

Charles University in Prague  
Faculty of Humanities  
Department of General Anthropology



Master thesis

TRANSGENERATIONAL  
TRANSMISSION OF ROMANI  
MUSICAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS  
IN KLENOVEC AND KOKAVA

Author: Bc. Petr Nuska

Supervisor: doc. PhDr. Zuzana Jurková, Ph.D.

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## **Prohlášení**

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*V Praze dne 24. června 2015*

**Petr Nuska**

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1	Introduction .....	5
2	Positioning of the research .....	9
3	Biological Point of View : Why They Cannot Have “It” in Their Blood?.....	12
3.1	Nature of the Musical Talent – a Brief Overview of the Discussion on <i>Naturality</i> of Musical Talent in the Social Sciences.....	14
3.2	DMGT – Gagné’s Model of Talent Development as a Conciliation.....	17
3.3	Musical Talent from the Point of View of Genetics.....	22
3.4	Positioning within EMDT Framework and Other Components of Romani Musical Aptitude .	26
3.5	Chapter Summary .....	32
4	Differences between Institutionalised Musical Education and Romani Traditional Methods of Musical Learning and Teaching .....	33
4.1	Music Education in the Czech and Slovak Republic.....	35
4.2	Concept Matters.....	37
4.3	Schooling vs. Education (A.P. Merriam) .....	39
4.4	Analytical vs. Holistic Approach (P. Van den Bos).....	40
4.5	Participatory Performance as a Learning/Teaching Medium (T. Turino).....	44
4.6	Characteristic Traits of Musical Education in the Czech and Slovak Republic.....	48
4.7	Chapter Summary .....	50
5	Results of My Research : Specifics of Romani Ways of Musical Learning and Teaching.....	51
5.1	Methodology.....	51
5.2	Romani-Musicians Communities in Klenovec and Kokava .....	53
5.3	Musicking as Business .....	55
5.4	Involvement of Family Environment .....	57
5.5	Lacking of Formality .....	62
5.6	Informal Music Sessions as an Educative Medium for Cooperative Learning .....	64
5.7	Different Kinds of Competition – a Fight with No Rules .....	67
5.8	Omitting Curriculums and “Toil with Pleasure” .....	69
5.9	Listening Instead of Notes and Key Mobility as a Result.....	71
5.10	Creativity instead of Accuracy and the Art of Improvisation as a Result.....	75

5.11	Flexibility and Adaptability.....	77
5.12	Male Dominance in Instrumental Music .....	78
5.13	Chapter Summary .....	80
6	Discussion : Tradition on the Verge of Change .....	82
7	Conclusion : Social Importance of the Research.....	89
8	REFERENCE .....	95
9	Appendix .....	104
9.1	Agreement of the Faculty with Writing the Thesis in English.....	104
9.2	My participants – details .....	105
10	Summaries .....	109
10.1	Summary in English .....	109
10.2	Abstrakt v českém jazyce .....	110

## 1 Introduction

*What is the difference between the interpretation of music by Romani and Non-Romani musicians? There is a great one. Non-Romani musician drill a song by notes while we [Roma] can feel something in our hearts, which is impossible to describe.*

An interview with Anna Šárköziová, a Romani musician  
(Horváthová 1997)

Romani<sup>1</sup> music is a mystery not only for general public but also for many scholars. Despite all commonly shared stereotypes depicting Roma as a “problematic minority,” a number of people in the Czech and Slovak Republic cannot imagine better choice for a wedding band than a Romani ensemble. Some people claim they can offer something different that non-Romani bands cannot – a different kind of performance, a different kind of musical experience and a different kind of feeling. This difference is noted in the quotation above as “*something in their hearts, which is impossible to describe.*” People witnessing a performance of Czech or Slovak<sup>2</sup> Romani musicians often pose this question: *How could they possibly be so good?* Or more exactly: *How could they be such excellent musicians without any musical education?*

There is a universal answer to this question: “*Oni to majú v krvi.*” which literally means “*They have it in their blood*” and could be translated as “*It must be innate.*” It

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<sup>1</sup> There is a great on-going debate amidst scholars (including anthropologist, sociologists, historians, romists and others) what the Roma minority be called – whether Gypsies (in Czech *Cikáni*, in Slovak *Cigáni*) or Roma (*Romové/Rómovia*) (cf. Jakoubek 2008). Thus, there has become a tradition that every single scholar who writing on issues related to Roma/Gypsy must begin each piece of work with a clear statement of how s/he decided to call them Roma/Gypsy and why. I decided not to break the tradition. Throughout my thesis, I will be using English word *Roma* for referring to people from my field, word *Rom* as the singular and word *Romani* as the adjective. It was chosen for consistency within this thesis and for showing respect to the ethnicum which refers about themselves as *Roma*. It should also be noted that phrases *Romani music*, or *Romani ways of musical learning and teaching* which will often be used throughout the thesis refer just to music (and its way of transmitting) from the examined field, i.e. Klenovec and Kokava in Slovakia. There is no ambition to describe Romani music/Romani musical education as whole. Nevertheless, I am aware of the fact that my findings could have some parallels elsewhere among European Roma.

<sup>2</sup> Despite of the fact that I will be referring separately about Czech and Slovak Roma, the cultural roots of this ethnicum are basically identical. The major population of Roma in the Czech Republic consists of Slovak Roma who travelled and settled there (in several migration waves) after the Second World War. The vast majority of Czech prewar Roma was wiped out during the war. (cf. Pečínka 2004).

goes without saying that this universal and dogmatic answer is potentially dangerous in a political sense as the similar explanations arise in discussions about their tendency towards non-conformity and criminality, thus contributing to a biological-deterministic view on Roma and racial discrimination.

When I was in Klenovec for the first time, I was doing an ethological research concerning issues miles away from music. I had no intention of doing research neither in anthropology of music nor in ethnomusicology. However, when I saw Romani musicians from Klenovec I was impressed, not as a researcher but simply as a human being. And I posed the very same questions – *How could they be so good without any musical education? Could they have it, after all, in their blood?* It took me a while to recall that I was an anthropologist. I was not supposed to be impressed and replying to questions in the same manner that everyone did. I was supposed to ask different questions, or, at least, in a different way. And so my preliminary research had begun.

Thanks to the Department of General Anthropology at Charles University in Prague, I have got background both in human ethology and in social cultural anthropology. Therefore, the explanation about their musical excellence determined exclusively by their genes had soon become unacceptable. And so I started considering different questions: what if there is something more that we tend to disregard whenever we consider their “great musical excellence?”<sup>3</sup> What if their musicality is also shaped by *something*, which does not stem from the biological nature? Should not we consider their *cultural environment* (which undoubtedly forms content of their music, the way how it is produced and their overall musical approach) as an important aspect of their musicality? To what extent does *cultural transmission* of their musical skills from one generation to another play a role? And, even more

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<sup>3</sup> The term *musical excellence* will often be used in this thesis as an emic term expressing level of musical aptitude from the point of view of institutionalised system of musical education. Although it should be considered rather as an issue for aestheticians and art theorists, there is an important fact that should be kept in mind: we can conceptualise an image of “an excellent musician” in the context of Western classical music (or other particular contexts) but from the anthropological point of view there is no such thing as “universally shared model of musical excellence.” Simply put, *music is not athletic*. It is perfectly possible to say who is the best in sprint but absolutely impossible to say who is the best in music. Something that is regarded as a difficult and advanced musical skill might be regarded as a very simple skill for someone else and vice versa. This fact was metaphorically expressed by Rice (2003:163) when he stated that “*music is X*.” Musical excellence has many aspects and, therefore, we cannot say that Romani musical excellence is generally greater than “ours” (as the general public often says). The musical excellence of Roma is neither greater nor smaller; it is *different*. And so the construction of this excellence is bound to be different. That is an important premise for next thoughts. This premise will be deeply discussed in the chapter 4.2 *Concept Matters*.

precisely, how are their *methods of musical learning and teaching* involved in the construction of their musical excellence? Under the weight of these questions, I started searching for studies dealing with Romani traditional ways of acquiring musical skills.

To my surprise, there has been very little scholarly interest in this issue. There were a few pieces of work discussing Romani minority with the music-educational system of majority and it had been noted that the Romani traditional system of musical learning and teaching, indeed, differs from the formal educational system that is being used both in the Czech and Slovak Republic.<sup>4</sup> However, in the territory of former Czechoslovakia, there had not been written a single study which would analyse the *traditional*<sup>5</sup> educational system of Roma. I decided to fill this gap by doing an intensive ethnographic research – a case study in the area when I felt in love with Romani ways of playing music – in Klenovec and Kokava.

The aim of my MA research was to examine traditional transgenerational transfer of musical skills (i.e. methods of musical teaching and learning) of professional Romani musicians in the region Klenovec-Kokava (Central Slovakia). As a result of my preliminary field research and preview of theoretical literature (which will be discussed later on), I defined my research questions for my master thesis as follows:

- 1) Is there such a thing as natural heritability of musical excellence (or musical talent) within an ethnic group such as Czech and Slovak Roma?
- 2) How could traditional methods of transgenerational transmission of musical skills among Romani musicians in Klenovec and Kokava be described?
- 3) How do these methods differ from the formal system of musical education in the Czech and Slovak Republic?

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<sup>4</sup> In particular, studies by Gelbart (2010) and Ševčíková (2002, 2003, 2005, 2008). These contributions will be deeply discussed in the chapter 2 *Positioning of the Research*.

<sup>5</sup> I use this term to refer to methods of Romani music-skills transmission that are not tied with formalised system of majority, i.e. an institutionalised system of music education in the Czech and Slovak Republic. (cf. Chapter 4 *Differences between Institutionalised Musical Education and Romani Traditional Methods of Musical Learning and Teaching*). I am aware of the fact that what is “traditional” for Romani musical culture has always been a very questionable matter as their repertoire always reflects the musical taste of majority. Cf. Chapter 5.3 *Musicking as Business*, and 6 *Discussion : Tradition on the Verge of Change*.



- 4) Could the specific musical skills of Romani musicians (art of improvisation, creativity, key mobility etc.) be the result of their specific methods of teaching and learning? And if so, what are the particular inputs for emergence of these skills?
- 5) Is an explanation of their musical excellence based on the specific musical teaching and learning more reasonable than an explanation based on a biological-deterministic point of view?

To answer these questions,

- A) I researched the issue of heritability of musical talent by doing a meta-study reflecting the discussion of *naturality* of musical aptitude in both social and biological science (Chapter 3).
- B) I considered current points of view and proposed an alternative explanation for the postulated musical excellence of Roma based upon *differences* in their system of musical education from the system of majority (Chapter 4).
- C) I did ethnographic research examining musical learning/teaching methods of Romani musicians from Klenovec and Kokava to determine if my hypothesis was correct (Chapter 5).

## 2 Positioning of the research

Although the level of knowledge about music of Roma in former Czechoslovakia – compared with, for instance, the Spanish flamenco, or the music of Hungarian and Balkan – is relatively little (cf. Jurková 2003a), there are scholars who have systematically studied their music from both the ethnomusicological and anthropological points of view (ibid, pp. 96–99). However, research considering transgenerational transfer of musical skills through traditional means of Romani musical teaching and learning has not been done.<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, there are several studies that touch upon this issue from the music-pedagogical point of view implying that differences between Romani traditional ways of acquiring musical skills and the formal musical education do exist and confirming that inborn musicality of the Roma is, indeed, broadly considered as a positive cultural stereotype. I will mention two most important names in this field: Veronika Ševčíková and Petra Gelbart.

In her PhD thesis (2003) Ševčíková presented results of her own research and experiments performed during music lessons with mixed classes (i.e. Romani and non-Romani children) in selected elementary and special<sup>7</sup> schools. The results of her research was a synthesis of Romani-music specifics (both from the sociocultural and musicological point of view) and a model of new methodology of musical education

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<sup>6</sup> Though there are several contributions dealing with traditional transgenerational transfer of musical skills from elsewhere, e.g. Hungary (cf. Kertesz-Wilkinson 2000).

<sup>7</sup> Special schools [in Czech “*Speciální školy*” and “*Špeciálne školy*” in Slovak], broadly known and commonly incorrectly called “*Zvláštní/Zvláštné*” (this term could be also translated as *weird*, *strange* or *peculiar*), are intended for pupils with some special needs – typically for pupils with visual or hearing impairment, physical or mental disability etc. Officially, special schools intended for Romani pupils do not exist. However, at some parts of both Slovak and the Czech Republic, a *special school* is merely an equivalent for a *school for Romani pupils*. A commonly held opinion considers Romani children as those having troubles with concentration, being fierce, hyperactive and of a different *temperament* (cf. Gelbart 2010:54–103). That is why they are often being put into special schools for pupils with mental disability without a proper research about their real “disability.” For instance, in Klenovec, there are two elementary schools – the “normal” one and the special one. In 2013 when I was doing my preliminary research, the special school was full of Romani pupils (by whose brightness I was honestly surprised) and one blond boy with special needs from Kokava. Their teacher explained to me: “*But he’s normally mentally disabled. He’s not a Roma.*” This example from my field experience unveiled a prejudice in the system of Czech and Slovak special education where Roma are regarded as *abnormally mentally disabled* (as was insinuated by the teacher’s comment). There are on-going discussions on malfunctionality of special educational system that were amplified by statement of the Czech president Miloš Zeman who questioned the principle of pupils’ inclusion in 2015 (see Ryšavý 2015). In the context of Romani minority, these discussions arose when Czech TV released controversial docusoap series “*Třída 8.A.*” [The 8.A class] (see e.g. Kostlán, 2014). For more information about Czech and Slovak special education, see *Speciální školství v Česku 2012* and *Špeciálne školy n.d.*

for the Romani minority. This model has been subsequently applied in innovative educational projects run by the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MŠMT) (such as *Výchova a vzdělávání dětí romské minority hudbou – doprovodný kurz Didaktiky hudební výchovy*“ [Education of Roma Minority Using Music – Accompanying Course of Music Didactics] or *Specializovaná profesní a osobnostní příprava budoucích učitelů hudební výchovy směrem k romipen* [Specialised Professional and Personal Preparation of Future Music Teachers Towards *Romipen*<sup>8</sup>].

The important point worth emphasising is that Ševčíková is not only trying to adapt music-didactics for Romani children but also to use music as a tool for making the Roma *general* education easier both for teachers and Roma. Her research brings up several important findings. Most importantly, she came to the conclusion (based upon her own collected data) that musical skills and abilities of Romani children were not at all higher than those of their non-Romani peers (Ševčíková 2003:118–145).

Despite this conclusion, which seems to discredit the Roma musical gene theory, Ševčíková’s work was sharply criticised by Gelbart (2010:180–183) for enforcing stereotypes about Romani children as those whose ways of learning music significantly (and naturally) differ from non-Romani children. Giving example, Ševčíková wrote about “*universally innate rhythmic feeling of Roma*” (2003:141), exceptional “*musical memory*” (ibid:145) or “*Romani mentality*” which results in a lack of “*long-term motivation of Romani children in the technical preparation for playing an instrument*” (ibid:143). Gelbart (2010:183) concludes, that “[t]his expert publication, legitimized by the academic review process, may very well serve to confirm some teachers’ ideas about the Romani “*specificities*” of reliance on emotions and other music-related indicators that Roma and other minorities are “*more body*” whereas Whites are “*more mind.*” So even though Ševčíková made an important contribution to contest the Roma-musical gene, we should treat her findings - especially the interpretation of these findings, with caution.

Ševčíková continues working on issues related to musical education of Roma and she published number of scholarly as well as popular contributions (see e.g. 2002, 2005, 2008). She is an assistant professor at University of Ostrava.

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<sup>8</sup> *Romipen* is a term coming from Romani language and could be translated as *Romaness*. It is a set of appreciated values that should be respected by all Roma. See Oláh, 2014.

Petra Gelbart also dealt with musical education in the context of Romani minority in her PhD thesis (2010). As her thesis was defended at Harvard University (USA), this piece of work is relatively unknown to Czech and Slovak readership, which is unfortunate as it is, without a doubt, the most coherent and the most thorough contribution to the question at hand.

Gelbart exposes the myth of Romani *temperament* (which is the key for understanding where the myth about inborn musical power comes from) by analysing textbooks, didactic materials, scholarly works, etc., as well as drawing from her own experience of living in the Czech Republic and her “*conflicting cultural identities*” as a Rom. She deconstructs these myths on the basis of her own research data accumulated through interviews with educators, her own teaching experience, and observations of participants in the selected classes in the Czech Republic. She concluded that the belief in the natural Romani temperament (deeply connected with the one about inborn musical talent) is a myth widely held by many educators which is rooted in racist views of the Roma (p. 281). To correct this great failing of the educational system stemming from racial prejudice, she suggests that a new music-education curriculum should be constructed and provides ideas on how music should be taught for Romani minority as well as for the White majority (pp. 280–309).

Petra Gelbart acts as a pro-Roma activist on a number of weblogs. Unfortunately, her work remains unknown and so while Ševčíková’s work (despite serious generalisations leading to enforcing stereotypes I have mentioned above) is being used for projects run by Czech government and, therefor, having a real impact on curriculums-construction and overall methodological approach to Romani pupils, Gelbart’s thorough contribution remains unrecognised. I would definitely recommend to the author to publish her work in Czech to acquaint Czech readership with her findings.

### 3 Biological Point of View : Why They Cannot Have “It” in Their Blood?

*As members of ethnic groups, we are not the same. It is obvious from physical point of view. But we are not aware of this when it comes to mental differences [...] Roma are a temperament, emotional nation with a strong sense of family and social life [...] They have strong emotions and they express them emphatically.*

(extracted from the article published in reputable magazine Respekt in 2006, later republished on several websites dealing with substitute foster care)

(Vrtbovská 2006)

“They could have it in their blood! Why couldn’t they? After all, many things are in their blood. Their darker skin, their inborn musical and dancing talent and their irreparable nature of criminals and parasitic way of life.” Despite of the fact that these words could be considered as a quotation from the beginning of 19th century, i.e. the century of eugenics and social Darwinism, this is actually commonly held opinion of many people living in the Czech or Slovak Republic.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Concerning this sad statement, I would refer to a short documentary *Za Adolfa by žádní margoši neměli žádný práva* [If Adolf Hitler Lived There Would Be No Rights for Gypsies] filmed by young filmmakers Apolena Rychlíková and Martina Malinová (see Rychlíková and Malinová 2014). This 27-minutes-long film is formed on an observation of a Romani family where mother gave birth to the first Czech quintuplets. The observation of the care about little Romani toddlers is accompanied by reading of commentaries that showed up in online discussions when Czech news server brought up the information about their birth. It is obvious that these just-born children will be growing up in a country that will consider them as parasites, criminals, unemployed and more, no matter what they will really do. And even though the worst commentaries were (or would have been) deleted by editorial staff, apart from the usual nicknames (such as “brownies, five little monkeys, the untouchable five, a prosperous farm, potential azybones, little rats, black pigs, freeloaders, brats” etc.) there are many commentaries calling for violence, some of them referring to the *Final Solution to the Romani Question*. Sadly, all these commentaries were posted under real names and it cannot be interpreted just as opinion of few extremists but (considering the quantity of the commentaries) rather as a broadly shared public opinion. To use a note of an outsider, a student of psychology blogging under name Gwyneth, who was staying in the Czech Republic for some time, noted about Czechs: *Don’t bring up Roma (“gypsies”) unless you want to hear a barrage of thinly disguised ugly, racist sentiments (in 80% of cases) [...]* and later she added: *[t]his comment seems to be causing the most debate, so let me make it clear that this statement does not say “All Czech people are racist” – it says that the comments can be racist [...]* *The reason I say it is because I’ve ended up having to listen to all the terrible things that these ‘gypsies’ do from students (who might not have never met one) a few times.* (Gwyneth 2012). This opinion of an outside observer is unfortunately confirmed also by public opinion researches examining what Czechs say about themselves (see e.g. Machalová 1997).

Though this thesis is a piece of work written by a social-cultural anthropologist and most of the argumentation hinge on ethnographic data collected during my fieldwork, I will research general question of *naturality* of music talent in order to cut the full-grown myth about “*Romani gene for music*” off at the roots.

Arguing that their musical excellence is shaped by specific methods of acquiring musical skills (as will be argued later on throughout the thesis) does not automatically deny the statement about “*something in their blood.*” Imagine, for instance, a starting line. A critic of my thesis could say that, surely, their musical excellence might be formed by their specific learning and teaching methods later in their lives, but what if their position on the starting line differs from the position of the rest of musicians? What if their journey to the musical excellence starts sooner? And what if, after all, it lies on “something in their blood,” i.e. innate basis?

In this chapter, I will discuss the issue of natural basis of musical talent. The crucial question is whether we can consider a natural heritability of musical talent and, if so, whether this heritability could be shared within an ethnic group, such as Czech and Slovak Roma. To answer these questions, I will make a brief overview to discussion about different approaches to musical talent in the history of the social sciences (naturalists vs. environmentalists), introduce Gagné’s models DMGT, DMNA and EMDT for talent development, take into discussion very recent hints concerning genetic basis of musical talent and then I will bring arguments against the simplifying statement that musical talent can be inherited. At the end of this chapter, I will also make an important positioning of my own research within Gagné’s EMDT framework to make clear that ways of musical learning and teaching are probably not the only and *exclusive* inputs leading to the emergence of “Romani musical excellence” (and hence the emergence of myths about their inborn musical talent) but they are just a part of very complex and dynamic process of talent development. I will suggest what other parts might play roles in the talent development of Romani musicians.

### 3.1 Nature of the Musical Talent – a Brief Overview of the Discussion on *Naturality* of Musical Talent in the Social Sciences

With the beginning of anthropology, the ethnographers were bringing testimonies about music production from the all corners of the world. It was soon regarded as one of the *cultural universals* (e.g. Wissler 1923 in Brown 1991) and it was comparatively studied by both ethnomusicologists and musical anthropologists. After years of research, it was shown that although music vary from culture to culture, there are also some globally shared traits such as singing by using words, association with dance (Nettl 1983:36–44), use of octave-based scale systems with 5–7 pitches per octave or preference for consonance over dissonance (see e.g. Hauser and McDermott 2003). And so the hypothesis about natural origin of music has appeared. Later on, this hypothesis was found influential – it was written a number of specialised monographs, special issues of prestige journals or extensive anthologies (e.g. Mithen 2006, Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences 2001, Wallin et al. 1999) and it has finally given rise to highly specialised stream of science such as *evolutionary musicology*, *neuromusicology* or *comparative musicology*, sometimes called altogether as *biomusicology* (cf. Arom 1999).

With the hypothesis about natural origin of music, discussion about origin of musical talent emerged. The question was: could musical talent be transmitted from one generation to another in a biological way?

Probably the first attempt to answer this question can be traced back to Francis Galton’s (in-)famous study (1869) where he analysed musicianship within 14 famous musicians’ family and where he labelled the fact that musical talent is biologically inherited as *notorious and undeniable* (p. 237).<sup>10</sup> Since then, we can speak about the battle between scientists supporting the thesis about the inheritance of the musical talent on the one side (we can call them “naturalists” for the purpose of this chapter though they would not probably like it) and scientists which defend the view that all signs of talent must appeared as a consequence of learning via shared and unshared

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<sup>10</sup> Considering the seriousness of the Galton’s conclusion, the Galton’s methodology is rather humorous. He regarded the inheritance of musical talent as fundamental though just 22% of scrutinised musicians had “eminent” kinsmen and almost 75% of these 22% were members of the legendary Bach’s family.

environment on the other (we can call them “environmentalists”). It should be added that tendencies towards one stream or another has always been highly influenced by paradigm shifts and development of political situation, as will be shown soon.

Galton’s point of view was warmly accepted and deeply scrutinised at the beginning of 20th century. Seashore (1920) distinguished the apparent musical talent into two parts – musical abilities and musical capacities where *[t]he term capacity is used [...] to denote inborn power, whereas the term ability is used to denote acquired skill in the use of a given capacity* (pp. 587). It was the expression “inborn power” which became later the apple of discord. Seashore, influenced by contemporary worldview, believed that some Mendelian rules for transmitting this power must exist. We could guess that Seashore<sup>11</sup> thought that it was just a matter of time to discover *the gene* which is responsible for existence of musical talent.

However, the statement that musical (as well as any other) abilities are inborn was soon mentioned in a dangerous context – context of eugenics. Mjoen, for example, argued that high heritability of the musical aptitude in the Bach’s family was caused simply by the fact that Johann Sebastian Bach married his own cousin and, therefore, their children obtained the genes from the same “*stock*” of geniality (1926:243–244). It is obvious that meaning of these conclusions was politically extremely dangerous. In the second world war, the infamous case Nazis’ theory of Aryan master race (which was explicitly built upon the ideas of eugenics) led to extermination of 11 million innocent people, not-excluding Roma.<sup>12</sup>

Accordingly, after the war, there was a great demand for theories which would contend against the ideas of eugenics and, therefore, against the idea of inborn nature of human. It did not take a long time and the theories based on the idea of naturality were massively revised, including these about the naturality of musical talent. Revesz (1954), one of the early critics, was reconsidering the data based on pedigree of the famous musicians’ family, created by early eugenic. He noted that these kind of

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<sup>11</sup> Despite very radical point of view, Seashore’s name appears in researching the question of musical talent until now. His test of musical aptitude (so called *Seashore test of musical ability*, originally proposed in 1919) is used up to date not only for the educational purposes, but also for purposes of scientific research (e.g. Pulli et al. 2008, Oikkonen et al. 2014 – both mentioned later). See Seashore 1919 and 1960 for more details.

<sup>12</sup> There is an often-used Romani word *Porajmos* (*Porrajmos*, *Pharrajimos*) referring to Romani Holocaust during the WWII. The exact number of victims remains unknown until today but according to some scholars it could be up to 1,500,000 Roma (Hancock 2005).



analysis might be highly misleading since the musicians born into (e.g.) Bach's family were not chosen for career of musicians just because of "*inborn power of natural talent*" but also "[...] *family tradition, musical environment, the guild spirit, and, last but not least, the prestige of great Johann Sebastian Bach all played a part in this choice.*" (1954:187). He took into account the *environment* as an important part of development of musical talent. Revesz was soon followed by others. Theories built upon environmental point of view were appreciated for being far from the ideas of eugenics. They were "politically correct." No matter whether they were right or wrong.

Nevertheless, even the politically pure environmental paradigm later reached its absurd point in the same way as eugenics in the first half of the 20th century. As a symbolic height of this absurdity, we can mention Tooby and Cosmides' (1992) broadly criticised framework called *Standard Social Science Model (SSSM)* which integrated the idea of "blank slate" as the fundamental basis for all social sciences. In the particular field of researching musical talent, we can give an example of Sloboda and Howe's case study of inheritance of musical talent among pupils of a music school (1991) in which the data was, as Gagné (1999) shown, particularly misinterpreted to fit into the environmental paradigm. Thus, even environmental paradigm did not offer a sufficient explanation for existence of musical talent.

So how to sum this "a-century-long battle without winner" up? Would there be a winner at any point? Is one side supposed to defeat the other? Lets thing with an example in mind. See for instance the video with 4-years-old boy playing *Flood Time* written by Eric Thiman who, thanks to his mature musical performance despite of his age, has become a very popular YouTube star (4 Year Old Boy Plays Piano Better Than Any Master 2012).<sup>13</sup> I dare say that even the most radical environmentalist would not say that every single child in the world would reach the same level as this little pianist if they have the same environmental condition. And, on the other hand, even the most radical naturalist would not claim that he would reach the same level if he was upbringing by wolves as in the famous example of Amala and Kamala or (not to give such an absurd example) simply by people who do not own a piano). There is neither "pure naturalistic" nor "pure environmentalist" solution of the issue.

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<sup>13</sup> Since August 2012 up to date (i.e. April 2015) it has got more than 10,000,000 views.

Simply put, this battle is not supposed to have a winner. Neither the man with his concept, who will be introduced in the next section, is the winner (though his name could be freely translated so). We could see him rather as a peacemaker. Gagné managed to reconcile very recent discoveries in the field of natural sciences and not to omit the environment as an important part of talent development. I decided to present his theory in the next section; I will shortly introduce his concepts DMGT, DMNA and EMDT.

### **3.2 DMGT – Gagné’s Model of Talent Development as a Conciliation**

Francoys Gagné has been dealing with nature of talent<sup>14</sup> all his academic life and he is continuing despite of his retirement. His theory can be summed up in the theoretical framework which he calls *Differentiating Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT)*. It was first introduced in 1985 and it was updated several times. The last “update” released in 2013 which is the version I am working with and which will be shortly introduced below.

Gagné built the DMGT model upon the distinction between giftedness and talent (see the fig. 1). Gifts [G] (natural abilities) are encouraged (or inhibited) by two types of catalysts (environmental [E] and intrapersonal [I]) and through the developmental process [D] are finally transformed into immanent talent [T].

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<sup>14</sup> His model, which is introduced below, concerns the talent development in general, not particularly the musical one. However, he himself touched the question of musical talent in specific pieces of his academic work. See e.g. Gagné 1999.

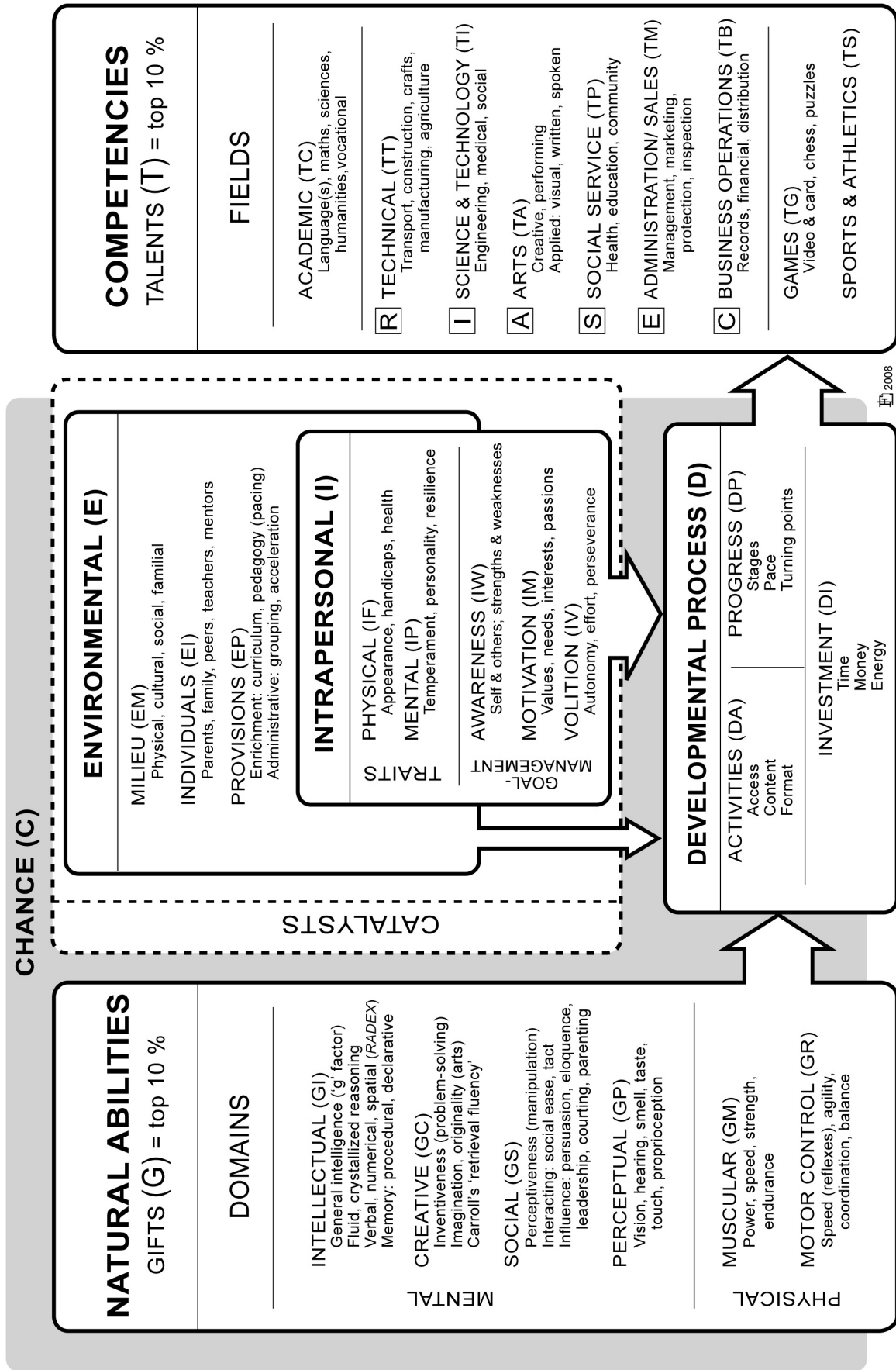


Fig. 1 – DMGT 2.0 (Gagné 2012)

The key point is that natural abilities are *not innate*. Gagné considers them as developing “*over the whole course of a person's life, but probably more during a person's early years*” (2012:2). He mentioned, nevertheless, (e.g. 2012:5) that natural abilities lay on the *biological underpinning*.

This model seems to be complex because it has been created for almost 30 years and it has been dealing with all kinds of talent, taking into account its all thinkable components. However, the basic idea is really simple: natural abilities are inhibited/exhibited by environmental and intrapersonal catalysts and, through this developmental process, observable talent can emerge.

Two critical notes may occur. Firstly, one could argue that Gagné is just playing with words and trying to use another terms for something that has been already discussed. Baer and Kaufman 2004, for example, suggest similarities with psychological terms aptitude (*natural abilities*) and achievement (*talent*) that are commonly used in contemporary science. Gagné is, however, aware of this limitation – he knows that his model is based on a *construct* which “*will stand – or fall – on the validity of that basic distinction, especially on the acceptance of the giftedness part of this crucial duo of constructs*” (2013:6).<sup>15</sup>

The second critic is about the mention of “*biological underpinning*.” If we reconsider again the Seashore's distinction discussed in the previous section (capacity vs. ability), one could say that Gagné did not invent anything new. He has been working for 30 years on a model which is dealing just with (in Seashore's words) acquiring of *abilities* and the question of *capacity* was completely unanswered or, to be precise, neglected by a mention about a “*biological underpinning*.” Nevertheless, Gagné in his last update of the DMGT (2013) developed also these “biological underpinnings” which were kept in dark in the previous versions of DMGT.

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<sup>15</sup> To play with words even more, cognitive science often refers to terms *primary capacities* and *secondary skills*. Cf.: “*According to the model of auditory theory, traits that we usually understand as musical abilities are secondary skills, whereas primary capacities are a prerequisite for the development of these skills [...] The secondary musical skills are culture-dependent and modified by the environment, and the primary capacities should reflect innate musical aptitude.*” (Oikkonen et al. 2014). I am not about to give an overview of how could we call things in different methodological backgrounds but I would like to point out that “playing with words” is an essential part of science and, therefore, very bad target for any criticism.

Before the last update, Gagné’s model did not contain the process of development of natural abilities. It was the ground level of the model. Gagné rationalised this limitation as follows: “DMGT represents a theory of talent development limited to the ‘ground level’ of directly observable behaviour.” (2012:5). In 2013, however, he took into account recent findings in a number of field and on their basis he created the DMNA model (*Developmental Model for Natural Abilities*) as you can see on the figure 2. This sub-model is dealing just with the part which was marked as “natural abilities” in the previous version of framework. By connecting both models together, the new *Expanded Model of Talent Development* (EMTD) has been born (figure 3).

Gagné’s suggested three levels of biological basement – *exophenotypes* (i.e. anatomical; e.g. such as size of brain), *endophenotypes* (i.e. traits that are not visible but that are measurable; e.g. neurological process) and, finally, the *genetic foundations*.

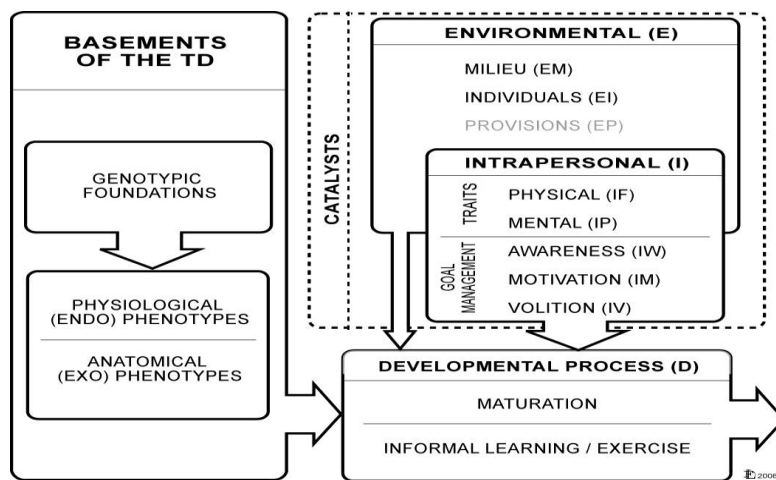


Fig. 2 – DMNA (Gagné 2013)

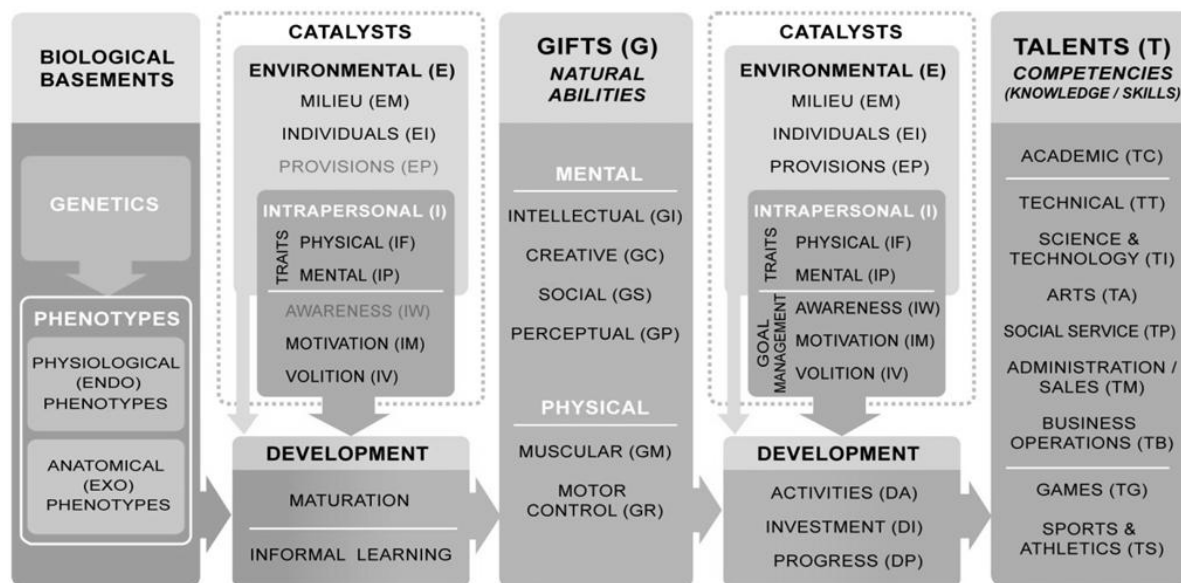


Fig. 3 – EMTD (Gagné 2013)

Obviously, this three-levels model is “brand new” and critical commentaries have yet to come. But it carefully shows the all dynamic of the process of talent development and it points out that all parts of the process are tightly linked together. Not just the natural side of human, not just the environment, but a complex process consisted of both.

Nevertheless, note the very basis of the scheme: named as *genetic foundations*. It might seem know that even last version Gagné’s complex theory lies on the genetic basis and, therefore, Gagné has just been playing with words all the 30 years (*natural abilities* renamed to *biological underpinning* and later relabelled as *genetic foundations*) without any explanation of involvement of this part. But at this point, Gagné (2013) put an effort to make it clear.

To explain it metaphorically, one could cynically note that even Shakespeare’s work is based on genes as there would not be any Shakespeare’s hand which could physically hold a quill without a genetic basis. It is impossible (and it would never be) to deny the role of the genes. Genes are like building material responsible for anything we can consider and even for our own consideration. Our question should not be: “*Do genes play a role in emergence of (musical) talent.*” Obviously, they do. They must do. Question should be rather put as: “*To what extent do genes play role in emergence of (musical) talent?*”

To answer *this* question, I will discuss the most recent findings of genetics concerning musical talent.

### **3.3 Musical Talent from the Point of View of Genetics**

At the beginning of 21st century, there were several notable hints concerning the inheritance of musical abilities we have to mention. Baharloo et al. (2000) showed that absolute pitch<sup>16</sup> presumably has a genetic component (though conditioned by early music training). Similarly, Peretz et al. (2007) found a genetic component for the very opposite – tone deafness (*amusia*).<sup>17</sup> These findings, however, concern rather two extremes – a very exceptional advanced musical trait on the one side and a quite rare disorder on the other. So it cannot be considered as a great evidence for impact of genes on emergence of general musical talent. Two following studies, however, were presented as great breakthroughs in the debates about inheritance of musical talent.<sup>18</sup>

In 2008, Pulli et al. published results of research during which they found gene loci correlating with results of tests of musical aptitude. They were researching 234 participants from 15 Finnish multigenerational families. Each of the participants was subjected to two musical tests – Karma Music Test and Seashore Pitch and Time Discrimination Subtest. After that, DNA samples of a part of participants were analysed. It was found a strong statistical linkage of musical aptitude to two particular chromosomes and it was found that there might be a contribution of several genes variants. It was also suggested that this musical genetic component might be an evidence of common origin of music and language brain faculties.

In 2014, another team of Finnish geneticist published a more thorough study which included 767 individuals in 76 pedigrees. This study discovered other genetic components; moreover, some of them linked to genes related to inner ear development and neurocognitive functions.

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<sup>16</sup> Ability to identify pitch tones without any reference tone.

<sup>17</sup> Inability to distinguish pitch tones.

<sup>18</sup> I will present just two most recent and most significant studies. For more studies researching link between genetic components and musical aptitude, see keyword “*Musical aptitude*” in SNPedia (Musical Aptitude 2014).

Both articles mentioned above have been warmly accepted by intellectual news servers and weblogs and they have given rise to many articles titled like “*Nature Triumphs over “Nurture” Again: Musical Ability Genes Identified*”<sup>19</sup> following by futuristic claims, e.g. “[a]s studies like the current one become more commonplace, bolstering our knowledge of innate musical ability, it may become possible to sequence a baby’s genome and determine if he or she is predisposed to musical stardom.” (TNO Staff 2014).

From this point of view, it might seem that the battle between “naturalists” and “environmentalist” has finally come to an end. So was *the gene*, which has been searched for more than a century, finally discovered? Was Galton right after all? And, taking a step back and returning to particular question of Romani musicians, is it possible to inherit this gene (these genes respectively) within one ethnic group? Roma, as an ethnic group, in fact share some genes – it is (besides the linguistic evidence) the main indication of their Indian origin (Gresham et al. 2001). As a result, they share a number of Mendelian disorders. Why could not they share also some genes for musical talent? Is not the explanation about “something in their blood” the easiest and, after all, the rightest one?

Despite of everything that has been written so far, the answer is *no*. There cannot be *any* gene which could be considered as directly responsible for musical talent shared within one ethnic group such as Roma. I will bring three main arguments why not:

Firstly, musical talent is not the same case as Mendelian disorders, otherwise it would be described according to same principle as Mendel described inherited traits of his peas a century ago (and Galton would probably have a gold statue on the Trafalgar square). Music, if we hypothetically consider it just from the genetic point of view, is a complex (so called *quantitative*) trait which means that there cannot be found a single gene which is responsible for its existence – it is a result of interactions of two and more genes. These genes do not copy patterns of classical Mendelian inheritance. Analysing of these interactions is called QTLs mapping, i.e. searching for *quantitative trait loci* – specific regions of DNA which are linked with a specific

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<sup>19</sup> TNO Staff 2014.



quantitative trait. At the beginning of millennium when human genome was finally mapped out, it was believed that QTLs for many quantitative traits (such as intelligence, mental disorders or, for another instance, musical talent) would be quickly recognised by basic statistical methods that would measure correlations between particular QTLs and emergences of traits themselves. Nevertheless, the QTLs mapping has not been going as smoothly as expected, at least in the case of human genome.<sup>20</sup> Plomin, Kennedy and Craig in 2006 noted, that

*“[p]rogress towards identifying quantitative trait loci (QTLs) for complex traits [...] has been slower than expected. An important factor is that most QTL effects may be much smaller than expected—not just 1% effect sizes but perhaps effects as small as .1%. If so, this would mean that studies have been seriously underpowered to detect and to replicate QTL effects.”* (Plomin, Kennedy and Craig, 2006, p. 513).

This means that pure genetic contribution to emergence of some particular quantitative trait, i.e. trait where we have to consider interaction of several genes and their environment (such as musical aptitude) is up-to-date barely measurable. Even the latest study on musical aptitude mentioned a few lines above which caused a great upheaval with futuristic claims about measurement of “stardom predisposition,” concludes very modestly:

*“We acknowledge that musical aptitude is a complex behavioural trait and that our tests account for only a part of the phenotype. Environmental factors, such as the childhood musical environment, the example set by parents and siblings, and music education affect musical abilities.”* (Oikkonen et al. 2014).

Secondly, and accordingly, well-known premise “*cause by genes does not mean determine by genes*” should be kept in mind. Social sciences have invented the term *heritability* for expressing that phenotype is always given both by genotype and environment. For expressing extent of “genetic determination,” it is said whether heritability for a particular trait is rather low or rather high.<sup>21</sup> Importantly, we can

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<sup>20</sup> To be fair, I should add that QTLs mapping has got a great success in breeding of domestic animals.

<sup>21</sup> Giving examples, discrepancy in number of fingers among people is (in the most cases) caused by environment (accidents etc.). We say that heritability of discrepancy in number of human fingers is rather low. On the other hand, discrepancy in number of cats’ finger is caused rather by genetic disorders; we say that heritability of discrepancy in number of cats’ finger is rather high. See Heritability 2002 for more details.

consider high heritability for traits that are not at all determined by genes themselves. For instance, we could not find a gene which would cause tattoo of Maori. On the other hand, one could say that heritability of this particular trait is relatively high, simply because “born as Maori” almost automatically imply “tattooed as Maori.” This is an important point we have to remember while thinking of heritability of musical aptitude among Romani musicians. (Cf. Chapter 3.4 *Positioning within EMDT Framework and Other Components of Romani Musical Aptitude*)

Thirdly, and accordingly to both preceding arguments, measurement of human heritability of complex traits (such as musical talent) is very entangled as we are not able to separate exactly variability of genes from variability of environment. Development of these traits should be regarded as a *process* whose components (i.e. genes and environment) are totally inseparable one from another. This is very well described by Gagné’s model of EMDT.<sup>22</sup> The genes-environment distinction, which was considered for decades as the apple of discord, should be rather imagined as a vicious circle which is impossible to disconnect. To sum up, “*the heredity of genes cannot be studied in isolation, because environmental factors influence human existence from conception.*” (Panebianco-Warrens 2012:4).

After the decades of fierce discussion about the classical distinction genes vs. environment in terms of musical talent, the battle seems to lead to the draw. But not with a winner on any side. We know now there is nothing in the blood of Romani musicians. No one can say that Roma are born as musicians. *All Roma musicians have to become musicians.* That is the most important point of this chapter and an important springboard for ideas that will be presented later.

The best approach I found is the Gagné’s model of EMDT (2013) which was not invented just as a compromise but it depicts the true nature of dynamics of the talent development, including the musical one. That is why I put this framework into the very basis of my thoughts. In the next section, I will shortly position my own research

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<sup>22</sup> To give an example of this inseparability, note that Gagné considers the environmental factor even within his model DMNA (fig. 2) referring to Plomin’s (2003) idea of *nature of nurture*: “*Dozens of studies using diverse measures of the environment in addition to family environment such as life events and social support – and even television-viewing, accidents, and divorce – find consistent evidence for genetic influence*” (pp. 189–190).

within EMDT and I will propose alternative components that might play roles in Romani development of musical talent.

### **3.4 Positioning within EMDT Framework and Other Components of Romani Musical Aptitude**

The main argument for this thesis is that *methods of musical learning and teaching* play an undeniable and very important role in the construction of Romani musical excellence. In terms of EMDT, this can be identified as *developmental process* (D) which consists of *developmental activities* (DA) (depending on access, content and format of these activities) and *developmental progress* (influenced by stages, pace of the progress and important turning points). Both factors are stimulated by *developmental investment* (DI) (including time, money and energy being invested).<sup>23</sup>

However, it does not mean that the role of developmental process (i.e. methods of learning and teaching) is exclusive. I am aware of several other components that might be involved in the process of construction of musical aptitude in case of Romani musicians. Unfortunately, it is completely beyond the scope of this thesis to research every single component thoroughly and so the focus of this work remains in researching of methods of transgenerational transfer of musical skills. But I will shortly suggest several examples of other components that I found relevant during my research and that might contribute to construction of Romani musical aptitude.

At the level of *environmental catalysts* (E) (more particular at the level Gagné named as *milieu* [EM] which, among others, includes cultural and social milieus), I have encountered a strong ingrained *societal belief* of Roma in their natural musicality. The term *societal belief* in the context of anthropology of music was used by John Blacking while he was doing fieldwork among Venda people (South Africa) (cf. Hargreaves et al. 2012:94). He noticed that among Venda every single individual is supposed to be endowed by natural musical ability and every single one has to take

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. fig. 1.

part in communal dancing-singing sessions. What differs is just the extent of this endowment (someone may be endowed more than someone else). In Western society, only tiny fraction of pupils pursuing musical education reach the level in which they can call themselves “musicians.” Therefore, musical ability is considered to be rather rare, often based on innate power which can never be caught up if individual is not “the chosen one.” We can see the great difference which can take a part in construction of musical aptitude.

This societal belief among Czech Roma was, for instance, described by Gelbart during her research among Czech Romani pupils:

*Romani children, like many of their parents, are hardly immune to stereotypes and self-essentialization. When the rarely effusive teacher [...] praised a group of Romani boys for clapping correctly, one of them whizzed past her, chirping, “We have it in our blood, Ms. teacher!,” as if she need not have bothered being nice. Not surprisingly, the teacher did not disagree with him (Gelbart 2010:216).*

I have encountered the strength of this societal belief during my own fieldwork. All my informants have been well acquainted with popular saying about Roma as the chosen-ones. Some of them even mentioned that this saying left them in uncomfortable positions full of expectations. David Oláh, 13-years-old violin prodigy from Klenovec, told me a story from a summer school for young violinist called *Primášikovia*:

*“At the very beginning, my schoolmates didn’t recognise that I’m a Rom. But when I was playing stuff I have been taught during our folklore rehearsal, they asked me: ‘Hey, what you’re playing? How could you play that so quickly?’ and so on. As soon as they learnt that my surname is Oláh they kept calling me Rinaldo Oláh<sup>24</sup> and whenever I played they just said ‘It makes sense how he’s playing... He’s a Rom and he has ‘it’ in his blood.”*

And so David’s schoolmates stopped comparing themselves with him as if it would be uneven (or even unfair) to make any comparison. *He’s a Rom so there’s no need for comparison...he simply has it in his blood.* None of them probably cares that

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<sup>24</sup> Rinaldo Oláh (1929–2011) was a famous Romani violinist, well known in all Slovakia as “Paganini from Slatina” for his exceptional skills of violinist.

David practises four hours a day playing classical music for his Art School (*ZUŠ*)<sup>25</sup> curriculums, then he plays an hour folk songs with his brother or father and, moreover, he has several folklore-ensemble rehearsals per week.

I assume that this societal belief can work as kind of self-fulfilling prophecy. It has also a great influence on basic relationship of Roma to music and it could give them a great advantage over their peers, e.g. as for shyness while performing (“*Why should I be shy if I’m the chosen-one?*”) I will not further research the question of societal belief and leave these unfounded speculations along but I would anticipate that the contribution of this point might be one of the crucial and I would definitely encourage any researcher to examine it closer.

At the similar level, i.e. environmental catalyts (E), but in the part of DMNA (Developmental Model for *Natural Abilities*; left side of EMDT) we can point out another component that, as I would like to speculate, might be considered as an important element of traditional construction of Romani musical excellence: surrounding Romani children by music from early childhood, i.e. singing by their mothers or (later) participation in informal dancing-singing sessions (in my field often called by Romani word *bašavely*).

In developmental psychology, we use the term *maternal music*, more particularly we are talking about *maternal singing* as this form is most commonly performed. As it has been proved several times that children react better to maternal singing than to maternal speech and that from their very child they are able to recognise both pitch and tempo (see e.g. Trehub 2001). It was also suggested that maternal singing might contribute to children arousal (Nakata and Trehub 2004) or language development (Tallal and Gaab 2006). That might be a reason, after all, why lullabies, as a specific genre of music, is shared cross-culturally and are even considered as an important part of mind evolution (cf. Dissanayake 2000).

Importantly, early musical experience has been predicted as a crucial component in development of musical aptitude and this fact has been confirmed by

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. 4.1 Music Education in the Czech and Slovak Republic.

number of studies.<sup>26</sup> Gordon's (1997) extensive theoretical framework for childhood music development, including development from the very babyhood (i.e. from birth), can be summarised in this matter as follows:

*"[...]a child's progression through the stages of preauditional development into a stage of understanding music is dependent upon a combination of early musical experiences and inborn potential for music achievement. He believes that appropriate early childhood musical experiences are especially crucial between birth and eighteen months, at which point the child exits the preverbal stage of development. [...] Gordon believes that because a child's music aptitude is more malleable early in life, musical stimuli are especially influential during that time. If early musical influences are insufficient, the child's level of music aptitude may decline." (Rasmussen 2004:13–15, emphasis mine).*

Surrounding children by music, especially maternal singing or taking part in informal musical sessions such as *bašavely*, is indeed a trait broadly considered as typical for Roma not just in my field, but also elsewhere. Here is an ethnographic example given by Kertész-Wilkinson (2000) who researched methods of musical learning and teaching among Vlach Roma<sup>27</sup> (Gypsy) in Hungary:

*Children are involved in music-making from birth or even "nine months before birth," the age Kodály<sup>28</sup> suggested was the best for starting musical education. [...] adults sing children to sleep whilst cradling them in their arms or rocking their arms [...] When adults dance in private they often hold babies close to their bodies, or move them to the song in their lap [...] Vlach children also make their own motor movements in response to the musical sounds around them. These automatic actions are soon coloured by cultural gestures as they try to move their wrists or click their fingers in Vlach Gypsy style. Some babies also make early attempts to join in singing,*

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<sup>26</sup> As a great starting point, I would suggest PhD dissertation of Eric P. Rasmussen (2004). His thorough meta-study where he summarises knowledge about interrelationship between early musical experience and actual achievement in music is one of the best I have encountered, though his own research did not confirm a significant contribution of musical exposure in the first 18 months of individuals' lives (2004:75–90).

<sup>27</sup> For more details about Vlach (or Vlachika) Roma and specifics of their musical culture, see footnote n. 50, p. 55.

<sup>28</sup> She refers to Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967), Hungarian composer and pedagogue well-known for his *Kodály method* of musical education, i.e. complex methodology in musical-aptitude development beginning in early childhood based upon ideas "more Art, more quality, less fragmentarisation and as much systematics as possible." (cf. Choksy 1999, Holas 2004:25).

*trying to elongate certain high-pitched tones in a loosely controlled cry.* (Kertész-Wilkinson 2000:364)

Again, there is no space to examine this point thoroughly but I would like to suggest that this very trait could be an essential explanation for their sense of pitch and tempo appearing in their early age which would many people regard as an evidence of inborn talent.

As a last example of traits, which may be a part of Romani musical-aptitude development and are not part direct musical teaching and learning, I will mention Romani bilingualism. This is, again, an essential and very typical cultural trait for Roma all around the world. Their ancestors left India somewhere between 6th–11th century and started migrating and living nomadic way of life. During a millennium, they spread-out over all continents apart from Antarctica,<sup>29</sup> therefore, their own culture has had to be modified thousand times; Romani culture in every single country creates its own peculiar variant on motives of their original and surrounded culture(s). It has influenced their ways of clothing, housing, working and, of course, music production. But there is one thing that has been always preserved – their own language and, therefore, their ability to be multilingual, i.e. ability of acquiring own language and language belonging to country (countries) of their current stay.<sup>30</sup> Their language, i.e. Romani, is the most obvious evidence for this. Though we can still

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<sup>29</sup> See *Romani diaspora* page on Wikipedia which includes updated estimations of Romani population in more than 50 countries with references to relevant sources of estimation (Romani diaspora 2007).

<sup>30</sup> To be fair and updated, until recently, we could consider this as a rule. Nevertheless, the situation has changed during last generations. In the Czech or Slovak Republic, it is very common that the last generations of settled Roma do not speak Romani, because (most commonly) their parents refused to teach them. Still, they very often understand Romani but they are not able to use it actively. Vlad, one of my informant from Kokava, told me there is a wide-spread belief among Roma that if you will teach your children Romani they will have difficulties with learning in school (as if speaking Romani could occupy mental capacity which could have been used elsewhere). As far as I can say, this belief is rather an excuse and the real reason for not-transmitting Romani to children lies in something different. When I was doing another research among Roma in Žlutice (Czech Republic), I asked one Romani woman, grand mother of one of my 17-years-old participant, why she did not want her children to speak Romani. She replied: “*Well, you know, I simply didn’t want them to be regarded as Gypsies...like us.*” In my field most of people, including the youngest generation, can speak Romani, though, it is not the major language commonly spoken in households. Once I was giving a walk to Lajo, a Kokava-based musician in his late fifties, I witnessed a strange scene when he was cheerfully greeting all passers-by in Romani but all answers returning back to him were in Slovak. On the other hand, Romani is nowadays used in everyday lives as a major language in the poorest Romani settlement in Klenovec (*Dolinka*). Number of children there, however, have difficulties with Slovak language even in their school age.

recognise its Indian origin, we can find many elements coming from other languages (such as Greek, Persian, Kurdish or Armenian) proving that Romani was spoken all the centuries besides the languages of peoples they were coexisting with. Their bilingualism and talent for languages is also part of the stereotype, similarly to musical talent. Janko, a double bass player from Klenovec, told me once with a smile:

*“I remember once I was calling to a client of mine with whom I was speaking in English. When I hang up, there was an old lady starring at me who finally said: ‘So you, gipsies, don’t have troubles with language, do you? You speak Slovak, you speak Romani and now you speak even English?’”*

Even for this trait, the theories about its impact of musical-aptitude development do exist. From the point of view of Gagné’s EMDT, we can attribute it to the level of environmental catalyst for DMNA.<sup>31</sup> Research on interrelation of these two traits is in its early stage and no significant dependence has been found so far. Nevertheless, researchers working on this issue anticipate some interdependence of bilingualism and musical aptitude and it is probable that some interdependence might be proved during some *ad hoc* research (cf. Moreno et al. 2014, Valian 2015:16–17). But it should be added that if we are not talking about bilingualism (i.e. acquiring a second language through environment) but about *learning* languages in general (e.g. in a school environment), the fact that “[t]he musical-rhythmic intelligence has to do with the ability to perceive and appreciate rhythm, pitch and melody, [i.e.] elements also crucial in the language learning process” (Fonseca-Mora 2011:114) has been proved in many studies (cf. *ibid*:101–118).

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. fig. 1.



### 3.5 Chapter Summary

- 1) This chapter dealt with the discussion of heritability and naturality of musical talent in both social and natural science.
- 2) I argue that despite very long discussion in the history of both social and natural sciences and very recent hints in the field of genetic proving correlation between musical aptitude and some gene loci, we *cannot* consider a genetic component provably responsible for emergence of musical talent shared among members of an ethnic group such as Roma. There is “nothing in there blood” and no Rom is born as musicians – every single Rom must *become* musician.
- 3) I consider Gagné’s *Expanded Model of Talent Development (EMDT)* as the best model depicting true nature of musical talent development: it is a complex dynamic process where natural abilities mutually interact with environmental and interpersonal catalysts and the developmental process leads to the emergence of musical talent.
- 4) I position my own research to the *Developmental Process (D)* level of EMDT.
- 5) I do not assume that the *Developmental Process (D)* is the only and exclusive component in the process of Romani musical-aptitude construction which distinguishes their musical excellence from “ours.” I suggest three other components that might be essential (societal belief, early musical experience and bilingualism), though I do not examine these components closer.

#### 4 Differences between Institutionalised Musical Education and Romani Traditional Methods of Musical Learning and Teaching

*Roma are the truest violinist in the world. They are born with the instrument in their hands. I often encouraged my students to listen them as Roma have their own way of living music. There are no violinists in the world, apart from the greatest ones, would could be compared to Romani violinists. Maybe, they do not play Bach or Beethoven “in style” but there are different things: the expression which is bodily, original, organic and total.*

(An interview with Ivry Gitlis, Israeli violinist)

(Antonietto 1994:104–105)

This enthusiastic quotation should remind us the premise outlined in the introduction: we cannot consider a thing such as *globally shared model of excellent musician*. The mention about “*playing Bach and Beethoven in style*” is the best illustration depicting our typical oversight whenever talking about Romani “*unexceptional musical excellence*.” To bring the premise back, as it is important for next argumentation: musical excellence of Romani musicians is neither higher nor lower than “*ours*.”<sup>32</sup> Their musical excellence is *different*. Equally (and consequently), we can claim, that their musical excellence is different because

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<sup>32</sup> The terms such as *European/Western/institutionalised/formalised/majority’s/our/etc. system of musical education* are used throughout the all thesis as a counterpoint to Romani musical teaching/learning in Klenovec and Kokava, therefore, it should be fair to set the record straight about meaning of these words. It is only fair to note at the outset that these adjectives should be understood rather as a metaphor in quotation marks. Obviously, we could consider intersection of sets of all subsystems of (so called) Western musical education, on the other hand, however, many subsystems of the “Western system” significantly differ from others (consider, for instance, the Czechoslovak musical education with the one in the USA or Japan). Moreover, I do not discuss specific genres of Western music whose methods of learning and teaching are completely dissimilar (e.g. Jazz). In short, “Western music” is a term too wide to be use otherwise but metaphorically. So, whenever I am referring to any kind of *European/Western/institutionalised/formalised/majority’s/our/etc. system of musical education*, I always mean the one which is being used in the area of former Czechoslovakia, more particularly, in general public schools and schools of art, intended for classical-music production (see chapter 4.1. *Music Education in the Czech and Slovak Republic*). Nevertheless, I am aware that some of the characteristic traits of the Czech and Slovak educational system I will describe in the section 4.6 *Characteristic Traits of Music Education in the Czech and Slovak Republic* could be analogous to educational systems elsewhere in Europe.

*concept*<sup>33</sup> of their music is *different*, and, therefore, their methods of acquiring musical skill must be *different*. Although this seems to be rather a matter of common sense than a subject of serious scholarly work, it is often being forgotten. The aim of this chapter is to make an order in these *differences* with help of current theories on various forms of musical education.

I will open up this chapter with a brief overview of structure of Czech and Slovak system of musical education to set up a reference point which will be important for comparison with Romani ways of musical teaching/learning. Then, I will show possible theoretical approaches towards explanation of differences in various educational systems; starting with explanation of different musical concepts, presenting the specifics of their attitude towards musical *education* which rather takes form of *education* than *schooling* (referring to Merriam), their overall methodological approach which takes form of *holistic approach* rather than *analytical approach* (drawing from Van den Bos), and the role of *participatory performance* as an educational medium (referring to Turino). In last section, I will describe characteristic traits of formalised system of musical education in the Czech and Slovak Republic according to outlined theories to hold up a mirror whose reflection will be used for understanding what *musical excellence* actually mean for “us” and why Romani musical excellence seems to be so *different* from our image of *musical excellence*. This critical mirror will be key point for analysis of Romani system of musical education in Klenovec and Kokava (Chapter 5).

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<sup>33</sup> By *musical concept*, I will be referring to both sound structure of music (beat, rhythm, melody, harmony etc.) and its sociocultural function (the way of performing, cultural meaning of its performance, its position in society, in short, “*accounts of music’s structuring properties in everyday experience.*” [DeNora 2004:2]). I will deeply discuss the issue of various musical concepts in the chapter 4.2 *Concept Matters*.

## 4.1 Music Education in the Czech and Slovak Republic<sup>34</sup>

In this section, basic structure of musical education in the Czech and Slovak Republic will be described. The description will not be any thorough as it is not needed for the purpose of the thesis (cf. 4.6 *Characteristic Traits of Musical Education in the Czech and Slovak Republic*). It is fair, however, to provide some basis for readers who do not have any experience with the educational system which will soon be subjected to reflection.

For this section, I am mostly drawing from methodical manuals for music teachers (e.g. Holas 2004), from critical comparison of Czechoslovak educational system with others (e.g. Pejcha 2010) and, last but not least, from experiences of many of my family members and friends (not excluding my own) who have reached various level of musical education covering all the system.

The system of the Czechoslovak musical education could be freely divided into two main categories<sup>35</sup>: musical education as a part of the standard education and professional education intended for pupils they wish to obtain a higher musical qualification.

As a part of standard education, music is compulsory taught for all the duration of elementary schools (age 6–15). Afterwards, it might be part of high school degree. At general lyceums (*gymnázia*), for instance, pupils have to choose between music classes and fine art classes. These courses are usually carried out for the first two years and students can even take one of these courses as a part of their final exam (*maturita*). Music classes as a part of standard education have strong tradition (at least from the era of *J.A. Komenský*)<sup>36</sup> and its role should be regarded as a counterpoint to

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<sup>34</sup> Since the educational system of the Czech and Slovak Republic were developing since 1918 (establishment of the Czechoslovak republic) until 1993 (dissolution of Czechoslovakia and establishment of the Czech and Slovak Republic as two independent states) as one educational system and after years of dissolution there are no essential differences between them, I decided not to talk about the educational systems of both countries separately. I often mention an adjective “Czechoslovak” as a kind of abbreviation referring to both countries.

<sup>35</sup> Some scholars stress also third category that is *special education* for pupils with special needs (cf. Holas 2005:24, 68). As this kind of education is not relevant for the purpose of this thesis, I will not closely discuss it.

<sup>36</sup> J.A. Komenský is a famous Czech-rooted pedagogue (1592–1670) who is considered to be (at least in former Czechoslovakia) a legendary reformer of education for children.

theoretical education and a great tool for relaxation (cf. Holas 2004:17). Curriculums of the music classes within standard education are enforced by law (cf. *ibid*:93–98).

The professional education consists of three levels corresponding to the age of students – Elementary Schools of Art (*Základní umělecké školy* in Czech and *Základné umelecké školy* in Slovak; in both countries commonly known under the abbreviation “ZUŠ”), Conservatories (*Konzervatoře/Konzervatória*) and Academies of Music (*Hudební akademie/Hudobné akadémie*).

Elementary Schools of Art (ZUŠ) are, considering the age of pupils (5 years upwards, sometimes even earlier) and the duration (7+4 years), crucial for formation of basic patterns of musicality. This level is a unique specificity of Czechoslovak educational system with no similar equivalent in Europe; their historical roots could be found in the 19th century (cf. Pejcha 2010:27). It is intended for children beginning with preschool age onwards and it does not serve as an equivalent of standard elementary education; it is considered to be rather a free time activity. ZUŠ consists of two cycles – the 7-years first degree (*1. cyklus*) and the 4-years second degree (*2. cyklus*). The level of ZUŠ aims mainly as a preparation for next level of musical education. Obviously, not everyone reaches this upper level. For those who decide not to continue with musical education (because of insufficient level of musical aptitude or preference over another type of further education), ZUŠ provide solid basis for non-professional music production. ZUŠ graduates should be prepared for pushing their musical development forward on their own.

*Conservatories*<sup>37</sup> are the only place where students can study music as a main subject. Curriculum content could be divided into two subparts – theoretical (including history of music, art history, music theory, organology, music management etc.) and practical (consisted of playing instruments, conducting, compositions etc.). Studying a conservatory usually takes 6 years it is ended up by *maturita* (4th year of study) and *absolutorium* (6th year study). Though graduating at conservatories has an equivalent status to graduating at any high school, many of my friends studied conservatory and another high school in parallel.

Studying at academies is very similar to any university degree. It is usually consisted of two levels – *BcA* (BA in Art) and *MgA* (MA in Art). The most notable

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<sup>37</sup> An equivalent of British Music School.

and traditional academies in the Czech Republic are *Hudební fakulta Akademie múzických umění* (known as *HAMU*) in Prague and *Hudební fakulta Janáčkovy akademie múzických umění* (known as *JAMU*) in Brno and in Slovakia *Vysoká škola múzických umění* in Bratislava and *Fakulta muzických umení* in Banská Bystrica. Nowadays, it is possible to get a university music-degree from elsewhere (Ostrava, Košice etc.). As admission procedure for mentioned academies are incredibly competitive, graduating students perform highest level of music and are usually well-prepared for career of professional musicians.

## 4.2 Concept Matters

To turn page to theoretical approaches towards musical education, we need to outline an important premise that could be summarise easily by two words: *concept matters*. To say it more exactly, the way of teaching/learning particular music always depends on the concept of the music itself, and, equally, concept of music always depends on concept of culture which produces it.

The fact, that music is always reflection of its own culture, is not just a speculation, but it has been proved in many scholarly studies. Ethnomusicology has even an exclusive tool for analysing correlation between structure of produced sound and structure of a society: so called *cantometrics*, originally developed by Alan Lomax in 1960s. (cf. Lomax 2000). In some ethnomusicological and anthropological studies dealing with music of European Roma, the idea about mutual reflection of culture and music has also been taken into account.

Pettan (1996), for instance, who studied Romani music in Kosovo, noted that as well as Roma always had to *adapt* to sociocultural norm of surrounding societies because of their worldwide diaspora, their music is also typical for its *adaptability*, that is ability to “*adapt a foreign tune for local consumption.*” (p. 34). In other words we might say, that their music is adaptable because it is a reflection of their *adaptable* culture.

Stoichiță (2006), for another example, find a Romani word for expressing appreciated trait of Roma from the point of view both of culture and music: the *ciorănia*. This word could be translated simply as “theft” but, amidst Roma, it has an

additional meaning referring to *intelligent and elegant theft* and is understood as appreciated political skill based upon artful negotiation and cunning circumvention of rules. Thus, as it is well valued by Roma to be a good *cior* (intelligent thief) in terms of interpersonal relationship, it is also valued in terms of musicianship. A good *cior*-musician is the one who can create new melodies by simple combining of older ones, who can maximise profit from performing by satisfying unspoken wishes of the audience etc.

Bonini Baraldi (2008), to give a last example, found an *emotionality* as a characteristic trait which connects Romani culture with Romani music. He does not consider emotionality as an inborn feature of Roma<sup>38</sup> but he noted that shared emotional expression, whether real or based on stereotypes, are important for construction of cultural specificity (“*we are group and therefore we feel similarly [...] and differently from other people*”) (p. 255). It probably comes as no surprise, that his own analysis of culture of Transylvanian Roma brings many evidences proving that Romani music-production is, indeed, connected with ventilation of emotions and that these emotions appearing in their music (and, accordingly, in their social organisation), play an important role in ethnicity-construction.

Putting it simply, the *concept* of Romani music is reflection of their own culture and we can find many elements in music corresponding with characteristic traits of their culture, such as endless necessity to be adapted, living on the verge of law and order, self-regarding and regarding by others as an “emotional minority,” etc.

Equally, ways of musical teaching/learning are always reflection of music itself. As a theoretician of music education noted, “*every epoch created its own model of [musical] education which was appropriate to economical and political conditions and specific needs of society*” (Holas 2004:7). Concept of Romani music is ways different from (e.g.) concept of European classical music. We simply cannot expect that if we spread music-sheets of New World Symphony among Romani musicians in

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<sup>38</sup> I need to add that this putative Romani emotionality has been already discussed (cf. Gelbart [2010], *Chapter 2 Positioning of the research*). The important note is that pure consideration of Roma as an *emotional minority* should not be regarded as an anthropological failure, if we simply move away from biological-deterministic point of view. Bonini Baraldi made his point saying that shared/differing emotions are important in the process of *negotiation of boundaries*, i.e. in the inclusion/exclusion processes which play part in ethnicity-construction according to Barth’s (1969) conception. Popular saying that (e.g.) Italians are “hotheaded” and on the other hand Swiss are “cold as charity” do not have to be automatically based on truth stemming from their biological nature but it does not mean they are involved in their ethnicity-construction.

Klenovec or Kokava, the results would be the same (if there would be any) as it was played by Czech Philharmonic. And, on the other, we cannot expect that musicians from Czech Philharmonic would succeed as a wedding band playing in whatever key according to wishes of audience and at the same time giving off feeling of bodily and emotional performance.

Music is X. X is reflection of culture. Musical learning/teaching is a way of acquiring X. X matters. Musical concept matters. This is my first important premise for dealing with differences between Romani and majority's musical education.

### **4.3 Schooling vs. Education (A.P. Merriam)**

A.P. Merriam deals with musical learning and teaching in his book *Anthropology of Music* (1964). He was influenced by another famous American anthropologist – M. J. Herskovits and his well-known concept of *enculturation*.

The Herskovits' theory of enculturation (i.e. process of acquiring skills that are necessary for being a member of a society) is quite complex and its whole description is not necessary for the purposes of the thesis. A very good key point, however, is Herskovits' (1948:310) division of the process of enculturation into three subparts – *socialization*, *education* and *schooling*. This division was also used by Merriam (1964) when he considered cultural transmission of music. Socialization refers “[...]to the system of social learning as it is carried on in the early years of life.” (p. 164). It includes acquiring of basic human skills (such as appropriate social behaviour, social norms etc.) This subcategory is not so relevant for my next point. But the difference between the second and the third subcategory of enculturation is the key for understanding one of the most important differences between formalised educational system and the Romani ways of musical learning/teaching. As Herskovits noted,

“[a] second special subdivision of enculturation is education – which may be defined as the directed learning system, both formally and informally carried out, for the most part during childhood and adolescence [...] Finally, the most restricted aspect of cultural learning is schooling, which refers to those processes of teaching and learning carried on at specific times, in particular places outside the home, for



*definite periods, by persons especially prepared or trained for the task.*” (1948:310, emphasis added).

In addition to this, Merriam added an important note, which is essential for next conclusions:

*It should perhaps be noted that while some non-literate societies lack formal educational institutions, this in no sense means they have no educational system. [...] The confusion for most Westerners lies in the distinction between education and schooling; the lack of formal institutions in no way suggests that education, in its broadest sense, is absent.* (1964:146, emphasis added).

Czech and Slovak musical education is highly formalised, as it has been shown and as it is common in the Western discourse of musical education. It takes specific time (lessons) in specific places (schools) and it is taught by specific people (teachers) who teach in a specific way (methodological guides). Even though Roma are not a non-literate society, we might notice that the tendency in their transmission is quite similar as it was described by Merriam, i.e. their acquiring of musical skills does not have the typical form of *schooling*.

The fact that contribution of schooling to Romani transmission of musical skills is different (i.e. less important or none) than the contribution of schooling to pupils attending formal musical education seems to be clear and obvious. However, this simple fact has an important influence on how their musical aptitude is being developed.

In other words, I will try to depict the Romani ways of acquiring musical skills as an *educational system* rather than a “*missing system despite of which a great musical talent emerges.*” This is my second important premise.

#### **4.4 Analytical vs. Holistic Approach (P. Van den Bos)**

In this section I will argue that Romani educational system is rather *holistic* than *analytic*. This distinction was suggested by Van den Bos (1995) when he pointed out the problems that he found in the methodology of World-music teaching. The scheme he suggested, however, is well applicable for my considerations of Romani educational system.

He constructs two prototypical models of musical education – the *analytical* method and the *holistic* method. The key difference we can find between these models lies in the main aim of each method. While starting point of the analytical method is to acquire separate abilities for *playing the instrument*, starting point of the holistic method is to *play the music*. Each aim is being reached in a different way.

Teachers teaching rather according to analytical method rely on separation of the main skill (i.e. playing the musical instrument) into many *subskills*<sup>39</sup> (such as posture, rhythmical control, reading written music, musical theory etc.). The spine of their education is determined by written methodological guides and most of the know-how is transmitted by notation.

On the other hand, the holistic approach does not split up the skill into subskills but it deals with music as a whole in its *natural context*. Teachers using this method transmit their skills orally or just by showing their skills to pupils that could imitate what they can see and what they can hear. Of course, pupils are not able to play the particular piece immediately as artfully as their masters. Hence, they have to learn the piece roughly first and, by the time, they can add some more advanced elements of performance (more musical ornaments, better musical expression etc.). That is what Van den Bos calls *concentric curriculum*.<sup>40</sup>

The opposite for the concentric curriculum is the *linear curriculum* typical for analytic approach. As for this method, pupils do not teach, so to speak, *real repertoire* but something what Van den Bos calls *pedagogical repertoire*. This special kind of repertoire is constructed for the methodological purposes, i.e. in the way fitting into a

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<sup>39</sup> To give an example how could this “*separation into subskills*” look like, I will mention what I have been told by a friend of mine who attends oboe class at University of Ostrava, Faculty of Fine Arts. I met him once when he was complaining about incredible amount of travelling he had been forced to do for his career of musicians (as he came from České Budějovice, he studied both in Prague and Ostrava and he used to play in an orchestra in Zlín – that means that he often had to manage around thousand kilometres per week). He told me: “*Some kilometres I have to do seem to me like useless. Especially those to Ostrava. I had considered it as a great opportunity to be taught by the best oboe teacher in the Czech Republic but...you know...if only he were playing together with me.*” I, taking by surprise, asked him: “*Hang on! Doesn't he play with you?*” “*No, he doesn't. The thing is that he's not able to play the pieces I'm working on.*” Many of my musician-friends, who reached the highest level in musical education, share similar experience. Obviously, this could not work without the “*separation into subskills.*” Even though the teachers are not able to play the particular piece which their students are working on, they do have some ideas how to improve it. I do not deny that this methodological component of analytic education impressed me. I had not realised until then that continuity of many pieces of European classical music would not be preserved if there were not people knowing how to make improvements, though not able of playing them.

<sup>40</sup> Van den Bos is not the author of this distinction. It is often used in other musical-pedagogy work (cf. (Holas 2004:99).

particular level of a certain pupil. It can be (and often really is) artificial and miles away from the real repertoire. The real one is acquired later on only when the pupil reaches the level which is needed for managing a certain masterpiece.

Following table summarises the general differences in holistic and analytic approach to musical education according to Van den Bos:

<b>Holistic approach</b>	<b>Analytic approach</b>
<b>“playing the music”</b>	<b>“playing the instrument”</b>
music remains in <b>natural context</b>	music “split up” in <b>separate abilities</b> , i.e. embouchure and respiration, posture, rhythmical control, playing technique, reading written music, musical theory, expression and recitation
<b>repertoire</b> is starting point	<b>separate abilities</b> are starting point
<b>“real”</b> repertoire	<b>“pedagogical”</b> repertoire
<b>concentric</b> curriculum	<b>linear</b> curriculum
<b>oral</b> transmission	transmission <b>by (staff) notation</b>
the teacher <b>shows</b> , the student <b>imitates</b>	the teacher <b>guides and controls</b> the student
learning action is <b>implicit</b>	learning process is <b>explicit</b>
teacher’s role is <b>passive</b>	teacher's role is <b>active</b>
teacher must be a <b>good musician</b>	teacher must be a <b>good methodologist</b>

Table 1.

(extracted from Van den Bos 1995:173)

As we can see, both of these methodological approaches have pros and cons. As we regard the analytic approach, teachers (as methodologists) have all progress of students under their own control. They do know the strengths and weaknesses of their pupils and they can systematically work with them to educate really advanced musicians. This way seems to be the only way of teaching how to play the notoriously difficult pieces of European classical music such as Paganini's pieces when it comes to violin, Ravel's pieces when it comes to piano etc.

Teacher using the holistic method of teaching do not have such a methodological tool. On the other hand, according to Van den Bos (p. 174), there is a notable advantage of the holistic method – since the music remains in its natural context during teaching process, the *other aspects* of music can be preserved. He summarised what he means by *other aspects* as follows:

*“Pupils in Western music often are taught that first technical competence has to be gained, after that mastery of staff notation, and at the end musical expression and feeling should be “added.” The result is that pupils can often play notes but not music. (Van den Bos 1995:174).<sup>41</sup>*

To sum it up, I argue that while Czech and Slovak system of musical education (as any other institutionalised European educational system) tends to be rather *analytic*, Romani way of musical teaching and learning tends to be rather *holistic*. This form important traits of Romani music-educational system which will be shown later on.

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<sup>41</sup> At this point, I need to note that though Van den Bos' article is well conceptualised upon principles of cultural relativism, i.e. not saying that one approach is a priori more accurate than the other. At the end of the article, however, we can feel a hidden undertone criticising the current Western discourse of musical education. I would say that Van den Bos made a good point questioning the aim of Western-music-educational system with an implicit question: *Must the aim of our musical education really be classical music?* The point is that I know many sad stories from my surrounding about people that were forced by their parents to play an instrument (very often piano) from the very childhood and since their repertoire corresponds rather with their “appropriate ability” than with their passions, they often quitted in puberty. Most of them regret their decision few years later when all acquired skills were almost forgotten. This happened just because the curriculum they were working with was conceptualised rather for the aim of musical education (i.e. classical music) than for their own enjoyment of music. Music is not just a series of finger movement that must be done in the right order and, to be taught right, it should definitely be accepted with passion and joy. I would say Van den Bos is right in a way. This thesis, however, is not the right place where his ideas should be developed. We need to keep up with our premise that teaching/learning methods correspond with the concept of music and that playing pieces of European classical music simply demand the analytic approach. Despite Van den Bos' activist undertone, none of the approach is more accurate. Both are corresponding.

## 4.5 Participatory Performance as a Learning/Teaching Medium (T. Turino)

Turino in his book *Music as Social Life* (2008) defined two general types of musical performance: *presentational* and *participatory*. This distinction appeared as consequence of “[a] gradual shift in thinking of music doing as a social activity to music as an object (2008:24).” The object-based approach is typical mostly for Western music and it expresses a new dimension of interrelationship of people and music, i.e. possibility to own music (e.g. to buy a music CD). Turino emphasises the argument (corresponding with my outlined premise about different musical concepts) that we cannot consider one type of performance more accurate than the other. Both types should be valued as such.

Turino defines participatory performance as “a special type of artistic practice in which there are no artist-audience distinctions, only participants and potential participants performing different roles, and the primary goal is to involve the maximum number of people in some performance role” (p. 26) and where “primary attention is on the activity, on the doing, and on the other participants, rather than on an end product that results from the activity.” (p. 28). In contrast, presentational performance “refers to situations where one group of people, the artists, prepare and provide music for another group, the audience, who do not participate in making the music or dancing.” (p. 26).

Turino, as a reputable ethnomusicologist, thoroughly analyses the differences between these concepts that are manifested in the final product, i.e. music in terms of sound. He notes that for the presentational performance is typical better musical organisation, greater variability and transparent texture, while for the participatory performance rather “feathered” (i.e. blurred) organisation, high repetitiveness and dense texture. He also discusses social context of both performance-concepts, e.g. tendency to downplayed individual virtuosity of the participants in case of participatory performance in order to boost flow of the event while emphasising individual virtuosity in case of presentational performance. The main differences are summed up in the following table:

<b>Participatory music</b>	<b>Presentational music</b>
Short, open, redundantly repeated forms	Closed, scripted forms, longer forms and shorter performances of the form available
“Feathered” beginnings and endings	Organized beginnings and endings
Intensive variation	Extensive variation available
Individual virtuosity downplayed	Individual virtuosity emphasized
Highly repetitive	Repetition balanced with contrast
Few dramatic contrasts	Contrasts of many types as design
Constancy of rhythm/meter/groove	Variability of rhythms/meter possible
Dense textures	Transparent textures/clarity emphasized; varied textures and density for contrast
Piece as a collection of resources refashioned anew in each performance like the form, rules, and practiced moves of a game	Piece as set item (although exceptions such as small ensemble jazz and Indian classical music exist)

Table 2.

(extracted from Turino 2008:59)

There should be no wonder that Turino considers European classical music as an archetypal example of presentational performance “*where the audience sits still in silent contemplation while the music is being played, only to comment on it through applause after a piece has been completed.*” (p. 52). One could anticipate that I am about to argue that while the European style of musical education is intended for European classical music, i.e. the most typical example of presentational

performance, the Romani way of acquiring musical skills is designed for fulfilling idea of participatory performance. Unfortunately, that would be a far too great simplification.

We simply cannot say that typical performance of Romani band has exclusively quality of participatory performance. On the contrary, traditional picture of Romani bands (imagine e.g. a band of Romani musicians playing for Hungarian nobility in the 19th century) is the picture depicting musicians who keep a distance from the audience, who are paid for their job and who show their virtuosity as much as they can. These are all characteristic traits of *presentational* performance, not participatory.

Sure, one could argue that performance of Romani band (or at least the traditional picture of it) is far away from concert of European classical music. And I would agree with this statement. In fact, unprepared repertoire based on organic wishes of audience, blurred boundaries between played songs when one song gradually become another or playing for dancing people and so encouraging overall flow of the event; all these things could be considered as traits of *participatory* performance.

Simply put, we cannot generalise that performances of Romani band tend to be neither participatory nor to presentational performance. There is one reason, however, why I took into account the Turino's theory: the role of *participatory performance as learning/teaching medium*. It has been shown that informal sessions of musicians, in my field commonly known as *bašavely*, where musicians do not play for anyone particular apart from themselves, plays an important role in musical-skills transmission.<sup>42</sup>

I have already discussed a possible connection between Romani musical aptitude and early musical experience.<sup>43</sup> Leaving aside the neurocognitive side of the problem and putting it pragmatically quoting Turino: “[I]n societies where participatory music is the most valued form [of performance], almost everyone will grow up taking part in

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<sup>42</sup> This will be discussed in the chapter 5.6 *Informal Music Sessions as an Educative Medium for Cooperative Learning* in details.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. chapter 3.4 *Positioning within EMDT Framework and Other Components of Romani Musical Aptitude*

*music and dance and develop some competence; music and dance will be available to everyone as normal human activities.” (p. 48)*

Music-dancing sessions are important not just for the basic approach to music but also for the way of transmitting and developing musical skills. Standardised system of musical education, mainly intended as preparation for the presentational performance, use the *participation* as an educational method just minimally or not at all. It tends to be very competitive and very often omitting the principle of cooperation. Cooperation appears at advanced stage of Western musical education where musicians are involved in orchestra. Until then, however, a typical pupil of formalised musical education scarcely meets an opportunity to play with another musicians. And yet, playing with someone broadens horizons, give insight to band-based music making and, last but not least. give an opportunity to be taught by others (betters) and to learn the other (less advanced). Simply put, these informal sessions based upon participatory performance are another crucial pillar of Romani ways of acquiring/transmitting musical skills, significantly differing from the formalised system of musical education.

I argue that participatory performance plays an important role of educational medium where musical skills of Romani musicians are being transmitted and developed.



## 4.6 Characteristic Traits of Musical Education in the Czech and Slovak Republic

As I noted at the very beginning of this chapter, there is no space in this thesis to examine thoroughly the system of musical education in the Czech and Slovak Republic with all its thinkable components. This would not be easy for many reasons. We would have to deal with private sector of musical education,<sup>44</sup> we would have to deal with new government-based strategy for musical-education reform,<sup>45</sup> it would be necessary to collect great amount of data throughout the all spectrum of musical education etc. In short: there is no space. But more importantly, there is no need to do so.

Characteristic traits of the system, which will be shortly described, should be understood as characteristic traits of *ideal type* of musical education in the Czech and Slovak Republic (drawing from Weber's conception).<sup>46</sup>

To bring to mind: the main argument of the thesis lies in the facts that 1) Romani musical excellence is neither bigger nor smaller, just different; which implies that their ways of musical teaching and learning are different 2) The way of perceiving Romani musical excellence is determined by "our" unwitting comparison with "our" musical excellence (and, therefore, our ways of acquiring this excellence 3) The significant otherness led to the emergence of the Romani-musical-gene myth.

My point is that when an audience, impressed by Romani musical excellence (or, to be precise, by otherness of their excellence), considers Roma as musicians endowed by innate power of musical talent, they do not make a comparison based upon a thorough scholarly analysis of their own system of musical education, but rather upon mentally construct of what this mean for them; or (in Weber's words) upon "*utopia [that] cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality*" (Cf. Ideal type 2007). That is why I do not consider thorough analysis of the Czech and Slovak

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<sup>44</sup> Such as music-educational system Yamaha which has become very popular both in the Czech and Slovak Republic (Cf. Pejcha 2010:34-35) and which has been omitted up to this point.

<sup>45</sup> Such as so called *White Book : National Programme for Education-Development in the Czech Republic in 21st Century*. [*Bílá kniha: Národní program rozvoje vzdělávání v České republice pro 21. století*] (Cf. MŠMT 2001).

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Ideal type in Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2007).

system of musical education as necessary and why I will deal with an *ideal type* of it, i.e. a construct on the basis of most typical traits.

In the following paragraph, I will introduce these components, which (according to my conclusions with helps of theories outlined in this chapter) are the main components of musical education in the Czech and Slovak Republic.

The institutionalised system of musical education in Czechoslovakia is:

- analytical
- formalised
- intentional and intended for Classical music production
- curriculum-based
- determined by norms and tradition
- performance-orientated
- competitive
- individualistic
- notes-transmission based
- accurate
- linear and gradualist
- gender neutral

These are the traits of “our” own music-education system on the basis of which we construct an image of musical excellence and which we regard as the standard. These traits will be subjected to comparison with Romani system of musical education in Klenovec and Kokava and they will be the spine of my comparative ethnography researching to what extent the two suggested music-educational system differ, presented in chapter 5.

## 4.7 Chapter Summary

- 1) This chapter dealt with theoretical analysis of *differences* in the two focused educational systems, i.e. Czechoslovak formalised system of musical education and ways of musical teaching/learning in Klenovec and Kokava.
- 2) I argue that ways of music learning/teaching always reflect particular *musical concepts*, i.e. final product (music itself) and culture which produces the music.
- 3) I suggest dealing with Romani ways of music learning/teaching as with *an educational system* rather than with missing system despite of which a great musical excellence emerges.
- 4) Drawing from Merriam, I argue that Czechoslovak system of musical education takes form of *schooling*, unlike Romani music-educational system in Klenovec and Kokava.
- 5) Drawing from Van den Bos, I suggest that while Czechoslovak system of musical education tends to be more *analytical* than *holistic*, in the case of Romani music-educational system in Klenovec and Kokava it is vice versa.
- 6) Drawing from Turino, I note, that *participatory performance* play an important role of educative medium for Romani music-educational system, while in the Czechoslovak music-educational system it is almost missing.
- 7) Upon all these theories, I consider typical traits of music education in former Czechoslovakia as analytical, formalised, intended for Classical music production, curriculum-based, determined by norms and tradition, performance-orientated, competitive, individualistic, notes-transmission based, accurate, linear and gradualist and gender neutral.
- 8) These typical traits of Czechoslovak music-educational system will be spine of my comparative ethnographic research among Romani musicians in Klenovec and Kokava.

## **5 Results of My Research : Specifics of Romani Ways of Musical Learning and Teaching**

*“I was teaching my son how to play double bass since he was ten. But I tried to teach him these things I was unaware of when I started learning myself. So I was precisely explaining him the basic things in order. But, you know, try to teach this a ten-years-old child. He soon started crying ‘hey, father... I hate learning this. I wanna play songs! Real songs!’”*

Janko Oľáh, Romani double bass player from Klenovec

In this key chapter, I will be presenting results of my own ethnographic research which has been carried out since summer 2013, mostly during an intensive fieldwork in the spring 2015. At the beginning of the chapter, I will introduce my methodology and my field in Klenovec and Kokava with reasons for which I have chosen these remote towns in Central Slovakia for my research. Later, I will depict characteristic traits of the local music-educational system. As a starting point, I will be using comparison of the actual Romani music-educational system with ideal type of formal musical education in the Czech and Slovak Republic (which has been outlined at the end of previous chapter) and its reflection in the theoretical frameworks dealing with differences in various music-educational systems (also described in the previous chapter).

### **5.1 Methodology**

My research begun in the summer 2013 when I attended an anthropological practicum lectured by Jan Havlíček (Charles University, Prague) and Ivan Murin (Univerzita Mateja Bela, Banská Bystrica). During this course, I was dealing with sociocultural status of Romani musicians in the settlement Dolinka (Klenovec) together with my colleagues Jan Kozák and Tomáš Marek. By the end of the course, however, I came across several interesting testimonies describing specifics of transgenerational transfer of musical skill among Romani musicians. I also acquainted important informants who agreed with closer cooperation in the case that my research would be carried on.

At the end of the summer 2013, I attended the festival *Koliesko* in Kokava when I met community of local Romani musician and when I decided to include them into my research for significant resemblance and shared roots of both communities.

In the academic year 2013/2014, I was on an internship at University of Durham where I was theoretically developing my project and preparing research grant for my fieldwork. The support for my project was approved by GA UK (Grant Agency of the Charles University in Prague) in April 2015, and so there was no obstruction for beginning my fieldwork which was carried out during three weeks in May and June 2015.

At the beginning of my fieldwork, I met up with acquaintances I made during my preliminary fieldwork in 2013 and used the method of snowball technique for construction of the sample of my participants. Consequently, I was in touch with 26 musicians from both Kokava and Klenovec and some other supportive characters (parents and other relatives of musicians, members of folklore ensembles, towns' representatives etc.) Then, I chose musicians so that my sample was balanced in terms of musicians' age, their family background, musical instrument etc. Finally, I set up interview sessions with 18 musicians, 17 men and one woman; the oldest one was 69-years-old and the youngest 13-years-old. I used an audio recorder for capturing these interview. The interviews were semi-structured and they were asking for experiences with learning musical instruments. The interview had various lengths; this disproportion was caused by high informality of interviews.

All of my participants agreed with being listed under their real names so I have not anonymised them. I include their short profile in the appendix; see 9.2. *My participants – details*.

Consequently, I rewrite the recorded interviews and cluster the information according to their topic and characters. These clusters are spine of this chapter and will be presented in the sections 5.3. – 5.13. Before introducing these sections, I decided to write some general information about Klenovec and Kokava with their Romani-musical communities in order to acquaint reader with the field.

## 5.2 Romani-Musicians Communities in Klenovec and Kokava

Klenovec and Kokava are towns in the Poltár district, county Banská Bystrica. Both has around 3,000 inhabitants and there is just 11 kilometres between them; they lie quite literally *over hill*. Since time immemorial, Kokava and Klenovec have been great rivals in all possible aspects. There are many jokes that are said in Klenovec about people from Kokava and vice versa. For instance, both the cannon and the tank, which remained in Klenovec as memorial monument from the Second World War, point to the direction of Kokava. In short, the rivalry is omnipresent and it could be seen even between communities of musicians, not excluding Romani ones.

This region has always been rather poor and employment opportunities have been unstable.<sup>47</sup> This might be the reason for which musicianship for the local Roma has always been the most respected craft. Even the historical roots of Romani settlement here are connected with music. As I was told by several locals, in 18th century, a Klenovec-based Hungarian aristocrat, whose name was Kubinyi, called two or three families of Romani musicians from Jánovce, giving them permission to settle in his manorial garden. In that time, it was very fashionable for Hungarian nobility to have a band of Romani musicians which accompany various soirees with their music. Kubinyi's house still exists and so his garden. Paradoxically, however, the place connected with noble soirees turned into the place of deepest poverty – Romani settlement Dolinka – where approximately 200 Roma live in desperate conditions. People from Klenovec often sarcastically note that *Kubinyi's farming went out of control*.

Romani families from Kokava have the same roots as those from Klenovec. Thanks to their shared surnames (*Cibuľa, Oláh, Radič*), we can track down original fratias of musicians coming here to practise their trade. The official number of Roma in the towns is unknown. Mayoress of Klenovec told me that during population census in 2011 there were just two or three people who declared themselves as Roma. Unofficial estimate of mayoress of Klenovec is 800 Roma (including 200 living in Dolinka), which means about one quarter of all inhabitants. The situation in Kokava is more or less similar. Musical activities, whether as professional craft or free time

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<sup>47</sup> This is true up to this date. Cf. *chapter 6 – Tradition on the Verge of Change*.

hobby, are something so common for the local Roma that Klenovec and Kokava are often regarded as synonym for *region of musicians*.

In both towns, there are well-known folklore ensembles – Kokava-based *Kokavan* and Klenovec-based *Vepor*. Both of these ensembles deal with folk Slovak music. They achieved many successes and are respected rivals on folklore musical competitions. Considering the fact that both towns are rather small and not far from themselves, it is remarkable that these ensembles have such continuity. For instance, in nearby Hnúšť'a which has more than twice more inhabitants, there has never been any folklore ensemble. Roma are traditionally (and almost exclusively) part of both ensembles on the musicians' posts. Local folklorists say that Romani band is one of the key aspects which make ensembles from Kokava and Klenovec so exceptional and for which they are considered as local stars.

Recently, this region rife with musicians has caught even the world's attention when a Kokava-based band *Kokavakere Lavutara*<sup>48</sup> led by Vlad Sendrei (one of my participants) co-recorded soundtrack of the film *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadow* (2011) under the baton of famous Hans Zimmer. This, again, confirmed the unique position of the local musicians and let the reputation about Klenovec and Kokava as "*the region of musicians*" be thrived.

The main reason, however, for which I have chosen Klenovec and Kokava for researching transgenerational transfer of musical skills, is the noticeable continuity in preserving of musical craft. We can talk about three-generational community of active musicians, horizontally and vertically interconnected. Despite of number of generations which passed by since the first families of musicians came, musicianship is still considered to be the best Romani craft. I would not count how many times I heard the sentences like: "*There is loads of musicians here!*" or "*Most of Roma here are musicians.*" or even "*There is no Roma who do not play any instrument.*" Obviously, these sayings are exaggeration, but actually not far from truth, as it will be shown later in this chapter.

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<sup>48</sup> It is fair to note that *Kokavakere Lavutara*, familiarly known as Sendreiovci, consists of musicians both from Kokava and Klenovec.

### 5.3 Musicking<sup>49</sup> as Business

In the previous chapter, I argued that formalised musical education in the Czech and Slovak Republic is mostly intended for the production of Western classical music. The system is *intentional* (cf. Holas 2005:68), i.e. ultimately serving to its aim to acquire necessary skills for being a musician performing classical music. Educational system of Roma in Klenovec and Kokava is also intentional, but the aim is different. I argue that in the case of professional Romani musician from central Slovakia the ultimate aim has always been *business*, i.e. to have maximum profit from musicking. This fact seems to be obvious, but it is basically common denominator of all traits of their music-educational system which will be mentioned in this chapter.

Romani music has always been highly influenced by musical taste of majority. This influence should be considered as an important aspect of their musical culture, or musical tradition. Simply put, they *traditionally* play what people who pay want to listen to.<sup>50</sup> Whenever we consider Romani musical tradition or musical authenticity, we need to remember the fact that music itself serves ultimately to its aim, i.e. maximising profit. Double bass player Janko from Klenovec told me once with laughter:

*“...what you meant with the ‘tradition’ [...] yes, it is not a problem for us to play that. I remember us playing on the festival Drótova nóta where the first price was 300 euros, so we simply played ‘authentically.’ You see? That’s what is all about!”*

I would also add that this tendency to maximise the immediate profit sometimes is sometimes stronger than other aspects of implicit profit that other musicians might take into account, e.g. musical prestige. The same double bass player had once an opportunity to travel to London and to be recording soundtrack for Sherlock Holmes movie. That would definitely be a unique opportunity for many musicians which most

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<sup>49</sup> I found the English term *musicking*, suggested and used by Christopher Small (1998), as the best equivalent for the Slovak slang word *muzicovanie* which sum up all activities which are connected with professional music-making.

<sup>50</sup> Even amidst Roma in the Czech and Slovak Republic, the exceptions do exist. Subethnicum called Vlachika Roma (*Olašští Romové*) has a different approach to music as they traditionally did not play for audience due to their nomadic tradition. They often show disrespect to settled Romani musicians by calling them pejoratively “fiddlers” (*húslíčkáři*) meaning “musicians playing for someone else, not themselves.” Their musical tradition is therefore less affected by the taste of majority. Their tradition consists mostly of expressing vocals accompanied by rhythm instruments such as pots and spoons. See Jurková 2003b for more details.



of them would probably be willing to pay for. Obviously, it is not just a matter of experience but also matter of a great musical prestige and beautiful decoration of any musician's CV. But Janko did not take part in this event, as he did not find it sufficiently cost-effective. "*Vlad was running out of money so he offered me 70 euros for three days [...] I would have to take a vacation in the factory and I would have loads of difficulties. Simply, it wouldn't be returnable for me...*" Janko told me.

Neither a preliminary promise nor even preliminary deal would have more importance than an actual honorarium. Many of my participants have experienced cancelling promised events because of more convenient offers somewhere else. Sometimes even wives of musicians take a part in these decisions. Wife of saxophonist Milan would manipulate many times with saxophone-case in order to send his husband to event which was better in terms of money, despite of his great anger.

Honorariums for Romani bands are often fluid and dependent on actual performance of the band. That is why Romani bands have their own strategy of communicating with audience in order to maximise the profit (which, again, take their part in their musical teaching/learning). As a symbolic seal of this communication, there is *primáš*, a band leader.<sup>51</sup> Laco, *brač*<sup>52</sup> player from Kokava told me:

*"There's great difference between good and bad primáš. With a bad one, you might earn just 25 euros for an evening which is incredibly low. But if it's a good one, then you can earn from 70 to 90 euros."*

Two of my informants have mentioned a Romani *primáš* from Rimavská Sobota who is an advanced violin player (he has got even a formal musical education and he teaches music at a conservatorium) but he fails to be a good *primáš*. Vlad, who takes him often as the best choice for concerts with *Kokavare lavutára*, stopped taking him for other events such as weddings. For events like this, he has another

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<sup>51</sup> *Primáš* in Romani band is the musician who plays main melody, often decorated with musical ornaments (*cifry*). In the most cases, *primáš* is a violinist, rarely the same role could be covered by other solo instruments such as saxophone or clarinet. He is choosing what to play, in what key and rythm etc. *Primáš*'s main role, however, lies in communication between the group and the audience. Good *primáš* is the one who can satisfy all the wishes of the audience and, of course, the one whose results are best in terms of profit.

<sup>52</sup> *Brač* is an old Slovak word for viola. Viola is typically use for playing *kontra*, i.e. accompanying music with off-beat. Kontra player is known as *kontráš* or *hráč na kontre*. Kontra could be also played by a second violin.

primáš who might not be technically as good as the other one, however, if it is necessary (as Janko told me) “*he could play even Japanese songs.*” By mentioning this aspect, I would like to point out that Romani musician is not considered being good just for technically-correct playing, but also for maximising profit of the group. This is an inseparable part of excellent-musician’s image shared among Roma in Klenovec and Kokava.

At the end of this section, I also need to add that living standard of Roma, who are musicians, is generally much higher than those who are not. Though I have not met a musician in Klenovec or Kokava for whom musicking would be the exclusive source for living, for many of them it has always been a good source of extra money. Most of my informants have also experienced busking around Europe. After the Velvet Revolution in 1989, there was a great boom of Romani buskers going abroad to earn money, not excluding these from Klenovec and Kokava. Some of them could have earned up to 40,000 Slovak crowns per months while salaries in factories in Central Slovakia would be just around 3,000. This difference was mostly caused by imbalance between weak currency of transforming post-communist Czechoslovakia in comparison to strong currency of Western-European states. Although nowadays the difference is not as high, many musicians from Klenovec and Kokava go abroad to earn some extra money even today.

This is an important fact to outline: Romani musicians in Kokava and Klenovec are considered as nobility with high living standard. As one old Romani proverb says, “*the greatest esteem to musicians*” (cf. Jurková 1997). That is why there might be (and very often actually is) a great pressure of family environment on educating their children as musicians. This involvement of family environment will be subject of the next section.

## **5.4 Involvement of Family Environment**

There is a popular saying in Klenovec and Kokava which parents often say to their daughters: “*If you don’t want to be hungry, marry a musician.*” Being a musician means to be well respected and to have much more social credit than other

Roma. That is why parents lead their sons<sup>53</sup> to career of professional musician. We cannot say that this credibility of musicians is culturally universal; on the other hand, in many cultures being musician actually means to have a “damned job” and to totter on the brink of poverty and at the bottom of the social scale.<sup>54</sup> But it is definitely not the case of central-Slovak Roma.

It has been proved many times in anthropology that transmission of cultural skills which are directly or indirectly connected with livelihood, are, indeed, provided by family members (e.g. Hewlett and Cavalli-Sforza 1986) so it should not come as surprise that family members play a great role in Romani musical learning/teaching, no matter whether direct (i.e. as music teachers) or indirect (i.e. supporters and/or “persons with whip”).

There are several important musicians-families (we could even say musicians-houses) in both Klenovec and Kokava; most important are *Radičovci*, *Oláhovci* and *Cibuľovci*. Boys born with one of these surname almost is ultimately supposed to pursue career of musician, or at least be able to play a musical instrument. “*Are they inborn musicians?*” I asked once my oldest informants, saxophonist Milan from Klenovec. “*No, I wouldn’t say inborn... I’d say they are rooted musicians. [“muzikanti od koreňa”].* In the chapter 3, I have been discussing involvement of family environment of Johann Sebastian Bach and his descendants. I would not exaggerate if I would compare this family environment with these of mentioned Romani musicians-houses from Klenovec and Kokava; I am about to show that the role of their family environment and belonging to one of the musician houses is crucial for their music-talent development.

First of all, positions of members of musicians’ houses are not different just for the sake of different living standard I have already mentioned, but also for a matter of a great prestige that is enforced by kind of historical continuum. There is a globally shared trait of Roma: they generally do not care much about their own history. Unlike many ethnicums, they do not derive their origin from a common predecessor. This

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<sup>53</sup> In the vast majority of cases, we are talking about male-musicians. I will be discussing this gender asymmetry in the chapter **5.12 Male Dominance in Instrumental Music**.

<sup>54</sup> Compare this, for instance, with shaman-musicians from South Korea (*mudang*) (Mills 2007:10-11) or Bulgarian *gaida*-players (Rice 1994:269). In both of these cases, we cannot find any support of family for people who decided to become a musician. On the contrary, we can see a pleading effort of parents to prevent their children from this “damned” career.

discontinuity is one of the aspects, which turns the anthropological concept of ethnicity into “anthropologists’ nightmare.” (cf. Gay y Blasco 2001). However, musicians-houses in Klenovec and Kokava represent a clear exception to this fact. They do remember their predecessors who were excellent musicians and they are very fond of them. Radičovci, for instance, very often mention their link to Imrich Radič (known as Dróto) who was one of the best primáš in Slovakia and respected specialist in fast folk songs (especially *Dětvanské* ones). Cibul’ovci, for another instance, derive their origin from famous violinist Miško Cibul’a alias Grbato (means Hunchbacked). Most of the musicians from Klenovec keep telling incredible stories about the power of his violin, comparing him to players like Paganini and saying “*A violinist like him has never been born since he died*” despite of the fact that he died 55 years ago. This is something very unique among Roma.

Being born in one of these family houses is also connected with some rituals, which serves to confirm their roles of musicians. Ol’áhovci, for example, give to all of their newborn sons a bow. This ritual is kind of oracle supposing that as soon as the son hold the bow on, he is a suitable candidate for career of a musicians.<sup>55</sup> It is obvious that this kind of family environment actively determines young boys to musician career. I argue that there are three aspects of this determination which take part in talent development – early musical experience, family support in the process of talent developmental process (both by hook or crook) and implicit pressure to preserve family craft. I will dedicate few paragraphs to each of these aspects.

In the chapter 3, I have been already discussing the role of early musical experience in the process of talent development. Though it is not a direct part of musical learning, it has been proved that neglecting musical experience in early childhood could prevent any child from becoming musician or even from chance to develop musical abilities (such as time and pitch distinguishing) that are necessary for obtaining any musical aptitude.<sup>56</sup> I was asking my informants since when they could

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<sup>55</sup> Though all members (including three generations) of Ol’áh’s family declare this ritual as common for all Roma, no member of Cibul’a’s family, for instance, has ever heard of it. However, a similar ritual is also known from elsewhere (cf. *Výstava Príbeh detí vetra predstavuje dejiny a kulturu Romů na Slovensku* 2003).

<sup>56</sup> Cf. chapter 3.4. *Positioning within EMDT Framework and Other Components of Romani Musical Aptitude*.

consider start of their musician-career and many of them mentioned their early childhood. Janko Déme, a primáš from Klenovec, told me:

*“Both my grandparents and parents were professional musicians [...] I remember when they would go to play to a wedding, they would almost always come back to our place to divide the money at six in the morning or so. And they would open a bottle and start playing. So I always woke up and listened. I love these memories. [...] They just lived with their music and we, as children, shared it with them.”*

Roma seem to be aware of the fact that if development of musical talent does not start soon enough, it would never be developed to a sufficient level. That is why they pay so much attention to early musical expressions of their children in order to start their musical training as soon as possible. This is especially important for the cases of children who are born in non-musician family. Mother of Peťo Cibul’a (who later became a good violinist and singer of a Rom-Pop group despite of the fact that his father was not a musician) told me about her observation at the end of which she concluded that Peťo could have had a musical talent which should have been developed:

*“I knew that he would be a musician. He sang well from his early childhood. And also, when he was observing musicians playing, I couldn’t tear him of watching and listening. He would even cry. So much he wanted to stay.”*

As soon as family recognises musical talent of their children, they start supporting their sons. This, for instance, might take form of financial support. Parents very often buy first musical instruments for their sons and are sometimes willing to pay for a musical teacher. Father of Peťo Oľáh, for instance, kept working despite having serious medical complications, just to be able to pay for studies of his son in a conservatory (which he, unfortunately, failed to finish).

This support, however, could also have a form of compulsion. When Karol Radič, probably the best present-day primáš in the county, came back from his military service, he told to his father that he no longer wants to be a professional musician and he would rather be a professional body-builder (and, as people say, he already had appearance of a body-builder in an advanced stage). When his father heard this, he gave to Karol such an amount of beating that Karol, like it or not, had to

change his decision and return to the original plan. But thanks to a father who ignored wishes of his young son, Klenovec has got one of the biggest primáš stars.

In the case of Janko Oláh, a Klenovec-based saxophonist in his sixties, and his sons and grandsons, this game on the edge of support and compulsion was brought to perfection. When his sons were about ten-years-old, he bought them guitars. He knew, though, that he would forbid them playing guitars later but at that stage he considered them as a great mean of learning basic musical patterns, especially harmony. When boys reached their seventeen, he told them to say goodbye to their lovely instruments and to start playing “traditional instruments”<sup>57</sup> – violin and double bass. *“It was like disaster. One of them had become the most respected bass guitarists in the county. So when he refused to stop playing modern music, I simply broke his bass guitar down.”* He added with smile: *“But they have never regretted. They have much more business with folk music than they would have had with modern music.”* In a similar way, Janko Oláh has led his grandsons to music. When they were young, he used to make carved fake musical instruments – a little cimbalom, little violin and so on, in order to (as he claimed) *“to teach rhythmic form their early childhood.”* The main point of his effort, however, lied in something different. As he told me later, he was well aware of the fact that children who start playing traditional instruments in their early childhood might become to feel resentment to their instruments later on. That is why Janko kept them in tension when they were looking forward to playing real instruments.

These Janko’s actions might serve as a good example of sophisticated effort to preserve family craft with minimal losses. Non-musician member of family seems to be like Janko’s personal defeat: *“One son-in-law doesn’t play an instrument. It’s such a shame. I’d break his thumbs!”* Janko concluded his narration with an emblematic sentence: *“Until the end of the world, this family will always be a family of musicians.”* As if his smile, which accompanied this sentence, would be saying: *“I’d do anything for it!”*

In the case of formal musical education in Czechoslovakia, family environment might take a part as a supporting element but, unlike different educational systems such as Japanese method *Suzuki*, we cannot consider it as a pillar on the basis of

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<sup>57</sup> By referring to “traditional instruments,” I mean the instruments which are intended for production of Slovak folk music (mainly violin, viola, cimbalom and double bass).

which the all system stands. In the case of Romani musicians in Klenovec and Kokava, on the other hand, I argue that family environment is one of the key aspects of music-talent development and, as it has been shown, being born in some family environments means that sometimes it is actually very hard *not to become musician*.

## 5.5 Lacking of Formality

It has been argued that the system of music-education in Czechoslovakia is strictly formalised. This means that it takes form of *schooling*, i.e. is taught in specific time, in specific places, by specific people and according to specific curriculums. Even the time taking by students for indirect learning (i.e. home-practising) is controlled by a teacher and is always planned according to schedule which is appropriate to particular level of student. This formality is enforced by methodical handbooks and, consequently, by law, especially by so-called *Teaching Plan [Učební plán]* which is approved by Ministry of Education (cf. Holas 2004:96–98). There are checking mechanisms for compliance with Teaching Plan and quality-standard of teaching (classroom observations, school inspections etc.) (cf. Holas 2004:103–105). One of the aspects of continuity of formality might be also considered the fact that the rank of music-teachers is always recruited from the rank of former music-students.

It would be great simplification to claim that in the case of Roma from Klenovec and Kokava the formal aspect of education is absolutely missing. This issue needs a closer examination. Berliner (1975:136–140) suggests there are always two parts of musical learning – *direct learning* (learning through direct observation and listening of a teacher) and *indirect learning* (learning by independent practising and by performing the music). These two parts are culturally universal, none of them omissible.<sup>58</sup> The difference, however, lies in the different emphasis in these two parts of musical learning. In the case of Romani musicians in Klenovec and Kokava, there is greater emphasis on *indirect* and *informal learning* though they are not exclusive, as it will be shown on the following ethnographic examples.

Although there are rather marginal, we can find testimonies of musicians and their musical learning which bare some resemblance to formalised educational

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<sup>58</sup> On the contrary to casual music performer, professional musicianship ultimately requires some kind of special training (cf. Merriam 1964:150).

system.<sup>59</sup> Mostly, they are not long-term and they could be seen rather as a quick intensive starting point than systematic effort for long-term musical education. Ondro, Klenovec-based accordionist in his sixties, told me that he was going to see an old Romani accordionist from Rimavská Sobota. They both had an accordion and the teacher was showing him convenient finger-positions. Similarly, older Janko Oľáh used to be seeing an accordion-teacher before he started playing saxophone. There were just four sessions altogether; then he was able to keep up on his own. Both of them, they were paying to their teachers. An appropriate teaching-fee was a rule with one exception: kinship of teacher and pupil. In these cases, regular sessions might have been provided for free in order to preserve the family craft. Of course, it has always depended on the level of kinship. Laco from Kokava, for instance, had a teacher who was rather a distant relative of his and so he sometimes did pay and sometimes did not. Laco remembers that he was often assessed according to the fee: *“Whenever I paid him I was the best musician in the world. When I didn’t, though, he often claimed that I’m a good-for-nothing guy who’ll never be a musician.”* These kinds of experience, however, are rather marginal and typical just for the very beginning of musical training.

Among Romani musicians from Klenovec and Kokava, there is greater emphasis on indirect and informal learning. Thus, there are as many stories about learning musical instruments as there are Romani musicians. As an example, I will give a story which I was told by Milo, a Klenovec-based double bass player in his late fifties. This story is a great proof of the fact that lacking formal (or even any) musical training is by no means an obstruction to become a musician:

*“When I was young, I wasn’t really keen on playing folk music. Here, there was a great boom of bigbít<sup>60</sup> so I wore long hair and torn jeans. And soon I started playing guitar [...]. My father wasn’t particularly happy about it, but what could he do? You know, I was in my teen so it wasn’t just a matter of music [...] we were also chasing girls [laugh]. [...] Later on, I started playing bass guitar as we lacked a bass guitarist but I didn’t mind as I found it similar. [...] Later, I appeared to be in Bohemia doing my military service. I remembered my father saying ‘tell them that*

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<sup>59</sup> I need to add that I am intentionally omitting last generation of Romani musicians as some of them have experience with system of formal education. I will deeply discuss this issue in the chapter 6 *Tradition on the Verge of Change*.

<sup>60</sup> Bigbít is a Czechoslovak term for British Beat music.



*you're a musician and your military service would be easy.' [...] One day, I was standing on a gathering when one of our higher was yelling at us: 'Is there anyone who can play double bass?' There were three hundred of us and none raised their hands. So I hesitated. 'None?' the higher yelled. So I finally raised my hand despite not holding double bass ever in my life. [...] Firstly, I was shocked as they were no frets, so I had to stick little labels on the neck of double bass. But in a month or so, I was able to play even czardases [...] I would never thought I would be a double bass player playing folk music. My father was very happy when his son arrived from his military service with cropped hair and able of playing double bass ... [laugh].*

Milo's story proves the fact that musician can acquire his ability of playing an instrument without any education or even any preceding musical training. "Learning by doing" (which was in Milo's case enforced by "learn as quickly as you can!") can lead to an emergence of musical skills which would otherwise have to be acquired through long process of musical education.

Comparing to formalised educational system, there are, as always, advantages and disadvantages. Formalised learning environment enable somehow "laboratory cleaner" environment for precise analysing of strengths and weakness of a pupil leading to better control of talent-development. On the other hand, for indirect learning and informal learning there is a great opportunity for musical learning in a group, i.e. *cooperative learning*, which will be discussed in the next section.

## **5.6 Informal Music Sessions as an Educative Medium for Cooperative Learning**

Great part of this "learning by doing" described in the previous section happens during music-production in bands, rehearsals or entirely informal music sessions. This section will be dedicated to analysing these events and to discussing their role in Romani educational system.

Jožko Radič, 25-years-old primáš from Klenovec, told me, that he was taught by his uncle (famous Karol Radič) who insisted on playing in a group as if it was an important aspect of musical learning. Firstly, he explained to him (i.e. to primáš) the

melody part. As soon as he was able to play it on his own, he made similar explanation to cimbalom and double bass players (his two cousins). Teacher Karol gravely emphasised importance of mutual listening of the band and primáš's responsibility for the performance: *"My uncle taught me that they must play according to me. Whenever they played a bad tone, I should have turned to them, knit my bows and show them my upset face."* This story is a nice example proving that Romani musicians consider mutual cooperativity of all members of group as an essential part of Romani musicking.

This given case, however, is kind of rare as this cooperativity was set somehow artificially by extremely exceptional teacher (who was able to teach playing violin, cimbalom and double bass). Most of this cooperative competence, I would argue, is acquired entirely spontaneously during informal musical sessions. These musical sessions might take form of celebrations (commonly called *bašavely*) or spontaneous jam sessions<sup>61</sup> (which, after some glasses of alcohol, might actually turn into *bašavel*), both usually appearing out of blue and lasting until daybreak. These sessions correspond to concept of *participatory performance*, as Turino<sup>62</sup> suggested. He stresses its function for coherence of society and flow of social events which is also immensely present in the case of Romani culture. However, I would like to stress its other function which takes great part in development of musical aptitude: as a by-product, there is a unique tool which serves as *music-educational medium* developing these aspects that could be barely developed by formal system of musical education (such as the aspect of cooperativity).

Many of my informants, indeed, mentioned the role of informal sessions as crucial for their career of musician and the opportunities where "it all started." Vlad was once telling me that his two brothers were going to see an old Romani guitarist when they started playing guitar. *"So did they pay to him?"* asked I. *"No, they didn't. In fact, he didn't teach them. They were just playing together with him."* Opportunities like these are just ideal for developing musical skills through listening

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<sup>61</sup> By referring to jam sessions, I would like to point out the similarity of Romani ways of acquiring music and the ways of American jazz-musicians. Jam sessions are, indeed, consider as the main pillar of the educational process: *„As essential to students as technical information and counsel is the understanding of jazz acquired directly through performance. In part, they gain experience by participating in one of the most venerable of the community's institutions, the jam session.“* (Berliner 1994:128).

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Chapter 4.5 *Participatory Performance as a Learning/Teaching Medium* (T. Turino).

and observing (which many of my informants mentioned as “*watching the fingers*” [*pozeranie sa na prsty*]), as well as for developing mutual listening which is necessary for musical cooperation.

This cooperative learning is very often happening inside family environment. That might be the reason for which no siblings-musicians in Klenovec and Kokava play the same instrument. The musicians’ posts are always cast in order to be fitting into family disposition and allowing participatory playing within family environment. For example, a young primáš David Oľáh plays almost every day accompanied by his brother Miňo or father Milan (both brač players), similarly primáš Jožko plays with his father (also brač player), primáš Janko Deme is looking forward to weekends when his son, returning from Košice, can accompany him playing cimbalom or piano and so on. “*There is sometimes too much music that I need to run away...*” told me mother of David with smile. It goes without saying, however, that cooperative learning can also take place out of narrow family circles. Musicians are many times clustered by generations and spend most of their free time by playing in bands. So, for instance, David plays in a group with his two same-age cousins (who play cimbalom and double bass), another group could be found around David’s brother Miňo, brač-player in his twenties, with another cousins, cimbalom and violin players also in their twenties, and so forth.

I would also assume that *multiinstrumentality*, which was very common among all my participants, might be a result of this emphasis on cooperative learning. “*Once you get to know one instrument, you can get to know any instrument as it is all connected.*” double bass player Janko told me. When I was to a concert of Kokavakere Lavutára in Bratislava, I witnessed a situation when all members of the band went away to have coffee and there was just cimbalom player Džuso on the stage tuning his cimbalom up. Suddenly, a soundman appeared saying that he needed to set up microphones of all instruments. Džuso, without hesitation, played sequentially cimbalom, double bass, guitar and accordion to help to set the microphones up while performing a really good level of knowing each instrument. Sound man commented this with words: “*Oh, you gipsies, you know how to play everything, don’t you?*” I would speculate that this common multiinstrumentality might also be a result of mutual listening and observing during number informal music sessions serving as an important educative medium for cooperative learning.

In the previous chapter, I argued that formalised system of Czechoslovakia is rather individualistic and very often neglecting the principles of cooperativity, especially in early stages. I argue that, unlike formalised system of musical education, the Romani ways of acquiring musical skills put a great emphasis on aspect of cooperation.

The term *cooperative learning* is nowadays very often mentioned in the discussion of Western education as a whole. There are alternative approaches (e.g. Montessori education) which prefer cooperative learning over *competitive learning* on the basis of which (as critics say) all system of Western education stands. Thus, cooperativity is considered to be the direct opponent of competitiveness in general discussion about education. However, I would not say that competitiveness among Romani musician is absent. It does exist, however, it has completely different rules. The following section will closer examine competitiveness among Romani musicians and its involvement in music-educational process.

## **5.7 Different Kinds of Competition – a Fight with No Rules**

Czechoslovak system of musical education is competitive from very conception. Competition starts with internal assessment of pupils. Theoretically, the internal assessment should serve as a tool for pedagogue. However, as it has been pointed out, sometimes this tool turn mistakenly into the *aim* of all educational-process (cf. Holas 2004:85). Competition goes on with contest-events. Student must prove that s/he is better than the rest of the class, later in the city, in the county and finally in the Republic. The best is the one who can “beat them all.” And as soon as s/he finishes *ZUŠ*, there are entrance exams for conservatorium, where s/he has to beat them all again. Not to mention entrance exams to Music Academy, job-interview for contract in orchestras and so on. In short, competitiveness is one of the great tools of formalised music-educational system for music skills development. As soon as musicians would not have “opponents,” they would not have to work on themselves. This is the key.

Similarly, competition is a great aspect of Romani talent-development. Just the rules of competitions are different. I would argue there are *no rules*. This is a great

difference between formalised system where “competition ring” is well organised, the rules are predefined and there are referees who are looking after fairness of the game.

Milo told me, that competition among musicians is nothing comparing to days passed. *“You could have counted on the fingers of one hand those who were NOT musicians!”* Competition used to be immense and fierce. Everyone who wanted to play must have been playing. *“If you played badly just once, you would be never taken again.”* accordionist Ondro told me. For some of them, the competition was the reason for changing their instrument. Janko Oláh, for instance, ceased playing accordion as there was number of accordionists. He focused on playing saxophone as there were just two saxophonists in Klenovec and saxophone was becoming extremely popular. Simply put, choosing the instrument was not just matter of love but also matter of potential income.

Due to the immense competitions, older musicians were scared of being replaced by younger. *“Young musicians obviously had faster hands.”* Ondro told me. That was the reason for which older musicians always protected their musical skills. For instance, they played some musical ornaments so quickly that younger musicians could not grasp it. *“Old Roma didn’t show everything. They showed just what was necessary. They were scared of being replaced. [...] There was one exception, though, and that was family.”* Kokava-based brač player Laco told me. In these cases, old musicians preferred to preserve quality of family craft and showed as much as possible.

Unlike fair competition between opponents of formalised music-educational system, the Romani competition often takes form which one would labelled as “not-fair.” These might look like *taunting* and *mocking*. Jožko Radič, a primáš from Klenovec, told me the story when he was exposed to mocking which motivated him for the next musical progress:

*“I remember once we were on a competition of folklore ensembles near to Bratislava. There was primáš, a gipsy, who played incredibly well. And he bragged about it a lot. He was mocking at me: ‘Hey, look at me! Can you play this? And this? You’re never gonna play like me, never in your life!’ So I was angry. I came back home and started practising four hours a day or more. [...] I met him again a year after. When he listened me playing he was taken by surprise: ‘Hey! What did you do*

*with yourself?’ It was my turn to mock at him: ‘You know, if you wanna play like me you need to practise a bit more.’”*

Moreover, taunting among family members is very common. David told me, for example, that both brother and father taunt him a lot to keep him motivated. Sometimes, they use words which one would consider as cruel regarding the age of David: “*You play really, really badly! You should practise much more.*” David’s same-age cousin Dalibor, who is a cimbalom beginner, is taunted by his brother who is not even a musician. And yet, both boys take this family taunting rather as a source of motivation than something which could discourage them.

Mocking and taunting is definitely not something which we could read in the methodical guides for music teachers. But despite of this, it is something which has a great impact on Romani music learning. If there were a referee watching Romani musical competition, he would probably find many aspects of their competition unfair. However, these are specifics of their music-educational system setting their musical excellence apart from ours.

## **5.8 Omitting Curriculums and “Toil with Pleasure”**

Czechoslovak system of music-education is strictly curriculum-based, i.e. curriculums always lie between pupil and the aim of the education (playing a musical instrument) (cf. Holas 2004:36). I have been arguing that these curriculums are more or less *linear* (drawing from Van den Bos), which means they start with easy *pedagogical* repertoire which gradually becoming more and more complex. Repertoire played by pupils is always appropriately fitting into their current skill.

An important specificity of Romani music-educational system is that they simply omit curriculums and start directly with *real* repertoire.<sup>63</sup> I argue that omitting curriculums might result in inherent pleasure which motivates musicians to keep up with their development of musical skills and which can transform a “great toil” to a “great pleasure.”

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<sup>63</sup> That is what Van den Bos (1995) labelled as *concentric curriculums*. Cf. 4.4 Analytical vs. Holistic Approach (P. Van den Bos).

First important factor of this inherent pleasure lies in the aspect of cooperativity, which has already been discussed. Turino, referring to Csikszentmihalyi, suggests that pleasure is ultimately included in participatory performance, which, as it has been mentioned, played an important part in Romani culture. He concludes that this pleasure leads to desire to repeat these kinds of events, which, indeed, leads to music-development:

*“Csikszentmihalyi has observed that because flow experiences are pleasurable, people return to the activities that provide them again and again. As they do so, their skills for the activity increase, requiring ever higher challenges. In places where participatory music and dance are at the center of social occasions, opportunities to improve one’s skills are common. (Turino 2008:31)*

Another important aspect of the pleasure could be found in the simple fact that they play what they like to play. It is probably matter of common sense, but it is still needed to emphasise: playing what pupils like is, indeed, much more pleasurable than playing what is appropriate to their actual level of musical aptitude.

When I asked Lajo, a Kokava-based guitarist in his late fifties, how many hours a day he was practising, he replied: *“Well, I simply came home from a shift, sometimes I even forget to eat and I already have guitar in my hands. I was able to play all the night when I was trying to solve how to play some complicated songs. Even until daybreak.”* and later he added with smile: *“You know, music is a bitch. Beautiful, but a bitch”*

Many of my informants were similarly deep in love with their instruments. Contrabass player Janko, for instance, told me:

*“When I was seventeen, I used to play bass guitar in a band. I was just that old and all my playmates were older. So when we were required to play after midnight I would soon become too tired to keep my eyes opened. But despite of that, when I arrived home at 4 a.m. or so, I sat on the sofa and kept silently playing. When I woke up in the morning, I still had the bass guitar in my hands.”*

I would guess that none could be in love with their instrument as far as they do not play what they like to play. This is, again, a great difference between their musical education and the institutionalised one. As it has been outlined, both educational systems are appropriate for their concepts of music. As soon as one wants to play

classical music in an orchestra, the Western formalised system of music education is the only educational system which can help them out with reaching their goal. There is one more point, however, I would like to make. Only musicians who can feel pleasure during their music production can pass their pleasure to the audience. In words of primáš Jožka Radič, “*I’m enjoying when people are enjoying.*” This simple fact could help us with understanding the great mystery of Romani music; that “*something in their heart which is impossible to describe.*”

## 5.9 Listening Instead of Notes and Key Mobility as a Result

While considering Czechoslovak system of musical education, I concluded it is strictly *note-based*. This means that the role of the notes in transmitting musical material is almost exclusive. Even the very first exercise consisting of repetition of one tone is written into five lines of stave.

Among Romani musicians, on the contrary, musical material is transmitted exclusively without notes,<sup>64</sup> i.e. by *listening* and *observing*. It is a very significant trait of Romani musicality which results in stereotype: “*Look! They can play so well and even without notes!*” In actual fact, this statement could be rephrased as follows: “*They can play so well preciously because they do not know notes.*” Later in this section, I will be arguing that *key mobility*, which could be considered as an advanced musical ability, is actually result of not-knowing notes. First of all, however, I will discuss how does the listening-based transmission look like.

It goes without saying, that the oral way of transmission of musical material was very common in the past. Nowadays, however, it is rather marginal, overshadowed by influence of reproduced music. This shift from oral-based to reproduced-based transmission had begun as soon as the first radios became available in the region. Thanks to radio broadcasting, many genres (such as swing, jazz, bigbeat etc.) which would otherwise never find a way to Central Slovakia, have become popular in Klenovec and Kokava. Milan, a Klenovec-based saxophonist in his late sixties, was telling me how did the radio-based transmission looked like:

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<sup>64</sup> Nowadays, it is not entirely exclusive as the youngest generation of Romani musicians pursue institutionalised musical training. I will discuss this in the chapter 6 *Discussion : Tradition on the Verge of Change*.



*“We simply gathered around the radio and listened. Once the song ended up, we started recalling. [...] I was remembering something, the guitarist was remembering something else and double bassist grasped also something. So we put the pieces together and, in the evening, we played the song in a café.”*

Obviously, recording techniques (magnetic tapes or cassette tapes) allowed replaying so that musicians could play the particular song (or only the particular musical ornament) again and again. It does not probably come as surprise that *YouTube* today plays the greatest part in this transmission.

As one of the results of omitting notes in the process of musical-material transmission, there is a phenomenon which I call *key mobility*, i.e. the ability of immediate transposing to the key in which the song is being played. This key mobility is not typical just for the region Klenovec-Kokava, but it is widely known among all Romani musicians, as the following interview with Romani musician Jožka Fečo proves:

*Q: “I have heard from Roma that Romani musicians had to often play songs, which Gadjó sang, even though they didn’t know them.”*

*A: “Yes, yes! They had good ears. Because the song...I will give you an example... the song was for instance in A minor but Gadjó started to sing, let’s say, in B minor. And they immediately started playing in this key. They couldn’t say: ‘Wait! I will play for you but in A minor!’ It didn’t happen.”*

(Hübschmannová 1997)

To explain the link between not-knowing notes and key mobility, we need to take step back and return to institutionalised system of musical education. Many musicians tend to regard the difficulty of the particular piece according the difficulty of its notation. E major seems to be a very difficult key, B major or F sharp major are even impossible to play for some musicians. It is because their musical knowledge is tightly linked to musical-stave and many complications appeared to be consequence of its reading. Putting it simply, *“the more sharps or the more flats, the more complications.”* Nevertheless, many Romani musicians would not probably know what is so stressful about that. For them, neither sharps nor flats do exist. They can play song in B major as well as F sharp major without hesitation.

I have asked many of my participants how it is possible to obtain such a skill. Many of them said just “*you have to have it here*” pointing out their heads, hands, ears or hearts. But some of them revealed me that it is not a matter of a miracle but rather a matter of both specific learning and communication inside band.

To start from the beginning, it is necessary to break one myth which I often heard among the audience. Their ability of immediate transposing from one key to another has given rise to the myth that every single Romani musician is possessed by *absolute pitch*. In actual fact, this musical trait is as rare among Roma as among majority. Laco told me, that he used to play with an exceptional Romani musician from Hnúšť'a, able of playing almost any instrument and moreover distinguishing tone pitch without any reference:

*“He had absolute pitch. I witnessed that someone slammed with a door and he was able to say what tone it was. [...] When he was playing cimbalom, he sometimes played with one hands and tune the cimbalom up with the other. [...] He was simply incredible.”*

*“This absolute pitch, is it common among Romani musicians?”* asked I.

*“I wouldn't say that. In my all life, I have met just this guy who possessed it.”*

As far as I can say, there is much more easier explanation for emergence of key mobility than the speculation about absolute pitch. Firstly, I argue that key mobility is a result of their education. Saxophonist Janko Oľáh told me: *“Among Roma, you can't say about yourself that you are a musician if you're not able of playing in any key.”* He described me his own way of was learning harmony. Before he started playing saxophone, he was playing accordion. So looking at accordion, he took a piece of paper and wrote all chords down according to circle of fifths (obviously, without knowing what circle of fifth actually is) and later memorised them. He knows them by heart even today. It is also common to practise these keys that cause troubles. Primáš Jožko, for instance, told me: *“I always had difficulties with open E string. So there were days I played just on the open E just to make myself sure.”*

It is important to add that this musical trait is also a result of communication inside the band. I will show it on an example of so-called *rondo*. Rondo usually happens at late stage of night on events such as weddings. People are standing in a

circle and when it is their turn, s/he sings his/her favourite song. Romani band is supposed to accompany the singer without any previous negotiation about the key. Singer can sing the song in *whatever* key and so the Romani band is supposed to play in whatever key. It is common that audience pay for their wishes by giving money for each of their song, usually giving them into primáš's violin. Sometimes, there are situations that the singer sings exceptionally badly and start singing the song out of tune. Even in these cases, however, Romani band have to keep up with the audience. I would say that accompanying an out-of-tune singer is the most challenging deal for musicians which can be done just by Romani bands.

Ability of immediate transposing is definitely very useful for moments like rondo. During these kinds of performing, however, there is always an on-going communication inside the band which is well hidden to ears of audience. Gombík, a Kokava-based double bassist, told me. *“Sometimes you can't hear the singer so you need to listen to primáš [...] Accompanying instruments join after two or three tones. If it is a complicated key, the one who hit it first say it to others. It is very often a cimbalist because he can quickly try various keys.*

Another double bass player, Janko from Klenovec, emphasised the importance of reference tone.

*“You know, you just finish the song so you still have tone in your mind. As soon as anyone else starts singing, you can assume whether he's singing higher or lower than was the previous song. [...] An important thing is that you don't have to play the right key from the very first tone. So you're trying. Sometimes you hit it, sometimes you are semitone higher or semitone lower. After three or four tones, you find the key.”*

Janko also stressed the importance of band mutual listening and communication: *“In the most cases, everyone hits the key rightly after few tones. Sometimes it happens, though, that some of us is struggling with finding the right key. When he keeps playing badly, someone just shout at him: ‘Dežo!’ meaning ‘It's D minor!’”* “So you have special designation for each key?” asked I. *“Sure. E is Eva, F is Fero, G is Gejza, A is Adam and so on.”*

For an uninformed viewer, key mobility might seem as a miracle, somehow related to their “inborn musical talent.” I argue, however, that there are much more

sensible explanation for this. The roots of this confusion lie in our unwitting comparison of their musical excellence with “ours.” Putting it simply, omitting notes is not a handicap, as many people would say, but it might lead to emergence of other advanced musical skills, such as key mobility or art of improvisation. The improvisation will be subject of next section.

## **5.10 Creativity instead of Accuracy and the Art of Improvisation as a Result**

I argued that Czechoslovak system of musical education is aimed at accuracy. It could be said that it is even more accurate than other subsystems of Western musical education. Jiří Pejcha (2010), for instance, who was comparing the Czech and the British system of musical education on the basis of examination of methodical guides of both systems, noted:

*“The emphasis is placed particularly on the technical and expressive skills of students. It is expected that the student is able to play appropriately challenging pieces from the list as well as by heart. But there is no mention that the student should be able to improvise (p. 26)*

Improvisation could be defined as *“the creation of music in the course of performance,”* according to oldest definition by Ernst Ferand. However, we cannot consider improvisation as an antonym with the word *accuracy* and anticipate that music is either purely improvised or purely accurate. Nettl (1974) suggests the idea of continuum between *fixed music* and *improvised music*. Particular music always positions itself somewhere between these two extremes. Obviously, music which is rather improvised demands different methods of musical education than the one which is rather fixed.

Probably the most thorough contribution to improvisation-based musical education was made by Paul Berliner in his book *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation (1994)*. This book is dedicated to the process of acquiring improvisational skills of American jazz musicians. He points out that jazz improvisation is not just instantaneous *creative interplay between vehicles and ideas* but it is also rooted and formed by tradition.

Tendency to improvisation-extreme of Nettle's continuum is an important aspect of music of Roma and not just those in Slovakia. Pettan (1996), for instance, who dealt with Roma (Gypsies) in Kosovo, described the Romani way of dealing with music as follows: "*Gypsies handle a tune as raw material, out of which they tend to create a new product [...] In the process of molding the product, Gypsy musicians consider all musical features changeable.*" (p. 56) And at the end of his work, he noted: "*Their goal in music is not to intimate a tune, but to create a personalized version of it*" (p. 57). Pettan expressed commonly shared tendency of Romani musicians for shoreless variability. The song will differ not only from town to town or from one musician to another but also from day to day or mood to mood of certain musician.

When I was asking saxophonist Milan for explaining me the matter of improvisation, he said: "*I don't know how to explain that. You know every one has his own šmik or šmuk.*" It is hard to translate these words to English. I would probably compare them to interjections following some performance of a magical trick. It illustrates that improvisation is actually nothing which Romani musicians often think of but rather something immanently present in very conception of their music.

The most significant part for improvisation is definitely the melodic part of primáš. He decorates the basic melodic line with various ornaments, commonly known as *cifry* (sing. *cifra*). Contrabass player Milo explained me matter of *cifry* as follows: "*Every primáš has his own cifra. There are some typical for Klenovec, for Kokava, for Rimavská Sobota and so on. But there are also cifry which are like personal secret of a particular primáš. [...] the better musician the more personalised cifry he's got*"

Improvisation, nevertheless, is not just a matter of melodic parts but it is immensely present in the case of accompanied instruments, i.e. for the part of *harmony*. Generally speaking, Romani harmony tends to be very dense. Accordionist Ondro expressed this density in following words "*In the case of Roma, the music is much more fuller. They do not hold one chord for the whole phrase but they play several of them.*"

This is especially typical for guitar players who use number of chord-variants such as diminished, augmented, suspended or extended chords for many of which

even an advanced music theorist would probably have trouble to find appropriate name (and obviously for which Roma themselves do not know names). Once I was interviewing Lajo, a guitarist player from Kokava in his late fifties, I asked him for the issue of harmony-variation. Instead of immediate reply, he gave me a guitar saying: *“I’ll show you. Just hold D minor chord.”* So I did. *“And know hold the same chord conversely.”* *“What you mean by ‘conversely?’”* I passed him his guitar and he started showing me shoreless number of variants of D minor using all the length of the guitar neck. *“You see? I can play it up here and down there, or in the middle if I need. And these are variation!”* Then he started playing a Romani song changing chords per each bar (sometimes even twice or four times per bar) which gives out unmistakable feeling of romaness. *“And you play like that...boringly...! Just one chord per bar. How could you enjoy that?”*

To sum it up, both melodic and harmonic improvisation is a distinctive trait of Romani music. This ability stemmed especially from cooperative learning and listening-based methods of transmission. As Romani parts in group are by no means fixed, musicians’ post are very flexible and interchangeable, which will be shown in the next section.

### **5.11 Flexibility and Adaptability**

There is one great aspect of notes-based transmission: flexibility and interchangeability. Orchestra musicians, for instance, who have never played together before, can quickly get a piece of classical music together. Musicians’ posts are completely interchangeable, as soon as one musician is unable to play, there is another who can fully cover his part. As far as it has been shown, this might seem like a disadvantage for Romani musicians. But I would argue that despite omitting notes-based transmission, adaptability and flexibility is also an important and appreciated aspect of Romani musicianship.

Most of professional musicians I have met up in Kokava and Klenovec do not have one *exclusive* band. *“I’m going wherever they call me.”* double bass player Janko told me adding that the business comes always first. There is no need for rehearsals. They just go and play. As soon as one musician has a different business, there is another one who can play instead. This would not work without mutual

reliance on skills of musicians. Simply put, if there was no common model of Romani musician shaped by specifics of their unique educational methods, this aspect of flexibility and interchangeability would be missing. They can rely on the facts that all musicians will be able of playing in whatever key, be able of improvising, showing own pleasure passing and it to the audience. For instance, Vlad, the frontman of famous Kokava band *Kokavakere Lavutara*, has more than three alternatives for every single post in the group. There is no need for an intensive rehearsing, they just meet up and play.

Their *multiinstrumentality*, which I have been already discussing, can play a great part in the aspect of interchangeability. When Kokavakere Lavutara went for a concert to Bratislava, their double bassist did not show up in Zvolen as it had been settled and he did not pick up their calls. So they started discussing the variant that the cimbalist would play double bass and they would play without cimbalom.

Their musical flexibility is not used just for interchangeability of musicians' posts but it is also reflected in their ability of adapting any genre which is demanded by the audience. At the of this section, I will a nice example of musical adaptability which I was told by double bassist Janko:

*"I remember us playing on an event somewhere [...] During the pause, there was a guy who came to ask: 'Guys, wouldn't you know these two songs?' and he named two songs I have never heard of before. But it didn't matter. We went out to have a cigarette taking my cell phone along and opening up YouTube. I found these two songs and let them being played, saying to my playmates: 'Guys, listen to them carefully, we're playing that in five minutes!' Then we decided in what key we shall play it and in five minutes we stood up on the stage playing these songs. When the guy listened to his favourite songs, he was amazed. He said: 'Whoa! I've never seen anything like it. Here you have 50 euros!'"*

## **5.12 Male Dominance in Instrumental Music**

Male dominance in instrumental music is the last specificity of the system of Romani music-educational system I will mention. The formalised system is strictly gender-neutral and as far as I am concerned, there are even no stereotypes questioning

this neutrality. Nevertheless, the Romani musicianship has always been privilege of men.<sup>65</sup>

Women are involved in music but in a completely different way. They mostly sing genre of songs called *halgató*. These *halgatós* are slow and full of emotions; sometimes they are even regarded as ritual whimpering. They are considered as a communication valve for women whose position is slightly limited in patriarchal Romani families (cf. Jurková 2003b). The instrumental music, however, was for women almost forbidden. As one old Romani proverb says, “*girl grow up with song, boy with violin.*” (Jurková 1997:45). Even primáš Panna Cinka, a legendary Hungarian-Romani woman, who lived in 18th century, was supposedly wearing men’s clothing when she was on stage. Saxophonist Janko told, me that “*parents were really happy when a boy was born as he was supposed to become a musician... but they might have been sad if it was a girl.*” I will give a very rare ethnographic example of a woman who learnt herself to play a musical instrument despite sociocultural restrictions.

Zdena Radičová, maiden Cibul’ová, is 60-years-old inhabitant of Romani settlement *Dolinka* in Klenovec. She is a living child of the famous primáš Miško Grbato who died when she was four. Despite of her father’s death, she was raised in the very rich musical environment where all her brothers were musicians. In her teens, she felt in love with guitar but she knew that she could not play because she was a woman. So she started learning on the sly. “*I was really looking forward to being home alone. Whenever my mother with my brothers went shopping, I had guitar in my hands and I practised [...] There was none whatsoever who could teach me so I had to learn everything on my own.*”

Later, she told her secret to her younger brother who was a bass guitarist and so they started playing together. She realised that she should have been learning in various keys to be able to accompany other musician in any key. She used a radio and recordings for learning. “*The most difficult songs were these written by Gondolán.*”<sup>66</sup> *It sometimes took 45 minutes to figure just one chord out!*” Later on, her older brother

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<sup>65</sup> Even this is no more so exclusive. I will discuss current situation in gender neutrality in the next chapter **6 Discussion : Tradition on the Verge of Change**.

<sup>66</sup> She was referring to Antonín Gondolán (born 1942), Romani musician born in Slovakia whose career is tightly connected with the name Karel Gott, uncrowned king of Czech pop-music.



got to know about her hidden guitar skills. He was honestly surprised but happy at the same time.

She also likes singing. When she was unmarried, she used to go singing to one café but it all stopped after marriage. Despite being so rooted in music, she has never led their own children to music. Both of her sons are non-musicians. *“They are not good enough. They are deaf from their father.”*

When Vlad Sendrei went to Dolinka, he was impressed by her skills and he wanted to make her a new Romani star. But she roughly refused any participation. She has never played for business and she never would. All she did was just for her pleasure and pleasure of her family. *“I’ve always been with music and I will always be.”*

### **5.13 Chapter Summary**

- 1) This chapter dealt with the specifics of music-educational system of Romani musicians in Klenovec and Kokava. These specifics were presented as a comparison to standardised system of musical education in the Czech and Slovak Republic.
- 2) I argue that essential difference lies in the fact that while the aim of the standardised music-educational system is “playing classical music,” the aim of Romani musicians is to maximise profit from musicking.
- 3) I emphasise involvement of family environment as a crucial aspect of development of musical talent.
- 4) I point out that Romani traditional musical education in the most cases lack any kind of formalities and their acquiring of musical skills does not take form of schooling.
- 5) I stress importance of informal musical sessions as educative medium able of developing skills for cooperative musicking which are barely being developed by the institutionalised system of musical education.
- 6) I consider competition among Romani musicians as an important stimulus for musical-aptitude development, however, unlike the case of formalised system

of musical education, this competition has no predefined rules and often lack “fairness.”

- 7) Due to omitting curriculums and starting with real repertoire, I argue that Romani educational system is based upon inherent pleasure.
- 8) I regard Romani listening-based transmission (on the contrary to notes-based transmission typical for standardised educational system) as one of the causes leading to emergence of key mobility, i.e. ability of immediate transposing from one key to another.
- 9) I assume that lacking of emphasis on accuracy leads to emphasis on both melodic improvisation and dense harmony.
- 10) I consider flexibility of musicians’ post and genre-adaptability as an important trait of Romani musicianship.
- 11) I point out that, unlike gender-neutral institutionalised educational system, the Romani instrumental music is restricted to men.

## 6 Discussion : Tradition on the Verge of Change

*“Learning [...] is vital not only in the sense that music behaviour, taken as a unit, must be learned, but also because it forms the link that makes the process of music-making dynamic and ever-changing.”*

(A.P. Merriam : Anthropology of Music)

(Merriam 1964:145)

As James Clifford (1986:10) noted, *“cultures do not hold still for their portraits.”* I went to Slovakia to describe traditional educational methods of Romani musicians but when I was doing my intensive fieldwork, I realise that it is very hard to say what *“traditional”* actually means. Despite I was describing specifics of Romani music-educational methods among three-generational communities of musicians asynchronously (i.e. as a stable system) the system is actually dynamically changing, or, so to speak, is on the verge of a great change. In this chapter, I will discuss nature of this change. I have found four aspects: *change of lifestyle, change of genre, socioeconomic change of the region* and *involvement of standardised system of musical-education*. I will dedicate several paragraphs to each of these aspects.

*“In the past, you could have heard singing from everywhere. Bašavely were spontaneous with no need to organise them. Nowadays, however, it seems to be changing.”* primáš Janko told me. *“In former times, Roma were just one village. But today, Roma lives rather separately, alone for themselves. They’d rather be watching TV or surfing the Internet.”* saxophonist Milan added. Both of them remembered the good old days when music was significant trait for Romani minority. Today, however, they consider Romani musicality as a relict from the past. Romani settlement Dolinka in Klenovec is full of music for most of the day. Nevertheless, it is mostly music reproduced by loudspeakers.

I have been discussing the importance of early musical experience for musical-talent development. This early experience nowadays seems to be very limited. Vlad Sendrei, who is managing the biggest Romani children choir in Slovakia, told me: *“Today, many Romani children have difficulties with singing. They often sing out of tune. Comparing with past, it is just a disaster.”* Later, he added: *“When I was young,*

*we were surrounded by music. My grandmother sang me all day long. I think that musical hearing is well-developed during opportunities like these. Today, however, none is singing to their children.”*

Obviously, it is not just matter of early musical experience and its impact on musical-aptitude development, but also a matter of overall approach to music. Due to change of Romani lifestyle, it is now all changing.

Another root of change lies in genre-preference. As it has been discussed, it has not been really typical to cling on a specific genre for Romani musicians. Their popular genre is the one which maximises profits from musicking. The model of Romani group which we tend to label as “traditional,” (i.e. the model with violin-primáš, viola-kontráš, cimbalist and double bassist and sometimes other musicians’ posts) is actually the model which was constituted in 19th century as it was well valued by Hungarian nobility. Simply put, it has been constituted as it was a very successful business model. As the musical taste of majority is changing, Romani musicians try to find other ways of maximising profit from musicking.

That is why many Roma focus on other musical instruments. Most typically, it is keyboard which is an emblematic symbol for musical genre which many of my informants named as “*killer of folk music*” – the genre called *Rom-Pop*. There are others who pursue career of DJs as it is nowadays widely demanded and economically very convenient. Brač player Laco told me: “*People are simply poor in this region so why would they pay for five musicians if they can pay just one.*” Even for occasions where Romani bands would be demanded in the past (such as Romani weddings), DJs are nowadays called instead. Putting it simply, supply corresponds to demand, as it has always been.

Vlad Sendrei is however very sorry about this disappearing of “traditional music.” He raises money from EU for projects which are intended to save Romani traditional music. “*The situation is not as bad here as in the Eastern Slovakia. There, children have never seen a double bass or violin. That’s why Kokavakere Lavutara runs project for rescuing Romani traditional music [...] We go to Romani settlements in the East and we are playing for them Romani traditional songs.*” Vlad also raised money for running a Kokava-based music school for Romani children. Nevertheless,

even this project has not met with success. *“Do you see this wardrobe? There are eight violins there but none keen on playing them.”*

To be fair, however, even projects of Vlad Sendrei and Kokavakere Lavutara are not especially traditional. Amidst the songs of Kokavakere Lavutara, we can find *Andro verdan drukos nane* written by non-Rom Eugen Doga for a Russian film *Queen of the Gypsies (Cigáni idú do neba)*, *Bubamara* written by non-Rom Goran Bregović for the film *Black Cat, White Cat (Čierna mačka, biely kocúr)* and so on. Simply put, the Romani authenticity is always very questionable matter. The band Kokavakere Lavutara is actually just another response to market demands. As far as I could see in their concert in Bratislava, Romani music is has become very popular even among non-Roma teenagers. And as far as this popularity will be lasting and gaining profit, Kokavakere Lavutara will be going on.

Both changes in lifestyles and changes in genres go hand in hand with socioeconomic transformation of the region. Economic prowess of the region has been sharply decreasing. There is a massive unemployment leading to tendency to migration to big cities elsewhere in Slovakia or to the Czech Republic. In the past, people had higher living standard and so there were much more spare-times activities. There were cafés in both Kokava and Klenovec with live music at least three times per week. For many of musicians, it was great source of extra income. Guitarist Breno told me: *“I earned around 2000 crowns in a factory and than I was able to earn another 1000 by playing in café [...] I played there three times a week – on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. And when there was a wedding and we were supposed to play until morning, we were able to earn 500 more.”*

However, it has changed a lot. Cafés are no longer centres of evening life in Kokava or Klenovec. People have difficulties with their living expenses so there is just little money left to spare. And as none is paying for music, none is playing music.

Economic conditions have changed for buskers as well. The great potential income for busking abroad, as I have already said, was caused by disproportion of the currencies. Nowadays, however, it is no longer convenient in terms of money. Ones say that it is caused by post-revolutionary economic conditions, others blame euro adoption. In any case, musicking is no longer considerable as an exclusive (or major)

source of income. As Laco told me, *“By musicking, you can nowadays earn just for alcohol and cigarettes.”*

Last kind of change I will point out lies in Roma’s gradual adoption of institutionalised system of musical education. This means that the specific way of constructing Romani musical excellence which has been subject of this thesis will probably disappear in the next few generations.

There are Romani musicians who are really proud of being musicians despite not-having any musical education (e.g. 25-years-old primáš Jožko), there are those who are rather shy about it. I heard a story about famous primáš Karol when he was chatting with some man in Germany and he was asked about his musical education. Because he was very shy about not-having any, he made up a story about studentship in Hungary mentioning name of one famous violin teacher. Unfortunately for him, the man knew personally the mentioned teacher and, immediately, he gave him a call in front of Karol. As the teacher on the other side of wire did not know him, Karol was getting blushed. Then, his playmates told to the man: *No, he has no education.* When the man heard that, he could not have believed his ears, as they would have never thought that someone could be so good without any education. No matter whether Romani musicians are proud of their lacking formal musical education or not, this lack has always been considered as a significant trait of Romani musicianship. Even this, however, is quickly changing.

My oldest informant with musical education was Janko Déme, primáš from Klenovec in his forties who finished ZUŠ in Hnúšť’a. He depicted me his difficulties with the educational process. He was supposed to play notes but there was none who could give him a piece of advice, despite of the fact that both his father and grandfather were respected musicians. *“That’s why I didn’t particularly like it. [...] I was supposed to play etudes and concerts, nothing I would have liked. [...] When I finally graduated, I put the violin down and I didn’t play for some while. But then I started missing my violin.”* He realised that his son who is also studying violin at ZUŠ is probably at the very same situation as he was. *“But his position is ways easier as I, unlike my father, do know how to advise him in some matters.”*

The formalised musical education is very common in the very last generation of Romani musician, especially in Oľáh's family. Primáš David really enjoys his ZUŠ education. *“At the beginning, he didn't like it. There were even tears. But as soon as he was able to play his first song Kohútik Jarabi,<sup>67</sup> he started enjoying it.”* his mother told me. David loves playing classical music. He appreciates his teacher who always give him a chance to chose these pieces he likes. He is now preparing himself for entrance exam to conservatorium in Košice. His biggest dream is to be a professional musician and to play in an orchestra.

It is also significant that this youngest generation have an influence on the older generations. *“My husband doesn't know notes but he grasped something from his sons.”* David's mother told me about his husband Milan, a brač player. In some rare cases, even older Romani musicians pursue musical education in their older age. Double bass player Janko, who is in his forties, is now studying conservatorium in Rimavská Sobota. He also thinks of further education, such as BA or MA at an academy of music. *“And who knows, maybe I'll have PhD at some point”* added he with laughing. He would also like to finish a *pedagogical minimum*, and to become a double bass teacher, as nowadays there are very few of them. His biggest dream is to quit his job in a shoes factory and to make his living just with musical teaching and performing.

Male dominance in instrumental music is another aspect that has been changed due to involvement of standardised music-educational system. Janko's daughter Slávka, for instance, is now studying acting and singing at a conservatorium in Košice. Despite of the fact that she was a girl, Janko tried the old Oľáh's ritual and give a bow to Slávka when she was very little. Not only she held it on but *“she even refused to drop it!”* as her father said. And as Janko found her especially talented, he was little by little preparing her for career of musicians with the help of formal musical education. When I attended a concert of the ZUŠ in Hnúšť'a, there was a great number of Romani girls playing musical instruments, including guitar, piano or violin. Thanks to adoption of standardised system musical education, even Romani girls might become musician. No matter whether it is right step from point of view of

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<sup>67</sup> *Kohútik Jarabi* is an emblematic song for formalised system of Slovak musical education. No matter what instrument will pupil play, s/he will definitely encounter this song consisted of four tones. Czech pupils know the very same melody under the name *Běžela ovečka*.

gender neutrality, it is definitely something that we could not find in Romani traditional ways of musical learning and teaching.

I would call current situation in Klenovec and Kokava as a mix of two educational systems – the Romani traditional one and the formalised one.<sup>68</sup> I have met two Romani prodigies, both 10-years-old, both attending ZUŠ in Hnúšť'a. One of them was Majo, grandson of double bassist Milan who started with violin. He mentioned that his teacher in Hnúšť'a is not particularly happy that his grandfather teaches him Romani songs as well as Romani way of playing. He actually mentioned that his teacher is really upset about this matter. Another prodigy is saxophonist Andy, grandson of saxophonist Milan. Despite of the fact that Milan had a cerebrovascular accident and his doctor strictly forbid him playing saxophone, he plays an hour per day with his grandson. Andy told me: *“My teacher teaches me different things. Like notes and stuff. But grandpa teaches me real songs!”*

To sum it all up, youngest generation of musicians in Klenovec and Kokava are being influenced by both Romani traditional way of musical education, whose specifics was subject of this thesis, and institutionalised system of musical education. Older musicians seems to be relying on the institutionalised system and they evaluate it rather positively:

*“Nowadays, it’s not like it used to be that Roma are inborn musicians. [...] Musical education is accessible for everyone. We’re no longer living in fifties when the audience was impressed by skills of Dróto and Janko’s father in the film Rodná zem.”<sup>69</sup> I think that if you could compare abilities of these musicians and today’s musicians, you would find out that their level is expected to be higher. [...] As long as*

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<sup>68</sup> It is necessary to add that folklore ensembles play very interesting role in this educational mix. Kokava-based ensemble *Kokavan* and Klenovec-based *Vepor* are traditionally connected with Romani musicians. I would argue that folklore-ensembles-based musical education is something between the standardised system of musical education (it is necessary to be accurate, there standardised competitions, it is notes-based etc.) and the Romani traditional system (there is space for improvisation, cooperative learning etc.). For many of my participants, especially those from musicians’ houses, folklore ensemble had an important effect on their musical development. I would definitely encourage some researchers to examine folklore-ensembles-based musical education a bit closer as the folklore music also demands methods which are different from the ones of institutionalised system of musical education.

<sup>69</sup> *Rodná zem (Homeland)* is a film finished in 1953 which is trying to map out variability of traditional folklore in Slovakia. A viewer can find there even famous generation of Romani musician from Klenovec, led by Imrich Radič alias Dróto.



*you wanna be a great musician, you need to work harder than it used to be. And formal musical education is one way of getting you ahead of the rest.”*

I would like to point out that the youngest generation of Romani musicians lives in the very unique mix of two music-educational systems which can push their musical excellence even further. This can lead to model of a universal musician who is able of both playing notes and improvising, who can cover a post both in an orchestra and a wedding band and whose musicianship is also supported by ingrained societal belief about his exceptional musicality or by strong support of his (and, finally, *or her*) family environment. It is hard to assume, however, whether this unique mix of two ways of musical education will be preserved also for the following generations.

## 7 Conclusion : Social Importance of the Research

*“These [Romani] slaves are all musicians and sometimes good musicians. They are learning on their own, they have a good ears, more taste than we could assume and intelligence which we will unfortunately never believe.”*

Raoul Perrin, Coup d'oeil sur la Valachie et la Moldavie, 1839

(Antonietto 1994:104–105)

Results of my research and answers to the research questions, which have been outlined in the introduction of the thesis, could be summarised as follows:

- I) Despite long discussions in the history of both social and natural sciences and very recent hints in the field of genetic, it cannot be find a blood-based (i.e. genetic) component provably responsible for emergence of musical talent among Czech or Slovak Roma. There is nothing “in their blood” and no Rom is born as musician – every single Rom must *become* musician in the process of talent development and musical training.
- II) I argue that the myths about Romani inborn musical talent has appeared as a consequence of majority’s unwitting comparison of own image of musical excellence with Romani musicians. Their musical excellence is neither greater nor smaller; it is *different* and it differs because the concept of their music (aim, function and music itself) is different. To reach their concept of music, their transgenerational transmission of musical skills (i.e. methods of learning and teaching) is bound to be also *different*. Their musical excellence is by no means appearing out of blue, i.e. despite of lacking educational system. They have *their own educational system* with its specifics which differs from the educational system of majority.
- III) The following table summarises specifics of Romani music-skill transmission compared with institutionalised system of musical education in the Czech and the Slovak Republic.

<i><b>Institutionalised system of musical education in the Czech and Slovak Republic.</b></i>	<i><b>Traditional system of Romani musical education</b></i>	<i><b>Ref.:</b></i>
<b>Analytical</b> , i.e. using pedagogical repertoire, linear curriculums and analytical dividing of the main skill (i.e. playing instrument) into subskills.	<b>Holistic</b> , i.e. using real repertoire, concentric curriculum and learning music in natural context.	<i>Pp.</i> <i>40–44</i> <i>69–77</i>
Highly <b>formalised</b> , taking form of <b>schooling</b> (being taught in specific time and places, by specific people and in a specific way)	Highly <b>informalised</b>	<i>Pp.</i> <i>39–40</i> <i>62–64</i>
Intended for production of <b>classical music</b>	Intended for <b>maximising profit</b> from musicking	<i>Pp.</i> <i>55–57</i>
<b>Curriculum-based</b> , i.e. pupils play pieces which are appropriate to their current level.	<b>Amusement-based</b> , i.e. pupils play pieces they like to play	<i>Pp.</i> <i>69–71</i>
Explicitly <b>not demanding family involvement</b>	Highly <b>stimulated and encouraged by family environment</b> in order to preserve family craft	<i>Pp.</i> <i>57–62</i>
Using <b>formalised competition</b> , i.e. the rules are predefined and there are mechanisms looking after its fairness	Using <b>competition without rules</b> , often taking form of unfairness (e.g. mocking and taunting)	<i>Pp.</i> <i>67–69</i>
<b>Individualistic</b> , i.e. teacher and pupil are in the centre of educational process	<b>Cooperative</b> , i.e. noticeable part of musical education takes form of collective musicking during informal musical sessions	<i>Pp.</i> <i>64–67</i>

Using <b>transmission based on notes</b> , i.e. staff notation is predominant way of transmitting music material to pupils	Using <b>transmission based on listening and observing</b>	<i>Pp.</i> 71–77
<b>Accuracy-based</b>	<b>Improvisation-based</b>	<i>Pp.</i> 75–77
<b>Gender-neutral</b>	<b>Restricted to men</b>	<i>Pp.</i> 79–80
<b>Determined by norms and tradition</b>	<b>Ever-changing</b> , depending on market demand	<i>Pp.</i> 82–89

At the end of my thesis, I will discuss the social importance of my research and I will try to answer the question that might occur to the readership: “*Why should we actually deal with Romani transgenerational transfer of musical skills?*” I have found three important aspects to which I will dedicate few paragraphs: *biological-deterministic view on Roma, vanishing tradition, and reconsideration of our own curriculums.*

In the chapter 3, I have been discussing the fact that Roma both in the Czech and Slovak Republic are exposed to biological-deterministic point of view which sometimes (or I should say often) leads to racism. Unfortunately, we do not have to look far for an example. This year (i.e. 2015), for instance, Amnesty International released a report about segregation of Roma in the Czech schools (see Amnesty International 2015). Salil Shetty, secretary general of the organisation, commented the report as follows:

*“The extended segregation of Roma[ni] children is an example of systematic prejudice. The schools let children experience what discrimination means, and at a very early age [...] the Czech government is not only breaching European Union and human rights law but is restricting the life chances of tens of thousands of Czech*

*citizens. Let's call this what it is: racism, pure and simple.*" (The League of Human Rights 2015).

Connection between biological-determinism and racism is not a speculation. It is simply a fact. And it does not really matter whether the biological-determinisms concerns musical talent (as a rather positive trait) or tendency to non-conformity. As long as people will believe that one can be endowed by any of these traits *naturally*, i.e. have it in his or her blood, racism will thrive. In this thesis, I proved that they are not inborn musicians. All of them have to become musicians. Analogically, I can claim that none of them is an inborn criminal. In some cases, however, they become criminals due to their nurturing environment. And this is an important starting point for reconsidering the matter of Romani integration.

Concerning vanishing tradition, anthropologists tend to grieve whenever any tradition started disappearing. Sometimes, it is even an exclusive pretext for pursuing research in order to *capture a disappearing unique*. And very often, they even take some steps in order to save the vanishing tradition and preserving it for future generations. However, whether we, anthropologists, like it or not, tradition has always been subject of changes. And none of us can judge whether these changes from our point of view are right or wrong. What we can do, however, is to bring testimonies about how the change of tradition is perceived by people themselves.

Most of my participants from Klenovec and Kokava were honestly concerned about their musical tradition and they were worried about its disappearance. I would argue that these concerned were motivated by tight link between their musicality and their ethnicity.

To see the record straight, we need to distinguish "*music*" from "*musicality*." I was discussing that the term "*traditional music*" is very complicated to use in case of Romani musicians from Klenovec and Kokava as their musical tradition has always been influenced by the taste of majority (i.e. people who pay for production). In some countries, we can find very strong connection between Romani ethnicity-construction

and a particular *music*, or *musical style*,<sup>70</sup> but we cannot really find such noticeable link in the case of Roma from Klenovec and Kokava. What we can find, however, is the link between *ethnicity* (i.e. to be Roma) and *musicality* (to be musician). Musicianship is considered among Roma as a guarantee of respect and high living standard; in short, as something they should be proud of.

I have been describing a very unique educational system which is (as I pointed out in the chapter 6) on a verge of great change. The change of educational system is tightly connected with the change of traditional picture of Romani musician (including his legendary musical excellence). And as far as I could see, Roma from central Slovakia are seriously concerned about the fact that this picture might fade out. Vlad Sendrei, for instance, is raising money from European Union in order to preserve (as he claim) Romani *music*. But I would argue that he is rather trying to preserve Romani *musicality* than music. He is aware of the fact that musicality is an important trait of Roma and he involves this knowledge in many of his ethno-emancipational projects.<sup>71</sup> He is also aware of the fact, that music for Roma is kind of language and, as soon as people will be able of speaking the same language, they can politically mobilise themselves (and that is what Vlad and others actually work with). The content of this language is not so important. The most important thing is to share the ability of speaking.

The very last thought I will mention does not concern Romani ways of musical learning and teaching, but it concerns our own music-educational system. As I have outlined, both systems are intended to their own aims. As soon as one wants to play classical music in an orchestra, s/he needs to acquire different musical knowledge than the one who wants to play in a wedding band. However, during work on my thesis, I realised that our educational system has several serious cracks. The most serious one lies in the fact that curriculums lie always in the centre of educational process, i.e. between pupil and musical knowledge. And as these curriculums are strongly determined by tradition and norms, pupils tend to play

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<sup>70</sup> For instance, in Hungary, there is a very strong link between Romani ethno-emancipation and the orchestra called *100 Tagú Cigányzenekar* (*Hundred Gypsy Violins*, later known as *Budapest Gypsy Symphony Orchestra*) (cf. Jurková 2003b).

<sup>71</sup> As the best example, I refer to the film *Gypsy vote* [*Cigáni idú do volieb*] (2011) filmed by Jaroslav Vojtek. It very well illustrates how Vlad uses music to mobilising of Roma.

repertoire appropriate to their current musical level, no matter whether it is identical with the repertoire they like/wish to play. As consequence of this, the institutionalised system of musical education has very high mortality rate. That might be the reason for which we, on the contrary to Roma, tend to regard musical talent as something rare and exceptional. If we consider the tiny fraction of pupils who will reach the highest level of musical and education and who will end up in orchestras, is it really necessary to teach pupils what they are expected to play rather than what they like to play?

During my research amidst Romani musicians, I realise that there is huge difference in overall approach of Roma to music. We could use a metaphor and say that Romani musicians rather *acquire* music than *learn* music. As for the languages, we refer to *learning language* when we speak about obtaining language abilities through a formalised environment (e.g. school class) while we use the phrase *acquire language* when we are speaking, for instance, about children of multilingual parents. If I could metaphorically summarise stories I have been told by Romani musicians in Klenovec and Kokava, I would say that most of musicians have rather *acquired* musical skills than have *learnt* them. Acquiring usually takes form which is invisible for an uninitiated observer. Acquiring happens somehow on its own accord, somehow *naturally*. That might be the reason for which the myth about Romani *natural* musicality has emerged. However, *this* naturality has nothing to do with their blood.

We tend to regard our way of living and thinking as the rightest one. We tend to regard people living and thinking differently as people who need to be taught by us, to be relearnt, to be *integrated*. In this thesis, I tried to show that there are still things which we can learn from others.

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## 9 Appendix

### 9.1 Agreement of the Faculty with Writing the Thesis in English



Univerzita Karlova v Praze  
Fakulta humanitních studií  
U Kříže 8, 158 00 Praha 5 – Jinonice  
Studijní oddělení

STEJNOPIS

Č.j.: UKFHS-845/S-2014

**Petr Nuska**  
30 Young Street  
Durham, DH1 2JU (UK)

Věc: Sdělení k žádosti o předložení diplomové práce vypracované v angličtině

Vážený kolego,

na základě Vaší žádosti o povolení odevzdání diplomové práce v angličtině ze dne 18.2.20214 Vám sděluji, že Vaší žádosti bylo **vyhověno**.

S pozdravem,

  
UNIVERZITA KARLOVA V PRAZE  
Fakulta humanitních studií  
Mgr. Josef Kružik, Ph.D.  
proděkan pro studium UK FHS

V Praze dne 25.2.2014

## 9.2 My participants – details

**Vlado Sendrei (Pecko)** – He lives in Kokava and often says about himself “*I’m not a musician but rather a football player.*” Despite of this, he founded one of the most famous Romani band in Slovakia which, for instance, make a contribution to soundtrack for a Hollywood movie under the baton of great soundtrack-maker Hans Zimmer. Some musicians (especially those from Klenovec) are rather sceptical as for his musical abilities, but none of them doubt about his organisational and executive skills. He does not play any musical instrument. He performs as a charismatic frontman-singer altogether with her wife Janka. Apart from performing, he works on projects related to pro-Roma activism. They have three children, none of them a professional musician. He has no experience with musical education.

**Milan Deme (Milo)** – A double bass player from Klenovec in his fifties. Although he was born in musician-family (Milan Deme is his father), he was struggling with the instrument choice until his military service. He occasionally plays with the Vlado’s band as well as with folklore ensemble in Klenovec. He has also many experience with busking from all around Europe. He has not obtained any musical education.

**Janko Déme** – A Klenovec-based violin player (*primáš*). Being in his late forties, he is the oldest Romani musician with formal musical education I have interviewed. Most of his musician career is tied to folklore ensemble in Klenovec where he plays up-to-date, though he is gradually passing his role to a younger *primáš* (David Oľáh). He has got two sons, both of them have got formal musical education (older plays piano and younger plays violin) but none of them is doing music professionally. He works as a social worker for the town hall of Klenovec. He is the only Rom from Klenovec I know who obtained a university degree.

**Milan Déme (senior)** – In his late sixties, my oldest participant, but still very vivid and keen on talking. He was one of the first saxophone-player in Klenovec. He used to be seeing a music teacher in Hnúšť’a in order to get some notion about music theory but it was mostly his brother who has taught him most of his skills. In 2004, he had a cerebrovascular accident which prevents him from playing, but he is now helping to his eleven-years-old grandson who started playing saxophone two years ago.

**Lajoš** – A Kokava-based guitar player in his late fifties. He attended some guitar classes, but (according to his own words) he rather taught teacher than teacher taught

him, so he quitted and learn as an autodidact. He gained a great reputation when he was playing in cafés in Banská Bystrica and influenced many guitarists from Kokava. He used to be a very respected musician but most of his skills (as well as respect among other musicians) have been lost due to his passion in alcohol.

**David Oľáh** – A perspective thirteen-years-old violinist from Klenovec. He is a successor of Janko Deme for the position of primáš in the Klenovec folklore ensemble. He is in sixth-year of the second ZUŠ cycle and he is preparing himself for conservatorium in Košice. He dreams about career of orchestra-based professional musician. Besides his preparation for conservatorium, he plays folklore-songs as well as traditional Romani songs at home altogether with his father and brother (both brač players).

**Dalibor Cibulák** – A thirteen-years-old cimbalom-player from Klenovec and David's playmate. He has two cimbalom-teachers: one who teaches him notes and theory and the second (in the thesis mentioned as Džuso) who (according to his own words) teaches him how to play. He has not thought of doing career of professional musicians so far but he is one of very few young cimbalom players in the region.

**Zdena Radičová (maiden Cibulová)** – The only woman-participant I interviewed from Klenovec (Dolinka). She is in her early sixties and she is a living child of Miško Grbato, probably the best primáš ever born in Klenovec. As she was not expected to play an instrument because she was a woman, she had to learn playing guitar on the sly by observing and listening her older brothers. She plays guitar until today for herself, sometimes she accompanies other women-singer during various *bašavely*. She has got two children, none of them musicians.

**Ondro Radič (Gombík)** – A double bass player from Kokava in his fifties. He is a permanent member of Kokava folklore ensemble, but he also used to play bass guitar in cafés. When he was seventeen, he was taught by a music teacher from folklore ensemble so he learnt to know notes. Today, however, he is no longer able of reading them. His family had very strong musical background and his instrument was assigned him without much discussion; as his grandfather, a double bass player, died he had to learn quickly in order to preserve the family craft.

**Ladislav Fizoľa (Laco)** – A kontráš from Kokava in his fifties. He played exclusively folk music, mostly in folklore ensemble Kokavan. He started playing very

late – he was 28-years-old when one of his relatives, who played kontra, died and he was forced by his family to carry on with family craft. He has not got any musical education but his abilities were essentially shaped by folklore ensembles. He has 14-years-old granddaughter who plays violin in ZUŠ in Poltár

**Ondro Radič** – An accordion player from Klenovec in his fifties. He is brother of famous Klenovec primáš Karol and he keeps playing with him in a family band. For the beginning of his musical learning, he was seeing a Romani teacher in Rimavská Sobota who gave him basis of accordion-playing. He is an experienced busker and wedding band player. He tried to encourage his twenty-years-old son Miro to play cimbalom, but Miro has recently ceased playing.

**Breno Oláh** – A Dolinka-based guitar and bass guitar player in his fifties. One of my very few participants who completely omit playing folk music and despite of this he was earning great income from musicking. He was influenced by British Beat music, American rock, swing and other styles. Most of his musical skills and abilities have been obtained through listening of radio and recordings. He used to play regularly in cafés as a part-time job; he accompanied many weddings and has also experience with busking. His son, Martin, is also a guitarist, but in terms of musical genre, Martin rather set aside from his father.

**Martin Oláh** – A 25-years-old guitarist and singer from Dolinka, who can also play bass guitar or drums, son of Breno. He is not a professional musician but music performing is his greatest hobby to which he sacrifices most of his free time and money. He played guitar and sing in a punk-rock band *Pohl'ad zblízka* from Hnúšť'a. He especially enjoys breaking guitars on stage. His lifestyle copies lifestyle of rock stars. He used to be seeing music teacher in Hnúšť'a ZUŠ, but he did not enjoy it and it was not economically suitable for him, so he quitted and carried on as an autodidact.

**Janko Oláh** – A saxophone-player from Klenovec in his late sixties and lover of Klenovec folklore ensemble. He started his career with accordion but he quickly switched to saxophone for its economic profitability. Apart from three musical session with accordion-teacher, he has never had a music teacher and he learnt everything on his own. He essentially influenced music career of his two sons and he

keeps being very active in musical development of his grandsons. Immodestly (but truthfully), he claimed: *“If I weren’t here, there would be no folk music in Klenovec.”*

**Janko Oľáh (Gazda)** – A double bass player from Klenovec in his forties and son of saxophonist Janko Oľáh. Probably the busiest musician I have met. Despite he still keeps working in a factory in Klenovec, he dreams about being a professional music teacher. That is why he pursued musical education in his older age. Now, he is studying music in a conservatorium in Rimavská Sobota, but he is thinking of obtaining university degree in music. His daughter Slávka graduated in 2015 at the Conservatorium in Košice where she studied singing and acting. Her father helped her with recording of her first CD.

**Pet’o Cibul’á (Tankišta)** – A violinist from Klenovec in his early thirties. Despite not being born in one of the musicians’ houses, his mother had noticed his early expression of his musical talent and bought him a violin. His grandfather taught him how to play violin, when he was 19, however, he sold his violin and start learning guitar as an autodidact. Later, he became a singer of a Rom Pop group *Klenovec Gipsy Band*, which recently broke up.

**Jožko Radič (Špuko)** – A 25-years-old primáš from Klenovec. He has a Non-Romani mother so with his blond hair and blue eyes does not have typical appearance of Roma. He was influenced taught by his famous uncle Karol Radič. He used to play in Vepor, but today rather play in the family band altogether with his uncle Karol, his father Jožko (brač player) and godfather Ondro Radič (accordionist). He is really proud of not having any musical education and it he is really pleased whenever people ask him: *“Hey, wait... You don’t look like a Rom but you definitely play like one!”*

## **10 Summaries**

### **10.1 Summary in English**

*This thesis analyses transgenerational transmission of musical knowledge and skills, (i.e. methods of musical teaching and learning) in the community of Romani musicians in Klenovec and Kokava in Central Slovakia. The thesis questions widespread myth about innate musicality of Roma and suggests an alternative explanation for postulated musical excellence of Roma through differences in their musical education. In the first part of the thesis, the question of musical-talent heritability both in social and natural science is being discussed. It concludes that despite of long discussions and recent hints in the field of genetic, we cannot consider an inborn genetic component for Romani musicality. In the second part, theoretical differences in music-educational systems are discussed (Merriam, Van den Bos, Turino) and the majority's institutionalised system of musical education of the Czech Republic and Slovakia is presented. The third part is a comparison of the institutionalised system with traditional methods of musical learning and teaching inside musicians' community in Klenovec and Kokava. Specifics of these methods and their contribution to construction of Romani musicality are discussed. This part is based upon data collected during author's own ethnographic research (2013–2015). The final part of the thesis deals with current change of music-educational methods which Romani musicians in Klenovec and Kokava are nowadays experiencing.*

## 10.2 Abstrakt v českém jazyce

*Diplomová práce se zabývá analýzou transgenerační transmise hudebních znalostí a dovedností, tedy metodami hudebního vyučování a učení, v komunitě romských hudebníků v Klenovci a Kokavě na středním Slovensku. Práce bojuje proti hojně rozšířenému mýtu o vrozené romské muzikalitě a navrhuje alternativní vysvětlení domnělé romské hudební excelence skrze odlišnosti v jejich tradičním hudebním vzdělávání. První část práce shrnuje diskuzi o dědivosti hudebního talentu v přírodních a společenských vědách. Tato část dochází k závěru, že navzdory dlouhé diskuzi o této problematice a recentním objevům v genetice nemůžeme předpokládat, že za domnělou romskou hudebnost může být odpovědná vrozená genetická komponenta. V druhé části jsou představeny teoretické rozdíly v různých hudebně-vzdělávacích systémech (Merriam, Van den Bos, Turino) a je představen majoritní institucionalizovaný vzdělávací systém hudebního vzdělávání v České a Slovenské republice. Třetí část pak porovnává hudebně-vzdělávací systém majority s tradičními metodami hudebního vyučování a učení mezi Romy v Klenovci a Kokavě; jsou diskutována specifika těchto metod a jejich podílu na utváření romské hudebnosti. Páteří této komparace jsou data z autorova etnografického výzkumu. V závěrečné části je diskutována povaha změny hudebně-vzdělávacích metod, kterou romská komunita hudebníků v Klenovci a Kokavě v současnosti prochází.*

