



**From the Top at Carnegie Hall**  
**"Rhythm and Strings" Episode**  
Airing on PBS (check local TV listings)  
Available online at [pbs.org](http://pbs.org)

## Learning Activity

### Title: *Gypsy Airs*

**Description:** A listening activity that focuses on how traditional, folk, and classical music influence one another, as exemplified by Sarasate's "Gypsy Airs" (*Zigeunerweisen*).

**Grade Level:** 9-12

**National Standards:** **6** Listening to, analyzing, and describing music, **8** Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts, **9** Understanding music in relation to history and culture



### Background

On this show 12-year-old **Anna JiEun Lee** plays a virtuosic violin piece by 19<sup>th</sup> century composer and violinist Pablo de Sarasate. The piece was strongly influenced by "gypsy music" and Hungarian folk dances. A note about Gypsies: the word is used today to refer to many different and distinct groups whose ancestors migrated eastward from northern India into central Asia and eastern Europe around 1000 CE. Also known as Roma (and by other names in different countries where they settled), Gypsies share many cultural traits, as well as languages that began in common Indo-Aryan roots. Like many minority groups, they were discriminated against, and even enslaved, after their migration. Music is one of the hallmarks of traditional Roma culture and retains its special character even when influenced by the music of the dominant population.

In particular, because many Roma preferred occupations that allowed them to be independent and work alongside family members, there have been professional musicians among the Roma for centuries. For a fuller discussion of these complex subjects, see the fine article on "Gypsy music" in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Volume 10, pp. 613-620. (Oxford University Press, USA, 2001. Stanley Sadie, Ed.)

Composer **Pablo de Sarasate** (1844-1908) was born in Pamplona, Spain and began music lessons with his father, a bandmaster, as a small child. He showed a very early aptitude for the violin and performed his first public concert at 8. At 12, he was sent to Paris to study in the Conservatory there. Gypsy music was an important source for his composition *Zigeunerweisen*. Sarasate was also influenced by *csárdás*, a traditional Hungarian folk dance. *Csárdás* (CHAR-dash) varies in tempo, beginning slowly and becoming very fast. Other classical composers who have used *csárdás* themes in their work include Franz Liszt, Johannes Brahms, and Johann Strauss.<sup>1</sup>



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## Materials

TV/DVD player or computer/DVD player, recordings of traditional and contemporary gypsy music, and video of Anna Lee's performance

## Activity Instructions

1) **Listen** to several contemporary recordings of gypsy music such as "Jasmina Dromoro," from the soundtrack to *Gypsy Caravan*, World Tunes B000Q7ZOB2 (1997) (available on iTunes and Amazon.com); *Tsigane: The Gypsy Music of Turkey*, perf. Erkoze Ensemble, CMP Records 3010 (1991); *Radio Pasani*, perf. Fanfare Ciocarlia, PIRI 1254 (1998); *Taraf de Haïdouks*, perf. Taraf de Haïdouks, Nonesuch B00000I6FD (1999; available on Amazon.com); *The Gypsy Road*, Alula Records ALU-1013 (1999).

2) **Discuss** what you've heard with students. What characterizes "gypsy music"? What words would you use to describe it? Which elements of the music (such as tempo, rhythm, syncopation, melody, instrumentation, mood) seem to reflect gypsy music?

3) **Play** the video of Anna's performance.

4) **Describe** what you hear. How is it like the music played earlier? Does it remind you of folk music, dance music, or another kind of music? Can you think of any popular music today that includes a mixture of styles, or borrows from other types of music?

5) **Find** and **share** your own examples of contemporary music that has some of the characteristics you've identified in gypsy music. Can you find music that is typical of your heritage?

## Find out more!

### About Anna JiEun Lee

Read a story about Anna and listen to her perform another Sarasate piece on From the Top's radio program on NPR.

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=8995287>

### About Csárdás

Listen to the CD *Csárdás Hungarian Gypsy Music*, perf. Ferenc Santa and His Gypsy Band, Naxos B000001413 (1995; available on Amazon.com).

### About the lives of Gypsy musicians today

Filmmaker Jasmine Dellal has made two documentaries about Gypsy music and culture, one focused on Gypsies in the U.S. (*American Gypsy*, 1999) and the other on a touring group of Gypsy musicians from India and Europe (*Gypsy Caravan*, 2006). Read about them on the web or order the DVD of *American Gypsy*.

<http://www.gypsyncaravanmovie.com/>

<http://www.americangypsy.com/>

For a review of *Gypsy Caravan*, listen to this NPR story:

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=11601711>

**Note:** References to sources for music or books are included for convenience and are not meant to imply an endorsement of any vendor or source.

<sup>i</sup> Material adapted from Wikipedia article on *Csárdás*, downloaded 4/10/08

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