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Minority vs. Majority: The Case of the Origin of a Romani Song

The studies of Gypsy/Romani music have a long history of discussions, debates, and undoubted achievements. The stress is often on the distinctiveness of Romani music and its influences on the music of the majority. This approach is dominant in public presentations of Romani heritage in music festivals, performances and even school manuals. The issue of reverse influences - of the music of the surrounding population on Romani music is still relatively less researched and almost not indicated in public.

The proposed presentation will present the origin and development of one specific Romani song, *Ma Maren Ma* (Don't beat me). Its musical original is the song *Tayna* (Secret), created in the USSR in 1939 and became widely popular in the performance of the famous singer Leonid Utesov. Šaban Bajramović started performing it with lyrics in Romani language in the 1970s. In the 1990s, it became widely popular outside the former Yugoslavia - after recording it jointly with the brass band *Fanfare Ciocarlia* from Romania. Later, it entered the repertoire of other Romani musicians from different countries. Especially in the Balkans, it became so widespread that, for instance in Bulgaria, it entered the repertoire of almost all semi-professional Romani music ensembles and became performed at Romani holidays and weddings. Today, it is perceived a part of Romani folklore.

One of the schools of the 19th-century folklore studies perceived folklore as an oral transformation of motifs from written literature. Our presentation will discuss to what extent such an approach can be used in discussing Roma's social and political realities and what implications it could have for studying Romani music.

Bios

Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov work in the field of Romani studies for more than four decades, publishing widely on Roma in Bulgaria, the Balkans, Central and Eastern Europe, and Central Asia. For the last seven years Professors Marushiakova and Popov worked at the University of St Andrews, UK, on the ERC Advanced Grant entitled *Roma Civic Emancipation Between the Two World Wars*, devoted to the interwar Roma political thought and history in Europe. They are currently affiliated with the Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences.