cserepes adds sparse selected elements such as a clap track or bass and establishes tempi ranging from 90–95bpm. In "Náni" for example, short samples of a Hungarian folksong, klezmer violin, Thai music, church bells and the sound of a horse-drawn carriage echo over a sparse dub track. The treatment of the carriage sample is one of many intricate details. Cserepes pans the sound from left to right and loops the sample so that the clops of the horse hoofs and the whirring of the carriage wheels resemble a needle cycling in the runout groove of a record. In the dub track of "Náni", Cserepes uses many processing techniques such as filtered frequencies, cutting instruments in and out, panning and "barely audible" tracks (see Veal 2007: 65–77).

LEGAL OBJECTIONS TO BOHEME

Boheme and *Danubian Trances* had vastly different distribution histories. *Boheme* was released by Sony, sold millions of copies worldwide, received a Grammy, and went into regular rotation on pop music radio in Hungary. *Danubian Trances* was self-published by Cserepes and distributed only locally by the Hungarian label Fonó.⁹ *Boheme's* success concentrated several layers of inequity within the European Union and within Hungary. By 2004 Deep Forest and the Hungarian musicians whose recorded voices the duo had sampled were part of the same political and legal entity, the EU, so that in principle there existed a way to address some of the inequities.

For albums that remix ethnographic recordings, there are legal and ethical conflicts resulting from the fact that field recordings originally made for education and study were recycled for commercial use. The commercial use highlights how copyright is centered on an individual creator; copyright practice assumes that folk music does not have such a creator and therefore disadvantages the varied ways that local communities may acknowledge creativity (Seeger 2004; Toynbee 2004: 123). Another disadvantage comes from the legal

understanding of the unique qualities a musician brings to the performance of a song. Many interpretations of copyright law do not acknowledge performing rights for folk music. As is well known, Deep Forest bought the rights to albums of folk and non-Western music from the record companies that had released the albums. Some of the people who had recorded the songs, as well as record companies that first published these recordings, had clearly obtained releases from the original performers and were clearly able to license the music to Deep Forest. However, many other recordings that the duo licensed had been made in an earlier era when there was oral agreement for recording, compensation was made in the field on a one-time basis, no signed document existed, the original performers had passed away, and the people recording the music and the record companies assumed that every performance was of a folksong that did not have a known author (see Zemp 1996). In the case of *Boheme*, Deep Forest (and fonti musicali and Sony) exercised a privilege on musicians who lived just a short distance from them and who could easily be identified. This album focused the anger of many Hungarians about being obscured and “ventriloquized” (Novak 2011: 629). *Boheme* also brought to the fore the disadvantaged position of Romani people inside Hungary and within Europe, as well as an interest in and sympathy towards them that a significant segment of Magyars felt during the 1990s before extreme anti-Roma feeling spread in the country.

In Hungary, discussion over the legality of *Boheme* focused on its two hit singles “Marta’s Song”, in which Sebestyén’s voice is sampled from *Musiques de Transylvanie* and “Freedom Cry” in which Károly Rostás’s voice is sampled from *Rom sam ame!* The terms of any royalty arrangement between Sebestyén, Mouquet and Sanchez are unclear for the original studio recording of *Boheme*’s number “Bulgarian Song”. As Deep Forest’s remixing ethics were being discussed very heavily among ethnomusicologists, in the late 1990s I asked Sebestyén about her opinion of whether what the duo had done was right. She responded that legally they were in the clear. Sebestyén actually became more famous for her performances of “Szerellem, szerellem” (Love, Love) and other Hungarian folksong that Gabriel Yared incorporated into the soundtrack and score of the Oscar-winning *The English Patient* in 1996. A decade later, Sebestyén reflected that the Deep Forest case was a “strange situation in which . . . I was involved without my knowledge” (2007). She observed ruefully that it was the arrangers who had gotten royalties, not the performers of folksongs. However, she felt a major difference between the two treatments of her voice: the producers of *The English Patient* showed her what they intended to do before the film was released, whereas Mouquet and Sanchez had completed their mix and had released “Marta’s Song” before informing her.

Deep Forest’s sampling of a Romani singer’s voice for “Freedom Cry” caused a public controversy. “Freedom Cry” samples the song “Esik eső (kisangyalom)” (Rain falls [my little angel]) performed by Károly “Xuttan (Huttyán)” Rostás on *Rom sam ame!* Although Rostás was an impoverished member of the Romani minority living in a southeast Hungarian village, one niche of Hungarians already knew Rostás’s voice quite well. Folklore researchers had recorded Rostás doing bass scat-singing (*szájbögzés*, “oral bassing”) in the 1970s, and

folk revivalists as well as young Romani singers emulated him.¹⁰ When “Freedom Cry” and “Marta’s Song” went into regular rotation on Hungarian pop radio, a much larger number of listeners who did not normally pay attention to folk music heard the voice of Rostás and also Sebestyén. The filmmaker András Salamon relates that he was one of these people. In the 1990s he was making documentary films on Roma in Hungary. Salamon has explained that with documentary film he intends to depict states of existence and he does not intend to be an “investigative reporter” (*oknyomozó riporter*; see Szőnyei 1998). Salamon’s film *Huttyán* (1996) exemplifies this approach. Salamon relates that he decided to seek out the performer of “Freedom Cry”. He found that Rostás had passed away and witnessed Rostás’s family, like many other rural Roma, living in abject poverty. He and his staff financed the travel of Rostás’s sons, one of whom was in a wheelchair, and then filmed them traveling from their small village to Paris and to Brussels, meeting with Sony, and sightseeing. No payment from Sony or the Deep Forest duo resulted.¹¹ *Huttyán* premiered on Hungarian television with a large viewership and has been programmed there every few years since 1996. Salamon was criticized for facilitating the Rostás’s efforts so actively and for possibly raising the family’s expectations unrealistically. Salamon explained that he himself had not understood copyright law or the intransigence of international corporations. He explained that he was shocked when Sony did not pay anything to the Rostáses (Szőnyei 1998).

Marginalized people such as Roma face particular difficulties if they want to challenge what they experience as cultural appropriation. In this case the original event was the recording of Rostás that had occurred decades prior to Deep Forest’s sampling. International copyright law had been unclear on the question of intellectual property during suits of the 1990s (Guy 2002: 196). The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and within the European Union, the EU Copyright Directive of 2001 were meant to establish a uniform application of “Western-style copyright protection” (see Frith and Marshall 2004: 4, 13; Seeger 2004: 158–9). The Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property (TRIPs) provision of GATT globalized notions of individual authorship. Although TRIPs has aided efforts to keep local control of intellectual property, TRIPs also fixed the Western notion of copyright, rendering local communities less able to utilize their own concepts of intellectual property in the global commercial environment (see Arewa 2006). Notwithstanding the implications of these measures for extending the notions of Western copyright and of individual authorship into cultures that conceive of intellectual property quite differently, the EU Directive did in principle offer a framework for litigation, and by the mid-2000s, Hungary was a member of the EU. The “Brussels I” regulation of the EU (no. 44, passed in 2000) stipulates that a citizen of one EU member state can sue a party in another EU member state. The citizen has the option of initiating the suit within the courts of his own country, or alternatively suing in the nation where the defendant is located (European Commission n.d.: 14).

In the mid-2000s, the Rostás sons, represented by the Budapest copyright lawyer Zoltán Markovits, initiated a suit against Sony and the Flagels in Hungary. The legal case was complex. Three different international copyright laws had been in effect over the decades

during which Rostás was recorded, *Rom sam ame!* was released, and Deep Forest made its remix. In addition, there was the question of whether “Esik eső” was folk music or Rostás’s original song. Markovits argued that Károly Rostás was the unique author of “Esik eső”, that Rostás was owed performer’s fees, and that these should be paid posthumously. Prior to trial, Fligel settled with the Rostás family for a small sum (Borzák 2006). For the suit against Sony, the Budapest court solicited an expert opinion from the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The ethnomusicologist Katalin Kovalcsik rendered the opinion. She had in fact researched and written about the way that personal invention and autobiography penetrated the singing of important Romani performers in Hungary (Kovalcsik 1987). She explained to me that in her judgment, “Esik eső” was indeed Rostás’s individual composition.¹² Sony’s lawyers argued that it was folk music and that a performer’s fee does not have to be paid for folk music (Borzák 2006). The Budapest court rejected the Rostáses’ suit and it was thus unable to proceed in the EU legal system.

HUNGARIANS ON ETHICS AND AESTHETICS IN *DANUBIAN TRANCES* AND *BOHEME*

In reflecting on *Boheme* and *Danubian Trances*, Hungarians (among them the successions of urban young people for whom clubbing and EDM were formative experiences in the 1990s and 2000s) balanced their own ethics and aesthetics with the knowledge that two West Europeans had gained worldwide fame for the music coming out of their own region. Hungarians consider their own use of folk music from throughout the Eastern Europe region a statement of humaneness and of aesthetic elevation in the footsteps of Béla Bartók. Bartók and several other modernist artists opposed the entrenched nobility in Hungary and advocated for poor peasants at the turn of the twentieth century (see Frigyesi 1998). Bartók did this by making direct contact with peasants of several nationalities and recording their music. He applied an aesthetic ideal of organicism from European art music of the nineteenth century according to which all details should reinforce each other to create a unified work. Bartók regarded some peasant songs as symmetrical, concentrated and a model of organicist perfection (see Bartók 1989[1931]: 142).¹³

There are several parallels between this Bartókian standard and the image presented not just by Hungarians, but also by Deep Forest. Mouquet and Sanchez call *Boheme*’s numbers “songs of freedom and fraternity”, and this could be seen as analogous to (yet more vague than) the multiethnic approach of Bartók. Mouquet and Sanchez say that *Boheme* is “calling us to hear the eternal beauty of the human voice in a new guise”, and this parallels Bartók’s and many other classical composers’ reshaping of folk music. However, Hungarians did not hear *Boheme*’s remixes at all in this way. A case in point is *Boheme*’s number “Gathering”, which uses two lines from a folk prayer that revivalist András Berecz sings in an emotional folk style on *Musiques de Transylvanie*. The original song, an entreaty to St. Stephen, the patron saint and first Christian king of Hungary, is the final number on *Musiques de Transylvanie* and as such conveyed a protest against the isolation and the crisis of the villages under Ceausescu. Mouquet and Sanchez did have the ability to consider the meaning of the text, since the jacket notes of *Musiques de Transylvanie* supply full line-by-line translations.

However, the duo selected two expressively sung fragments from the middle of the song that by themselves are not intelligible Hungarian: “But above all/ As the guardian of our country”. To my knowledge, Berecz has not made any public comment on this, but Márta Sebestyén has done so. As a UNESCO Artist for Peace, Sebestyén frequently advocates for the live performance traditions and lands from which her songs originate. She objected that “András Berecz’s Saint Stephen song was as though it had been broken on the wheel (*olyan volt, mintha kerékbe törték volna*). Is it not terrible that they break a sacred song to pieces and that it doesn’t mean a thing to them”? (Kiss 2003). In Sebestyén’s view, Deep Forest had destroyed the song’s folk religiosity.

Discussions of Károly Rostás and Deep Forest/Sony’s treatment reverberated online throughout the 2000s and as recently as 2013. (The comments are in many different languages; here I discuss the Hungarian remarks.) A number of Hungarians have uploaded Rostás’s original performance of “Esik eső” from *Rom sam ame!* to Youtube, and others have transcribed Rostás’s text to blogs and Youtube response sections. Many comments show how *Boheme* and *Huttyán* have permeated Hungarian popular culture. Response posts summarize the events depicted in *Huttyán*, sometimes mistakenly assuming that Sony did compensate the Rostáses. Some have reminisced about hearing the Deep Forest version on Hungarian pop radio and under the credits to the 1990s video game *Asterix & Obelix*. Extreme anti-Roma views are not absent from the forums around “Esik eső,” although they are rare. Such posts insist that nothing is original about Rostás’s performance (thus spreading the racist idea that Roma contribute nothing to the nation; the same has also been asserted about Jewish musicians). In response, other commentators have asserted the originality of Rostás’s language and interpretation. Rostás’s grandson and one of his sons have repeatedly written on these forums that the song is Károly Rostás’s own and have described the circumstances under which he began to sing it. They also express anger at the fact that Sony did not compensate them. Many listeners reflect that Rostás’s performance touches them personally and describe playing the song over and over again. The comments predominantly reveal a sympathetic identification with Rostás, his family and the expressive culture of Romani people in Hungary.

In responding to *Danubian Trances*, Hungarians balanced the Bartókian organicist aesthetic with their reactions to the album’s EDM-related style. Reviewer Eszter Veronika Kiss saw *Danubian Trances* as “a completely new format of [Cserepes’s] customary electronic music”. She observed that, as the album is in the ambient genre, “we might actually translate this expression as environment-music. . . the musical numbers stand together in a montage of the countryside’s rustlings, sounds and music (Kiss n.d.). If much ambient music sampled nature sounds in order to create a general sensation of space or to give a general spiritual feeling (Reynolds 1998: 190, 196–7), Kiss is praising the opposite: Cserepes’s intricate processing, selection and coordination of hyperlocal samples.

Some listeners found ironic commentary in Cserepes’s fusion of electronic styles with old, acoustically recorded samples. On “Timeismycanvas”, the EDM blogger “rúka” rates *Danubian Trances* “10 out of 10” among “older records that have perhaps unjustifiably been forgotten”. He hears Cserepes making

Daring attempts . . . at the record's most humorous point, in the "Madudáj" composition, [in] which a bagpipe sample takes the place of a drum 'n' bass influence. . . . my favorite part is when, between drum machine breaks, he substitutes an old woman's *csujogatása* (rhythmically chanted verses) for what would be the MC's role at a jungle party ("rúka" 2012).¹⁴

Rúka finds an "exceptional ability to paint an atmosphere" where Cserepes had added the sound of the horse-drawn carriage to the breakbeats (*tört ütem*) in "Náni". Rúka calls attention to a parallel between Cserepes's *mikroworld* concept and Bartók's collection of piano miniatures entitled *Mikrokosmos*. Cserepes also

[C]olors the sound palette very subtly (*finoman*) with live instruments and synthesized sounds alike, but the impression always remains organic. . . . [w]e sometimes discover acoustic characteristics of an era, dub effects, but to me it never becomes jarring; the main role always belongs to the Hungarian folk music, whose timelessness remains intact ("rúka" 2012).

Rúka mainly blogs about international issues in dub and EDM, but here he is showing double consciousness as a dub advocate and as a Hungarian with knowledge of classical music. He hears Cserepes's creation of EDM and at the same time he sees *Danubian Trances* fully achieving an organicist standard.

Hungarian writers differed on whether *Danubian Trances* could facilitate a meditation on disappeared culture. László Marton, organizer of the world music stage at the Sziget festival and other high-profile venues and a major reviewer of world music in Hungary, commented that Cserepes was "turning into the gale" of world music trends with his microworld aesthetic. Yet Marton objected quite strongly that "the spiritual thrills do not match the saturation of feeling that they deserve" (2003). In contrast to Marton, Máté Papp, writing for *Új forrás* magazine, praised Cserepes's "archaic-psychedelic sound"; the listener "in a moment's time can be carried and rocked into the *Danubian transcendence* (*dunai transzcendenciájába*) of his own past and present" (Papp 2003, emphasis in original). The comments by Papp and Marton fall into two broader categories of response to European minimalist styles of EDM: "it can be heard as stark and cold because of its minimalist aesthetic or incredibly lush and detailed, if the listener focuses on these artists' subtle manipulation of the atmospheric elements" (Veal 2007: 236). Marton may also be responding to basic "impersonal" and "celestial" features of ambient music (Reynolds 1998: 192, 197). Cserepes's project did attenuate the passions that ethnographic recordings arouse in Hungarian listeners, but it did this in order to cause listeners to meditate on the loss of microscopic worlds.

"A DOMESTIC PRODUCT": HUNGARIAN VIEWS ON COMMODIFICATION

The global success of *Bohème* caused many Hungarians to reflect on what happens when folk remixes become commercial. Steven Feld has characterized the commercialization process as "schizophonic", creating a division where "oral performance and cultural

participation are transformed into material commodity and circulable representation” (1996: 13). Hungarian reactions map such a division somewhat differently. Even though they utilize recorded media Hungarians have not treated many of their own local remixes as a material commodity. Instead they have viewed their own efforts as modernized cultural participation on a continuum with live performance. Hungarians did believe that *Boheme’s* remixes had transformed folk music into a material commodity. Many saw in this event the larger socioeconomic imbalance between Eastern and Western Europe that occurred with the fall of communism. Reactions crossed the political spectrum, and included self-reflection as well as expressions of outrage.¹⁵

Hungarians with a multicultural orientation saw irony in the contrasts between successes. László Marton showed this orientation through his programming of Afropop, klezmer, and Balkan acts. He reminded his readers that Cserepes had modest success when he combined synthesizer with folksinging in the 1980s; this was “small comfort” (*enyhe vigasz*) when *Boheme* achieved global hit status a decade later (Marton 1998). Cserepes himself reflected on the fact that he, a person of urban privilege, was sampling the temporally, geographically, or demographically distant and disadvantaged folk. In his opinion the issue had arisen with the change of technology from magnetic tape-splicing and tape loops; digitization had made mixing easy and ushered in the fashion for mixing all types of ethnic music together. This in turn raised the question of socioeconomic imbalance:

This is a questionable thing morally, [the question of] whether it is correct or not. In general it’s better if an exotic, touristic result does not happen. Deep Forest was a bit like this, they made entertainment music out of it, and they used these elements as art for art’s sake (*l’art pour l’art*) a bit. So they used them not in terms of the contents, but to the degree of spectacle. I think the difference is that when I used these types of elements, I chose them for the reasons or from the aspect of content. . . . not because it was upbeat (*jópofo*) or interesting, I didn’t put [a sample] in there because of that.¹⁶

Cserepes is here distinguishing himself, as a contributor to ambient, film music and performance art scenes, from Deep Forest as a pop group. These comments illustrate how Cserepes and many Hungarian listeners are attuned to whether a producer keeps folk content elevated and recognizable; if the producer succeeds they feel a local cultural participation, although a commodifying imbalance will always place such an endeavor in doubt. However, in Hungary’s electronic music scenes, there is no particular consensus on how to treat folk music. László Hortobágyi, who centers his sounds mostly in Indian music, has done dub and Goa trance projects. He also mixed the voice of folksinger Irén Lovász for *Világfa* (World Tree), with this album winning the 1996 Preis der deutschen Schallplattenkritik (German Record Critics’ Award). But Hortobágyi has stated that his passion does not lie with Hungarian music and that he is not interested in dance rhythms. He comments that he does not prefer to think about the origins of his sound samples, since he is isolating frequency spectra from them for textures that are inspired by Indian music (Marton 2001: 271–8).

Anger and shock about the unequal exchange in *Boheme* crossed the political spectrum in the 1990s. In 1997 the folk musician Ferenc Kiss had composed the soundtrack to the film *Romani kris - Cigánytörvény* (Gypsy Law, dir. Bence Gyöngyössy) and used a recording of Károly Rostás's voice. A review in the Romani periodical *Amaro Drom* criticized the film's depiction of Roma in desperate material circumstances, but did not single out the soundtrack. However, when Etnofon Records released the soundtrack on CD in 2000, reviewer Lajos Fogarasi took the opportunity to comment on it:

Károly Rostás is a Domestic Product (*Hazai Termék*) and not an import. As a result far fewer recognize his local fame than they do his foreign [fame]. Or rather we, too, know it from there: that they took it away, packaged it up there, and then brought it back and sold to us the [very] thing that, if we had not given to them for free, we would have had for free, and they would [only] have been able to obtain for a lot of money (2000).

Fogarasi expressed a common local view on the inequalities between east and west. In Hungary after 1989, locally grown food and locally manufactured household goods disappeared from stores only to be replaced by far more expensive products with West European labels. My co-respondents from all walks of life were quick to identify the many cases in which the West European firms had used local raw goods to make the new products. On other occasions they commented that West European firms had bought the Hungarian factories and then simply relabeled and re-priced the same Hungarian products. Like many other people in the former communist countries Hungarians felt that they had become the object of "colonial relationships" (see Pine 1998; Seeger 2004: 160). In Fogarasi's analogy, Rostás's singing had, like the local household goods, become an object of unequal exchange.

Adherents of the Hungarian far right have attributed a sacred character to folk symbols.¹⁷ It might be assumed that they are especially angry about Western Europeans using folk material from Hungary, but they also engage in some self-reflection. The contrarian Feró Nagy, originally a dissident punk rocker of the 1980s, has become prominent in far-right "national rock". He has asserted that only foreigners like Deep Forest were able to sample and remix the folksong of Hungary effectively: "I can't put it into a musical setting because then I would desecrate the ancient flame . . . it's a typically Hungarian thing that two foreigners were able to do this. We couldn't, because it was said that it was not permitted, so you respected [folk music], so no means no" (2008). Nagy is critiquing his fellow countrymen for treating folksong as an elevated and sacred object; in his view, Hungarians only prevented themselves from making commercial hits out of folk music, and thereby left an opening for others to do so.

Recorded remixes of folk music aroused many passions in the 1990s and early 2000s. The Hungarian reactions reflect the major socioeconomic changes of postcommunism. Across the spectrum, there is anger at being exploited, contemplation on the ethics of re-using cultural goods, and self-critique of the way that elevating art can suppress experimentation; remixing sparked a lengthy discussion of what is appropriate for commercial use. The writers and musicians that I discuss here are treating commodification and communal

participation as mutually exclusive. Some, like Nagy, see this bifurcation as a choice; others, like Fogarasi or Marton, are viewing it as imposed from outside. There have been subsequent samplings and alleged samplings of music from Hungary into global hits; although they are mentioned in the Hungarian press, they have not generated the same persistent commentary. Contemporary processing techniques make such samples difficult to document.¹⁸

LIVE PERFORMANCE AND FOLK REMIXES

For my Hungarian acquaintances and friends who participate in electronic dance music culture, local folk music has a miniscule role, although folk music has such prominence in the country that it nonetheless appears in unexpected ways. The major Budapest club venue the A38 ship regularly programs acoustic folk music for one of its spaces; recent performers include the Buda Folk Band and the Romani group Parno Graszt (White Horse). Since an effective way to pre-empt appropriation is for marginalized people to put their own live music into the public sphere (see Hilder 2012), Budapest club venues are significant. As the right wing has penetrated the rhetoric and symbolism of national identification in the 2000s and 2010s, other constituencies such as EDM adherents emphasize an international and multicultural vision.¹⁹

Deep Forest and Cserepes have both done live PAs in Hungary. Deep Forest has appeared in Hungary several times; one recent appearance was at a very large rock/sports venue. Sebestyén has appeared a handful of times in person with Mouquet and Sanchez to reprise the song phrases of the two *Bohème* numbers that feature her solo voice. Live singers not from Hungary have re-enacted the numbers that include Rostás's voice (see Deep Forest 1999). In 2005, Cserepes self-published the album *Ipomea: Tricolor*, which in many ways

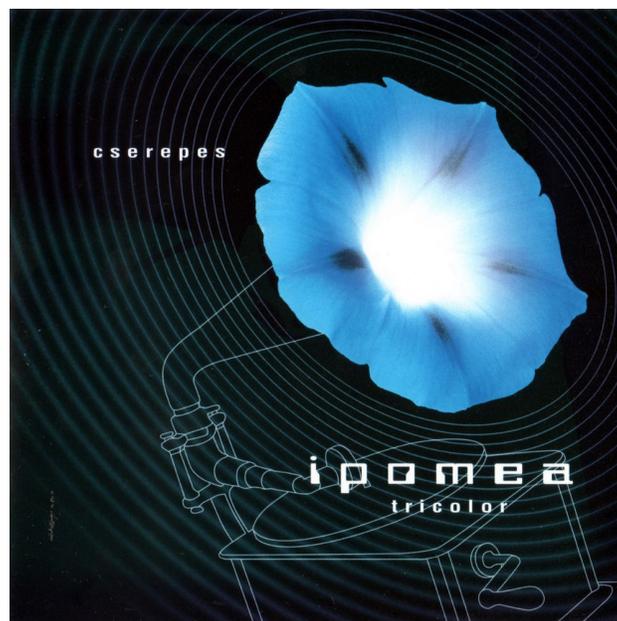


FIGURE 2. *IPOMEA: TRICOLOR* CD JACKET (2005).

is the optimistic contrast to *Danubian Trances*. A warm synthesizer palette predominates, the album is instrumental except for some wordless vocalizations, and it uses only a few processed African and southeast Asian music samples.

Cserepes made a series of appearances in the late 2000s at large outdoor public spaces. The concerts featured solo rock or folk singers and live instrumentalists playing minimalist motives while Cserepes mixed selected bass, synthesizer and other tracks from *Ipomea*, very rarely from *Danubian Trances*. In 2013, Cserepes produced *Flashback*, another series of Danubian trance-style mixes, but he notes that the ever-shifting styles in EDM and ambient music are not compatible with meticulous processing. Live appearances by Deep Forest, Cserepes, and folk musicians create a good audience mood or *hangulat* vastly different from the disjunctures and imbalances that the recorded remixes set in play.

CONCLUSION

Debates about musical appropriation are ongoing and arise especially when a project achieves hit status. Some musicians and observers think of appropriation as a basic creative activity, while others see it as an exploitation of inequality. In Hungary, a special version of this debate erupted when the digital sampling of folk music collided with the elevated status of folk culture inside the country. The debate surrounded EDM-related genres, core idioms of the postcommunist era. *Boheme*, a global popular hit created by West Europeans and published by a multinational recording company, sampled Hungarian and Romani folksong to project an image of Gypsy-style wandering. *Danubian Trances*, created and self-published by a Hungarian, projected an atmosphere of micro-climates. *Boheme's* success highlights legal and ethical conflicts that arise when previous recordings are recycled into commercial use. In Hungary, these conflicts were felt very strongly during the initial fifteen years of postcommunism. *Boheme's* publication coincided with a host of changes, including a wave of sympathy for Romani people, transition to global capitalism, and connection with EU legal frameworks. Hungarians experienced *Boheme's* sampling as a moral and aesthetic violation against which they had little recourse. By contrast, they embraced *Danubian Trances* as a project that took folk music into the genre of ambient music without changing its elevated status. Many Hungarians regard *Boheme's* commercial success as part of the larger socioeconomic imbalance between them as citizens of a former communist country and their West European neighbors. Hungarian reflections on *Boheme* and *Danubian Trances* have crossed the political spectrum. They see the projects as metaphors for unequal exchange, but they have also included self-critique. The case of *Danubian Trances* and *Boheme* shows that where commerce encounters a previous tradition of elevating music aesthetically and morally, it may marginalize that tradition but not change it to any great degree.

NOTES

- 1 This article is part of my larger ongoing project on experiments with folk music in East-Central Europe 1989–2008. It also draws on my ethnographic research of the 1990s and 2000s on Romani and Hungarian folk and popular music. My research was supported in part by the Fulbright Joint Austrian-Hungarian Research Grant (2007). All translations from Hungarian-language articles, interviews and personal communications are mine. I thank Anikó Dávid for her assistance in checking translations and transcriptions. See Nye 2013 on the integrative significance of EDM in Central Europe. On Hungary, see Kömlődi 1999 and studies by Angyalosy, Vitos and Nagy in Gergely 2010.
- 2 Here I use Romani language terms (Rom/Roma/Romani, sing./plur./adj.) to refer to Romani people and “Gypsy” to refer to the image of the Gypsy. I also mention the country of Romania in this article. Its national language, Romanian, is a romance language unrelated to Romani, which is an Indo-Aryan language. Many Hungarian Roma are bilingual in Hungarian, the nation of their citizenship, and in Romani. They sometimes switch between the two languages while singing.
- 3 During the communist period in the 1970s and 1980s, Claude Fligel had been a strong advocate of Hungarian folk music, managing to visit Hungary, record music and arrange tours and record releases for Hungarian folk groups in Belgium and France.
- 4 *Boheme* samples numerous Romani singers from *Rom sam ame!* All are named in the original recording’s jacket notes but not on *Boheme*.
- 5 A solo voice sample is from the stick-dance song “Rudas csillag hajnal hasad[ik]” (Pole star, dawn breaks). Mouquet and Sanchez cut the first syllable so that the line begins “-das csillag”. A group-singing loop on “Bohemian Ballet” is sampled from a song in an old, very emotional genre called in Romani *loki gilyi* (slow songs), where one singer starts the song lines and others join in. I am unable to identify the processing and/or provenance of the second half of this loop (several field recordings document Károly Rostás singing this particular song).
- 6 Károly Cserepes, interview with the author (MP3 recording), Budapest, 16 May 2006.
- 7 Károly Cserepes, interview with the author (MP3 recording), Budapest, 16 May 2006. See also Hamvas 1985 [1959].
- 8 Károly Cserepes, interview with the author (MP3 recording), Budapest, 16 May 2006.
- 9 Cserepes had released two previous CDs with Fonó, but in 2003, the label was reorganized to focus only on folk music and jazz.
- 10 See Hooker 2006 on exploitation and ethnic inequality in the instrumental music of the Hungarian folk revival.
- 11 For several years in the 2000s, the Wikipedia page on Deep Forest reported that some proceeds from *Boheme* were donated to the György Martin Foundation. As with Deep Forest’s first eponymous album, the end result of such donation is vague (see Zemp 1996). The György Martin Foundation’s stated purpose is to support research on Hungarian and European traditional dance, but its awards of the 2000s were almost exclusively in support of Hungarian folk culture and not Romani folk culture.
- 12 Katalin Kovalcsik, personal communication with the author, Budapest, November 2007 and May 2012.

- 13 Where Hungarians see Bartók's activities as signal statements of inclusion, some neighbors see the dominance of the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy (1867–1917), in which the Hungarian half of the Monarchy tried to assimilate the numerous Slavic, German, Romanian, Jewish and Romani minorities living in its territory.
- 14 The verses here are *dudautánzás*, a set of syllables imitating the bagpipe.
- 15 Timothy Taylor, comparing *Boheme* with the other 1996 Grammy nominees from Africa and elsewhere in the global south, saw *Boheme*'s win as a privileging of Western music (1997: 12).
- 16 Károly Cserepes, interview with the author (MP3 recording), Budapest, 16 May 2006.
- 17 Anti-Roma and anti-Semitic lyrics of the “national rock” genre resound casually in everyday family activities as well as at more provocative events (see Feischmidt and Pulay 2014).
- 18 In 2014, the Romani singer Mónika “Mitsou” Juhász alleged that Beyoncé's producers had sampled her voice for “Drunk in Love” (NYSCEF index no. 162333/2014, 22 December 2014). In 2010, Christina Aguilera's production team sampled the pop singer Kati Kovács for “Wooohoo”, cleared the copyright with the original record company Hungaroton, and did not get objections from Kovács or the songwriter (see Békés and Mezei 2010).
- 19 Carol Silverman discusses Balkan Romani music in West European clubs. She argues that despite an ideology of freely celebrating culture, DJs and impresarios exploit the Romani musicians (2013: 280–6).

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