"Shpil We Must!"

The Relationship Between the Jewish and Roma Musicians During the Holocaust
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Speaker: Yale Strom

Transcribed by: Rachel E Lieu

Holocaust Living History Workshop
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Time	Transcription
00:00	[The Library UC San Diego]
00:05	[A Holocaust Living History Workshop Event]
00:09	[April 8, 2014 / Geisel Library / Seuss Room]
00:13	["Shpil We Must!" The Relationship Between the Jewish and Roma Musicians During the Holocaust - with Yale Strom]
00:18	Susanne Hillman: Uh good afternoon. I would like to welcome everybody to this uh, workshop, this Holocaust Living History Workshop with Yale Strom. I would particularly like to welcome the students of Professor [Margrit] Froelich's HIEU 145 class. I'm sure this will be time well spent. We don't have music that often but tonight we will. We will also hear Professor Strom uh, talk about uh, these events but he will also uh regale us with some uh, samples, and I'm particularly looking forward to this. Uh, now I would like Professor Deborah Hertz to introduce Yale Strom and to tell us a little bit more about his background. Please, Deborah.
01:02	Deborah Hertz: This could go on forever, right? The person who introduces the person, who introduces the person. Okay, so um, Brian Schottlaender and I founded the history workshop, Holocaust Living History Workshop about seven, eight years ago and it's been a project that just took off by itself. We do a lot of work. Susanne does a lot of work, but we also feel the community has really embraced us and the project has migrated in many, many ways, as those of you who are regulars that know about. It's a particular pleasure to introduce Yale Strom, a composer, a filmmaker, a writer, a photographer, and a playwright. He's been working on Jews and Roma both as, as composers, as musical traditions, and also as sufferers together in the Holocaust and I think it's that artistic, cultural synergy, and also parallels in a historical experience that we'll be learning more about um, tonight.
01:56	Deborah Hertz: There's a couple of things that I have a really um, strong affection for that Yale has done. One is the NPR [National Public Radio] series on Jewish short stories for which he did the music and uh, that's, that's a particular, particular joy. Um, he also has a radio drama called *The Witches of Lublin* and - since I just got out of my Luther to Bismarck course, uh, teaching about witch, uh, witch craze - that was particularly interesting. Um, one of the things I want you to watch for um, is the play *Chagall* - or the musical *Chagall* - that's going to be performed in December of 2015 at the La Jolla Playhouse. I've seen this in its developmental form, and if you're a fan of Marc Chagall, or you're a fan of Yale Strom, uh this will be interesting. And um I would like Elizabeth [Schwartz] to stand up maybe, and just be recognized as a co-musician in the whole project, and always a pleasure to uh, to be in your presence. And um, so Yale Strom.
02:57	Yale Strom: Thank you. Thank you very much Debra and Susanne for inviting me here, and the folks that came out this lovely afternoon. I have to get the old specs, arm's not getting long enough here. Um, it's kind of an auspicious day to be invited to speak about this subject because, some of you might already know, that today is of course, what is it? Yeah, today's April 8th and April 8th is International Roma

Day. It is being celebrated all over the world. Did you know that? There you go. You should know that now. Today is, and it began in 1990. So it's not that old, but it's not that young. And that was a gathering the Fourth Congress of the Roma, coming together from all over the world uh, to Serock uh, Poland. And um, I actually had a, my wife and I, Elizabeth and I uh, had a dear friend, Carmen who went to that um, Roma - she was representing uh, the Roma from Transylvania - and so I got to know a lot about the, the uh, making of this day. So what is it? It's a celebration. This is the day to celebrate, also to recognize the problems. But we, we, they save that, they save that - the sad and the tragic for the, as they call it, the Porajmosas. The Holocaust is the Porajmosas, as they call it, the devouring. Um, that is in August. That's August 1 and 2 and we'll talk about those dates and why there are significant to uh, the Roma.

04:43 Yale Strom: So I'm happy to be here on uh, on, on this day to, to, to remember, and to commemorate, and to understand a bit more about the Roma and the Jews, particularly their relationship to each other musically. And um, so I'm going to start off with a little bit of background. Um, oh I just remembered Deborah said Yale, would you say just briefly, what brings me to San Diego? Well I, I was uh, middle school through undergrad at San Diego State [University] and I decided to, I was about to enter law school but I, I took a left turn and bought a one-way ticket to the East[ern] Bloc. I told the, I remember, I told [unclear], I called the - this is, you know, just a few years before email - and lady says, are you nervous Mr. Strum? I said, no. I think towards her rather for eating than for uh, breathing and, she hung up the phone. And she probably said, this guy doesn't deserve to come to this law school. Um, so I, 500 bucks, a violin and 200 rolls of film - um canisters, because I was developing in bathtubs - that was shooting black and white um, a sleeping roll and, a few clothes and, I uh, hitchhike, and car, and buggy, and horse, and some train uh, throughout uh, the Eastern Bloc countries, searching for remnants of Klezmer music, first and foremost. But that is when I, I came in touch with the Roma.

06:18 Yale Strom: Um, a gentleman saw my violin. I was waiting for a train uh, actually a bus, in northwestern Transylvania and he saw the violin and motioned and, to play it - musician to musician. I said, yeah sure take it out, try it, and he, he can play. So I said, oh nice, you know, bun, good, bun. And uh, then he put it away, covered it up, closed it, and started walking away with the case - but walking. So I, I kind of go, what? And then I kind of figured, he wants me to follow him. So I quickly got my backpack and I said, okay I'm coming. And then we walked about 10 kilometers and came to a village, met his family, ended up - basically - being invited to play at his niece's wedding. And we try, and I thought, okay we're going to go by car or bus. No, we went literally by horse and wagon for three days and uh, it was quite - And so, yet seeing this relationship with the music, you know. My twenty words of Romanian, my ten words of Romani uh, his ten words of English, his twenty words of Yiddish - he knew more Yiddish than he did in English - and so we were able to get along. So um, anyhow, came back went to NYU [New York University] graduate school, eventually taught, and very proud to come back to San Diego. San Diego, where San Diego State [University] created a position of artist-in-residence, where I'm an artist-in-resident in the Jewish Studies Department. I teach there, as well as anthropology, and do my artwork. Hi Denise.

07:49 Yale Strom: Um so, so a little bit about the the Roma, I mean, about the Jewish musicians and how I came, and how they came to connect. Since the collapse of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989, ironically, precisely 56 years after Kristallnacht, the beginning of the end for Jewish life in Central and Eastern Europe. The very countries that bore witness to the shrieks and cries of Jewish, of the Jews being rounded up in the streets is now home to the vibrant sounds of Klezmer music in Yiddish singing. Klezmer music has become the soundtrack to the renewal of Jewish life in Central and Eastern Europe today. In such cities as Berlin, Budapest, Prague, and Warsaw, one can find Jewish life manifesting itself in various ways Jewish day schools, synagogue services, Jewish food shops, kosher restaurants, Jewish summer camps, book fairs, film festivals, and literary salons. The engine that has driven this astonishing and ironic revival has been the advent of Jewish cultural festivals, and these Jewish cultural festivals have been energized primarily through Klezmer and Roma music. For Jews and non-Jews alike, rediscovering Klezmer helps fill a void that was created by the Holocaust, and for many places throughout Central and Eastern Europe, the Jewish tourist trade today helps fill the void in the cash registers. Large numbers of tour groups from North America, Israel, and Western Europe, driven by nostalgia and intellectual curiosity, have descended upon Russia and Central and Eastern Europe.

09:15 Yale Strom: Though the vast majority of the Jews are gone - although there are significant numbers in Hungary, Ukraine, and Russia - synagogues, cemeteries, former Jewish schools and hospitals, homes, books, poetry, songs, music, paintings, photographs, ritual art, and more remain. Today the revival of Jewish culture in Central and Eastern Europe is sustaining itself through other artistic and scholarly pursuits, and not just through Klezmer. Since most of the former Klezmer musicians have died, and those that are still alive have been thoroughly interviewed, and most of the archives thoroughly poured over, Klezmer musicians and enthusiasts have had to find another angle to sustain the public's interest. In fact, the popularity of Klezmer reached its peak in Central and in Eastern Europe in 2000. This other angle has been to research the symbiotic relationship between the Jews and Roma, the Gypsies. For many, the Roma are an exotic group of misunderstood people who are known for their musical heritage. So what is this relationship between the Jewish musicians and Roma lăutari [professional musicians]? Lăutar is how they're known in Transylvania, and Romania, the Carpathian region. To help me find out some answers I traveled to the former Eastern Bloc. My first time was in 1981 in Iași, Romania the capital of the province of Moldavia, and a hub for Jewish and Roma folk music in all of Bessarabia. And I just realized I made these Xeroxes just, nothing fancy, but this is just a photo so you can kind of look. This, this is a photo - and just pass it to one another - of Roma musicians, children, being forced to play uh, for the Einsatzgruppen.

10:56 Yale Strom: Iași was the capital of the country of Moldavia for almost 300 years, from 1564 to 1859 when Moldavia merged with Wallachia in 1859 Iași and Bucharest were de facto capitals for three years. In 1862 the two principalities were recognized as Romania with the national capital in Bucharest. Iași also served as capital of Romania during World War I, from 1916 to 1918, when Bucharest was occupied by Germany and its allies. The first Jewish settlers arrived in Iași in the 15th century from Poland at about the same time as the first

Roma from the Ottoman Empire. In the 19th century, the Jewish population throughout Romania grew rapidly, and the fastest growth was in Moldavia while the Rom, Roma population grew as well but not as quickly. In 1844 all the Roma who belonged to the state, churches, and monasteries were emancipated, and by 1855 all the Roma that belonged to the boyars were free. You should know if you know your history, that up until 1856 the Roma in Romania were slaves. Slaves like the word when we think of slaves in the United States, that, chattel, had were bought and sold with chains on their ankles and treated uh, as, the same as, sadly, as the African-American slaves were for many hundreds of years in the United States. Um, on the eve of the Holocaust, 1930 Jews were the second largest ethnic group with 34,662, or 34 percent, of the total population, with 127 synagogues. The next largest minority were the Roma, making up approximately 4.5 percent of the Iași population, over or approximately 5,000 Roma in Iași.

12:47 Yale Strom: I met the leading folklorist of Romanian Jewish culture on my first trip to Iași in 1981. His name was uh, Itzic Kara Șvarț, or simply Kara - which means black in Turkish. That was his pen name, as everyone in the kehilla, the Jewish community, would call him and he would come to the cantina, the Jewish cantina, uh every day to eat his lunch and bring lunch home for his wife Celie, who didn't go out much during the winter time. Itzic Kara was born in Podu Iloaiei, a small town just 17 miles west of Iași. He was born October 13th, 1906, and was the oldest of three boys and a sister. He looked like he was in his mid-70s. He was about five foot six with greying hair that was a bit topsy-turvy, falling messily over the nape of his neck, and he had a distinctive pointed nose. On the day I met him, he wore a long black wool coat over his rather thin frame. He carried a kind of lunch box made from four aluminum containers, each one smaller than the other and designed to fit inside of each other. They were held in place by a metal brace which formed the handle. Kara asked me how long I was staying in Iași. I told him in at least two weeks if, if not more. He said he would meet me here at the [unclear] cantina in two days and tell me of the rich history of Klezmer music in Moldavia, Bessarabia as he said. He said Bessarabia. You have to understand Moldavia, the northeastern province of Romania, well the bigger region that was Bessarabia, that takes into account the country of Moldova today, even Transnistria where, I am sure we'll be hearing if you stay tuned to the news, about ethnic Russians wanting to permanently break away sadly.

14:27 Yale Strom: So um, but that is that region of [unclear] Moldova. As I said, Iași is the capital of Moldavia. Chișinău, or Kishinev as they say, is the capital of Moldova. Schwarz said I was born in Podu Iloaiei, just outside of Iași. In my town, there was no Jewish Klezmers. So this started to make me thinking when I would hear this from him and others so, who played Jewish music, but in Iași, there were many ensembles. So, when there was a wedding we brought them from Iași by train. When we did not, we hired the Gypsies. And he used the word because we're speaking Yiddish. He used the word tsigaynerin, so you should know. So you know, I can translate Roma but it comes from, it comes from the word actually the old Greek word atzigani, which means actually uh, defile, impure. So already, when you think about it right we're using the word ziginer, zigeuner uh, czigany - there are many many different ways to say it in all the various European languages and you're saying the defiled one. You're already putting them down, and so this is early on. Uh so, it's one of the reasons why we don't like to use that word, and we

shouldn't use a word. Uh, we should use the word Roma, the other word. You might say, I've always heard Gypsy. Is anything wrong with that? Not really, except that they're not from Egypt. I, as a Jew I'm closer to the Egyptians than they are. They're, they come from Rajasthan or Balochistan. So I always try to tell my students, and I'm telling you. And also, remember because I still see it in college papers. I still see it even in the *New York Times*, small g. Would you write the word Jew with a small j? Never. Gypsy is a pronoun, you capital g.

16:02 Yale Strom: These uh, Gypsy Klezmers knew Jewish music very well and played at all our local balls for the Jewish festivals. For example Purim, they went from house to house accompanying the Purim spielers. The Gypsies were even more marginalized than the Jews were, and playing music, especially Klezmer, assured the Gypsies better pay and more respect. There were some Jews who were bigoted against the Gypsies, but for the vast majority, they were respected, especially the musicians. The Jews were a marginalized minority as well, end of quote. That was Itsic speaking. Often it was the Jewish musicians who taught the Roma how to read music. They generally played by ear. Many, for a time, generally the Klezmers played by ear, but they were moving into reading music faster than the Roma were. A large percentage of Jewish musicians did not know how to read music, and an even larger percentage of the Roma did not know how to read music. One of the leading Roma lăutari families from Moldavia was the Babici family who performed for Jews for many years. One informant I met was Paul Babici who had played tenor saxophone for several different Jewish ensembles for 40 years. Babici told me, my father played the cimbal - that's the Jewish, that's Yiddish - the cimbal. Hungarian said the cimbalom. They say the cimbalom. That, if you don't know, that's the grandfather of the piano. You play with your hammers. If you still don't know, open up your piano - if you have it - put the finger on your key and look at what happens. Mechanically a hammer goes down. Well, the cimbalist is the mechanical hammers. That's what it is. It's the grandfather of the piano.

17:29 Yale Strom: It begins in Iran, Persia, probably 6th century, 5th century, goes to China and so it goes East and also goes West, and so we have different cultures. The Greeks play the santoor, different cultures play it. It is an instrument that was brought, most likely though, not by the Roma to Romania, Hungry - where today you can go to the restaurants and, and - you know where a lot of tourists go - they say oh, I have to go to a Hungarian restaurant and hear Gypsy music and there'll be the cimbal is playing. But it was it was brought by the Jews actually first to the Balkan regions in that part of Europe. So he says, my father played the cimbal with Jews in the [19]20s and [19]30s throughout Moldavia. He learned to speak fluent Yiddish since he was the only Tzigane, Roma, among them. He even taught me a few Yiddish words and phrases. Once he traveled to [unclear], it's a little south of of Iași, right on the border of Moldova today, with his violinist, with this violinist named [unclear]. The [unclear] family was one of the most prominent Klezmer families in all of Moldavia and Bessarabia before the Holocaust. It was a Jewish festival in the spring [unclear]. The Tzadik - and he's using this word - he didn't, you know, he used Tzadik, the Hasidic rabbi, was celebrating with all of his followers the whole day and night because this was the same time the Jewish musicians could not play any music for their fellow Jews. Sadly my father next saw some of the very same Hasidim in Transnistria where my father was forced to play

music in the Bogdanovka camp. It was during that time, after Passover until the late spring harvest festival Shavuos - we say Shavuot in Hebrew - Ashkenazi Jews will say Shavuos. [unclear] The Moldavian and Romanian Jews, they have their, they have a dialect, right? Languages have dialects depending on geographically where you're from so all the oohs become ease.

19:26 Yale Strom: So when I first learned that, I remember, I'm in the Carpathian mountains and I meet Ellie. Ellie is the shammas and now Ellie says [not English]. He says, Isaac - my Hebrew name is Yitzhak - remember, tomorrow come to pray in the, in uh, in the shul. And I said, in the shul? [not in English] He says,[not in English]. And I said, what? I'm not, sick who's sick? Sickis, what the hell sickies? [unclear] he was saying. So all the oos become ees, which is interesting because look what Babici, a Roma, the Roma informant when he says the Jewish words he says it in the dialect from that region. So he just learned it as he should. And uh, and, and finishing they said, many musicians tried to… He said, oh during the holiday of [unclear] many Klezmer musicians tried to join a Roma [unclear] an ensemble during this period of forced mourning; some stayed with these ensembles and never went back to playing in their former Klezmer band. Now let me explain for those who don't understand. Lag B'Omer is the holidays the 33rd day after, well it's, we start counting it next Tuesday actually. Uh we, for those who will be celebrating Passover uh, we'll have that starting Monday night. Then, the very next day, in ancient times you counted the Omer. You brought a little grain, some wheat, an offering to the temple and you count. But also it was during this times, Romas. It's difficult, you know, the Romas and whoever else against the Jews - difficulty, I'm sad, I'm mourning. Okay, so the rabbi said, if it's a sad, difficult time - warning - you can't play music right, because music's about celebration. You don't get married. We don't have simchas, meaning happy occasions. You just go about life. But on the 33rd day of that 50-day period is a celebration.

21:19 Yale Strom: That was a day, ancient times, Roma times, that Rabbi Akiva, he celebrated - this is the guy who was running away - I'm getting far off but it's a famous rabbi, just believe me. You can study in your, in your, in your, uh in your Bible and your ancient Jewish history classes but it was a day that they celebrated with great joy. So on this 33rd day, there would be all these celebrations. So the Jews were following this, and the Roma, so the Roma know the Jewish calendar. That's what's interesting, right? The Roma know that Jewish calendar probably better than some of the Jews knew it, particularly those who had to work because they knew, ah guess what guys? They can't play from day one to 32. Let's get all the gigs. Ah 33, we'll join them. Uh, guess what, 34 to 49 they can't play. It's all our gigs. But some Jews weren't so religious, so they joined the Roma bands. They weren't, they wouldn't be caught dead they're playing in the Jewish bands, no. So Babici continues. He says, just before the band was to leave for home, the sidic, the great rabbi, asked my father, uh, he asked my father, rather than Avram, to play a solo piece for him. Avram had been playing all solee that day while my father kept the rhythm and harmony - which the cimbal, the cimbalist often does. So my father played a solo melody and the sidic was so pleased he gave him a small wine cup. My father said, whenever he drank and, whenever you drink from this cup fondly think of me, the Shtefanesht rebbe. And I saw this cup. The son had kept this cup many decades later.

22:48 Yale Strom: He continues, it was easy to perform for the Jews of Bessarabia since they already had an ear for the melodies we played. They sang to the same modalities in their synagogues. I know this because I went to, several times, I went to the shul, the shul, as you would say. I went to the synagogue - this is a Roma saying this - he's not Jewish. I went to the synagogue many times as a young boy with my father to the [unclear] synagogue which was the Klezmer synagogue in the 1830s through even World War II. It was a [unclear] - it was a union. The Klezmers would create their own synagogue, just like the tailors had their synagogue, the tin smith had the synagogue, the shoemakers had their synagogue, and so, and it would be, it was sort of a union place. You met, you, you talk about business, and Monday was the day of meeting. And guess what? There were no gigs on Monday and if you, and if you, you would, and you'd be fined by your fellow musicians. So he says, he went there and I remember going there to celebrate the new moon, new moon. Many other songs reminded me of ours, the Jewish musicians along with the țigan, the Greek and Romanian musicians traveled often to Constantinople. There, they played Jewish and all kinds of other music and brought back new Turkish tunes, which they introduced to the public. The Klezmers played the Turkish music the best because they already knew the scales from many other synagogue prayers. So let's just hear, since I got this axe right here. And you're probably saying, what the hell, when's he going to play something? So, so scales like this. And so, when I'm meeting the Roma for the first time, the lingua franca was only music. But we could talk. Oh man, could we talk?

24:17 Yale Strom: [plays the violin]

26:14 Yale Strom: So you see, it's all it's all in the phrasing really. And they recognize, they say, oh we hear those scales. We hear that that melisma, the melismatic quality to the playing because the Roma did that too. It's all, you know, in other words, you wouldn't really have a [plays violin]. You would have a [plays violin]. You would in a very fast piece, in a very emotive piece [plays violin] because that's how people speak and cry and laugh. We don't have frets on our throats [plays violin]. So that's how that was some of the earliest ways I was able to communicate with him. And as Babici says, how we recognized each other's melodies. So when I began my anthropographic field research in Moldavia and Bessarabia in the [19]80s, I asked the Roma musicians where they learned their Klezmer repertoire, and they all answered from playing with Jewish bands, or their own bands for Jewish weddings. And this was the same answer I got when I asked the Lăutari in Transylvania and in the Carpathian mountain regions, particularly southwest Ukraine. If all you students have good geography in your mind, then you know I'm talking about Mukachevo, Vynohradiv, Khust, Yasinya, the very part that juts, that borders Hungary and borders Slovakia, and borders Romania, and borders Poland and a very rich area for lots of folk culture. Between the inner war years 1920-39, the majority of the musicians playing Moldavia-Bessarabia were the Jews and the Roma.

28:03 Yale Strom: They had burnished their reputation as being the best and most versatile musicians. However, the Jewish musicians were sometimes hired first by certain Romanian gentile families because of the stereotypes that surrounded the Jews and Roma. The Jews rarely drank and would not get drunk on the job and

the Roma, you had to keep a careful eye on because they might steal from you. This is what, that was that's a stereotype. But when the fights broke out at gentile Romanian and Ukrainian dances or weddings because several guests got extremely drunk and antisemitic and, or anti-Roma sentiment was rampant and the musicians were equally harassed, beaten up, and robbed. So it didn't matter who you were Roma or Jewish. In uh, in these situations, the Jewish musicians found out they were perceived as no better on the social scale than the Roma, and in situations when just a Roma musician was being hassled, his fellow Jewish bandmates quickly came to his defense. Despite some progress up the socio-economic ladder for both groups of musicians they still found themselves in times of trouble as the outsiders the dirty Jews and Roma who could never be trusted.

29:11 Yale Strom: Another fact that I learned was that some Roma and Jewish musicians found solace and camaraderie in the labor camps set up by the Romanian and Ukrainian fascists during World War II and Transnistria and Nikolai Radu was the first Roma informant that I met, and lucky for me he spoke a fluent Yiddish. Uh, I met him in, in uh Chișinău, in a home of a refusenik, and these were Jews had been refused visas to emigrate from the Soviet Union, and she was a musician, and one of her best friends was Nikolai. And she said, oh Yitzhak, come home, come tonight and I can talk about Jewish music. But he can play Jewish music and and that's the way you're gonna learn, from him. And he says, when I was taken to Transnistria, I was lucky to meet a fellow musician, a Jew I had played occasionally with before the war. We were given special duties at night time to play for the officers, and given a little more food than the rest of the regular prisoners. I wouldn't have been able to survive that horrendous ordeal without my brother Janku.

30:11 Yale Strom: So this brings me to the main topic of the paper and this is the relationship of the Jewish and Roma musicians during the Holocaust. Almost every camp inmate was inescapably confronted in one way or another with music in the course of his or her camp imprisonment. This took place mainly within the officially prescribed framework of daily life in the camps. Singing was required and there were camp orchestras, but music was also played over loudspeakers. Besides these occasions, camp inmates were forced to perform music for the SS [Schutzstaffel], for their personal entertainment at private parties. Once the camp system had been developed the most common form of command music in the concentration camps was singing on command. The inmates received the order to strike up a song from a soldier, or from a prisoner functionary like a Kapo and immediately there would be singing. The guards used singing on command to intimidate, frighten, humiliate, and degrade the prisoners. After a long day of strenuous manual labor, being forced to sing meant an enormous physical effort for the weakened prisoners. Command singing took place on several occasions while marching while doing exercises, during the roll call, and on the way to or from work. Frequently singing was compulsory even during forced labor. It was not uncommon for singing to provide the macabre background music while prisoners were being punished. While the guards and officials did not usually prescribe any particular song, the prisoners generally chose pieces which were not calculated to unnecessarily provoke the guards.

31:42 Yale Strom: German folk songs with banal, country-fied, or naive texts were particularly popular with the SS and were repeated to the point of uh, stupefication.

These songs formed a harsh contrast with the hopeless situation the prisoners. For example, they were forced to sing a song as [in German] little hut on the edge of the forest, while faced with the daily terror of life in the camps. And I'm gonna go and play a song that it reminded me - I said, well here's, talking about a little hut in the forest and I learned a song about a little hut as well from a - and we'll talk about him a little later and - from a concentration camp survivor who played music in the camps. Eventually made it to the Partisans, and he would play this little song had a similar title, but it was sung in Yiddish.

32:37 Yale Strom: [plays the violin]

33:37 Yale Strom: So it went something simply, simply like this [sings in Yiddish then plays the violin] and it simply it means, there is a door to the [unclear] there in the Polish woods by a [sings in Yiddish] by a quiet little river. [sings in Yiddish] stands a little hut, all by itself. [sings in Yiddish] Not only will I long for it, I will never forget it. [sings in Yiddish] My little hut, my little hut. So that, it sort of reminded me of that song. Besides these songs, many concentration camps had their own special anthem which served as a sort of official signature tune for the camp the model for all these concentration camp anthems was composed in the summer of 1930. We have - You wanna ask?

35:02 Speaker 1: I just have a question. It sounds a bit like [unclear].

35:05 Yale Strom: Well, you know, you put the notes together. There's only so many notes on the scale and it could be, right? It could be. I, I can play [unclear] later on, we'll see how close it is. Um, the model, the model for all these concentration camp anthems was, was composed in the summer of 1933 in Börgermoor concentration camp, a political prisoner camp near Hanover in Lower Saxony. This is best known as, and many of you'll know, under the title of the *Moorsoldatenlied,* of the peat-bog soldiers. This song was created by the prisoners who used to dry out peat bog swamps. After a particularly vicious attack by some drunken SS on the prisoners, a miner named Esser wrote a poem that described the terrible camp conditions. Composer Rudi Goguel set it to music and it was performed for the first time in the Zircus Konzentrazani, this sort of concentration camp circus. Um, the, they created these for the entertainment of the guards, of course, the people at the work camp, but also, in some ways, for themselves. Because, as, as, as ironic it seems that I have to be forced - not only do you beat me and hate me, but now I have to entertain - but in a way, it was a way to keep their sanity and, and, and also ways of resistance. So the circus - so with the prisoners marching and holding their spades, singing, and then the peat bog soldiers won't go marching - won't go marching - that's the key - won't go marching with their spades to the bog.

36:35 Yale Strom: Everyone, including SS guards, joined in singing *Moorsoldaten*. It spread throughout the camp system as prisoners were transferred to other camps. In this way it became the most popular of all concentration camp songs, symbolizing for the inmates both protests and determined endurance. Let me take a moment to play it for you. I'll find it here somewhere. Let's see, there's that one, there's this and it's right here. So I'm sure some of you will recognize it. It has become famous all over the world, and here we go. I'll just play it for you real quick.

37:12 Yale Strom: [playing the violin] and this is the part that is famous [playing the violin]

38:27 Yale Strom: And no more, as they said - nicht mehr mit dem Spaten ins Moor - no more will I take my shovel, my spade, in my hand and walk to the bogs. And this became, it's a, there's a great version - if you're interested - Paul Robeson recorded this many years ago, and one of, one of the most - in my opinion - one of the most beautiful recordings of it. In some camps prescribed music was forced on the inmates in a second way. Music from radio or gramophones was played over permanently installed loudspeakers. In 1933 the system was used in particular in the [unclear] camp to re-educate the inmates who were political opponents of the regime, using propaganda speeches and so-called national music, for example, from the German composer and antisemite Richard Wagner. The most extraordinary aspect of music in the camp system was the existence of official camp orchestras, or so-called in German Lagerkapellen. Amateur and professional musicians among the prisoners formed these ensembles which were either ordered by the camp administration or tolerated by the officials. The musicians played first and foremost as directed by the SS. The first of these ensembles came into existence as early as 1933 and they were present in the early concentration camps such as Oranienburg and Sonnenburg. Almost every camp inmate was inescapably confronted in one way or another with music in the course of his or her camp imprisonment. This took place mainly within the officially prescribed framework of daily life in the camps. Singing was required and there were camp orchestras, but music was also played over loudspeakers. Besides these occasions, camp inmates were forced to perform music for the SS, for their personal entertainment at private parties.

40:25 Yale Strom: Once the camp system had been developed, the most common form of command music in the concentration camps was singing on command. The inmates received the order to strike up the song from a soldier, from a prisoner functionary like the Kapo and immediately would be singing. Command singing - Oh my, wait, I, I just read that. Oh, I see it copied it twice. Ah here we go, the musical life of Roma during the Holocaust is not as known as the musical life of the Jews during the Holocaust. This is ironic in that I earlier said, in various parts of Eastern Europe, particularly in the Carpathian, Ukraine, Transylvania, Bukovina, and Bessarabia the Jewish and Roma Lăutari had a strong influential relationship on each other's music. Soon after the start of the war, the Germans decided to remove the Sinti and Roma. Those who don't know, the Sinti were the Roma living in Germany already uh, for a couple hundred years. The Roma were considered those Roma coming from Romania uh, newly on Hungary, uh Slovakia uh, let's say within the latter part of the 19th century through the early part of the 20th century, until World War II began. The Sinti were they considered more cultivated uh, more assimilated uh, some speaking Romani, many have forgotten their language, Romani, some only speaking German, where the Roma spoke Romani as their lingua franca every day, among themselves and, and, and learned German too, for business reasons.

41:50 Yale Strom: Um, so what were, uh they were resettled in the general, in the general government which was Poland, where they were placed in Jewish ghettos and camps with the Jews. Over 5,000 German Senti and Roma were placed in the Łódź ghetto in September 1941, the second largest ghetto in Poland. Crowded,

malnourished, and weak, soon a typhoid epidemic broke out in the Roma ghetto. Jewish doctors tried to treat the sick and dying patients. The Jews were forced to bury the Roma victims in the Jewish cemetery, and by January 1942 the Roma ghetto was completely liquidated, with the majority of them murdered soon afterwards at Kulmhof. I, when I was doing [unclear] I said Kulmhof, okay? I gotta find out what is that. Well now I know, that's Chelmno. I always do it as Chelmno but the research done in Poland they call it Kulmhof. Jewish prisoner uh, the Jewish prisoner in the Łódź ghetto who was a musician was David Beigelman, who was born in 1887. He grew up in a musical family where each of his siblings played an instrument. Beigelman became a professional violinist, composer, and theater critic and toured Europe, and even the United States, as the member of the Łódź theater orchestra. During the Łódź ghetto, Beigelman became one of the key members of the ghetto's cultural activities. Most of Beigelman's songs were sad and about the daily tragedies of life.

43:11 Yale Strom: The head of the Judenrat, those who don't know, that's the Jewish police. You think, the Germans forced the Jews to create their own city council. A council, and you say, well, why would they do that? Why, because first of all, it's to make the Jews have to make the hard decisions. Who's going to live, and who's going to die, who's going to work, and who's not going to work? You know, it's just more sadism. So, the head of the Judenrat was the famous Chaim Rumkowski - satirically called the king of the Jews by the Jewish community - and he forbid any sad songs to be sung. So Beigelman's most famous tunes had to be sung in secret, not at the community Yiddish theater productions. Some of the most, more famous of these songs are *Makh tsu di eygelekh (Close Your Little Eyes)*, *Nisht keyn rozhinkes, nisht keyn mandlen [No raisins, no almonds]*. There's the famous *Rozhinkes, Mandlen*. That's the famous *Raisins and Almonds* written by Abraham Goldfaden but this is *No Raisins, No Almonds* um, and then of course *Tsigaynerlid (Gypsy Song)*. After the liquidation of the ghetto in July 1944 Beigelman was deported to Auschwitz, from there to a slave labor camp where he finally succumbed to starvation in February 1945.

44:24 Yale Strom: And so, let me just - it's just perfect - let me play the tune he wrote, this one. We don't have many tunes specifically about the Roma, that just aren't, but this is one. But actually, let me, let me get the other source here. That's actually better. So that, and um, we are actually - we as in my wife, and I, and members of my band - we, we uh, we do this song occasionally for uh, and the man who often accompanies Elizabeth is Roma, interestingly enough. So this is, so let's just, real quickly um, so you, you get this. I'm not going to sing it. That I'm not, a singer really, but uh, so let me just uh, here, here's what he wrote. David uh Beigelman. Five thousand Roma in the Łódź ghetto - and by the way, they were the first to be taken out in [19]41 to uh Chelmno, and so that camp was liquidated quickly before the Łódź ghetto. The Łódź ghetto for uh, was the second largest ghetto in Poland, and it lasted the longest. It was not liquidated until July 1944, very late in the war, very late in the war. Eight hundred survivors that walked out of that ghetto. Okay, dark is a night like black coal. I think and think and my heart pounds. We Gypsies live like nobody else. We suffer pain from lack of bread. Then there's a refrain, dzum, dzum, dzum. We fly like seagulls, dzum, dzum, dzum. We play the balalaykes. Nowhere to stay. Nowhere to be. Everyone struggles but I just

think we Gypsies live like nobody else. We suffer pain from lack of bread - and it goes like this.

46:19 Yale Strom: [playing the violin]

47:46 Yale Strom: And you can just hear in the melody, it's a sad song because there was nothing happy about the situation. And I think because David Beigelman did a superb job, of course, capturing that feeling. On uh, finally on December 16th, 1942 Heinrich Himmler orders the deportation of all the remaining Senti and Roma that had been shot, that had not been shot by the Einsatzgruppen. That photo that you might have just seen, I passed around, those were Roma kids that were shot by the Einsatzgruppen. Quick little history, if you know what that means, Okay so you have your camps, right? We've heard Auschwitz, and you've heard of Majdanek, and people Jews, and Roma, and others, you know, Seventh Day Adventists, and communists, and criminals, and so forth and so on that we're being in - and homosexuals - being deported to concentration camps. The Germans said, you know what? When they, when they attack the Soviet Union, they said, to hell with that. We're not going to do that. We don't have the manpower. We don't have the train power. We're just going to kill them where, in their homes, in the very places, in the villages, in their towns, and their cities. And so, it started off with four Einsatzgruppen that were only 1,000 men each, each unit, and their only job was to carry a gun, and take a bullet, and kill - nothing else, nothing. True murderers, each one of these guys killed easily thousands. And then a group, and by the, towards the end of the war the Einsatzgruppen went from 4,000 to 60,000 men. All they were doing, just killing machines.

49:19 Yale Strom: Very quickly I'll tell you the town where my cousins, my family, were murdered. They came to [unclear]. They came on, they came on what we call the eve of the Jewish New Year's, Rosh Hashanah, September 21, 1941. And they come, they gather up the Jews. They get a few able-bodied men, a few that were lucky, they sent - and this would be sending West right, not East - they sent them West to labor camps. The majority they did, men, women, children, they marched into the forest. They made them dig a pit, and they mowed them down, and then they just dumped, they just dumped that earth, and literally the earth still moved. I talked to peasants there old enough, in their 80s. They said we saw the earth moving when we came back at night, and hear moaning. And so, so Himmler says, okay so those Roma that are not been killed by the Einsatzgruppen, and now we're going to take you, and we're going to deport you all. These, and this was, and so they they created the special camp in Auschwitz, Auschwitz-Birkenau and they sent them January 29th, 1943. There the Roma were interned in a special camp created for them called Zigeunerlager - Gypsy camp - which existed for 17 months. It was a family camp. The Nazis felt it was easier to control the Roma if they allowed them to stay together as families, unlike the Jewish prisoners. This camp, adjacent to the Roma camp, was Lager C, or Lager C, camp C, and here several Jewish Holocaust survivors remember the Roma.

50:46 Yale Strom: One says, I often went to sleep in our crowded camp, full of men, with the strains of hearing the Gypsys singing to a lone violin player. The Gypsy violinist who played was called Jacob [unclear]. He played late into the night and I think the Gypsy, I think the Nazis enjoyed it. The melody was so sad. I cried every time I heard it. Then one night we heard terrible shrieks, shouting, crying coming

from the Gypsy camp. The screaming was only broken up with the Nazi soldiers shouting orders and the piercing barking of the dogs. This happened all night until the next morning until it was completely silent in the Gypsy camp. They had taken them all and sent them to the gas chambers. That night - August 2 and August 3 - and these are days that are remembered around the world, not only by Roma but of course by Roma for sure and other people. The able-bodied Roma men and women were sent to other labor camps. The rest, the rest that were left - 3,000 - were gassed and sent to uh, the crematoriums and all - about 20-25,000 Roma in Auschwitz-Birkenau were murdered. Survivors of the Nazi camps and ghettos often recall Roma musicians and singers, but concrete details are few and far between. The fragmentary information that we have about Roma music often came from non-Roma survivors. In Buchenwald, the first camp band assembled by order of the camp uh, commander Rödl in 1938 was composed primarily of Roma musicians, including some members of the famous Reinhardt family, relatives of the great Django Reinhardt. Are you familiar with Django Reinhardt? If you're not, do you like guitar, and you - the man who created what we call Gypsy jazz. And there. We use the term. We don't say Roma jazz. We say Gypsy jazz. It comes from Paris uh, check out Django Reinhardt, the greatest. There isn't anyone who's come close to him yet.

52:32 Yale Strom: The former inmate Eugen Kogon remembered this man was played not only by orders of the SS but also at night from themselves and their families. He remembered how one night while walking through the camp, he suddenly heard the sound of a Roma violinist that drifted out from one of the barracks, and how the music made him remember happier times in his native, native Hungry, and as he listened to the tunes from the Hungarian steppes and songs and melodies from Vienna and Budapest. The first Mauthausen ensemble was established in [19]42, also the majority of the musicians were Roma. Ironically, in both of these bands, Buchenwald and Mauthausen, the Roma musicians - who for the most part played by ear only - were replaced by the Jewish musicians, who could read music. There the tables were turned. It's very sad, right? They couldn't read. So, because if the German said, hey Wagner! They couldn't fake it. You could read music. It's a language, right? It's an international language, music, when you read it. So sadly, tragically, those who could only play by ear, and believe me, the Jewish musicians, they faked it too, or they or they were killed, no longer of use.

53:42 Yale Strom: In the small concentration camp Taucha or Taucha, I think right, a sub-camp of Buchenwald, SS commander, an SS commander ordered Ruth Elias to assemble a cabaret within 10 days, if not she would be killed. She worked desperately to gather a group of women performers and prepare a show and was impressed with the talented Roma singers she found. The show was popular with the guards and the SS of applauding loudly. Ruth Elias said, all the women were amazing, but especially the Gypsy women had the most talent. It gave us a sense of solidarity during such trying times. In some cases, there were several ensembles operating simultaneously in the same camp. For instance, in the complex of camps known as Auschwitz, you're going to have the Auschwitz-Birkenau, it's the largest of all the camps. It was the mother of concentration camps. So you're going to have the most orchestras. There, there were six orchestras, some as large as 120 members, and one of the most famous of the

kappelmeister, directors, was a woman named Alma Mahler Rose. Alma Mahler was of course Gustav Mahler's niece, the great composer. Upon arrival in Auschwitz, Rose was quarantined and became very ill, but was eventually recognized. She assumed leadership as the uh of the Mädchen orchestra, of the girl orchestra. The orchestra had been in existence before Rose's arrival and was under the baton of Polish prisoner Zofia Czajkowska. The ensemble consisted mainly of amateur musicians and was composed of an odd assortment of instruments, including a string section but also accordions, mandolin, and harmonica. The orchestra's primary function was to play at the main gate each morning and evening as the prisoners left for and returned from their work assignments, as well as playing with the trains arriving, disgorging its human cargo. The orchestra also gave weekend concerts for the prisoners, and the SS, and entertained at the SS functions.

55:30 Yale Strom: As the conductor the orchestra Rose had the status of a Kapo in the camp, with some privileges and comforts that exceeded those of the average inmate including additional food and a private room. The other orchestra members lived less luxuriously but were adequately clothed and avoided hard manual labor. Rose was held in high esteem, on account of her musical prowess, by high-ranking Nazis, including Joseph Mengele, Dr Mengele. She became very ill and died April 5th, 1944. And finishing up here, compared to the singing done on command, the camp orchestras offered a far broader spectrum of music, but they also demanded a much greater organizational effort. Because, remember I'm talking about using everything. Instruments, how do you keep them, you know, what are the string breaks, right? I, if I have a string, well I got three strings, the next string, but I got two. I have no strings? What good am I, right? The SS guy doesn’t want to hear me sing. He wants me to play the violin. Who's going to provide the strings? Reed instruments, clarinet, you know about that if you're a reed player. You gotta learn how to make a reed. It's all about the reed. No reed, no sound, you have nothing. So these things - sheet music. The position of the ensemble players was privileged compared to that of other prisoners, enabling many of them to survive. Although they enjoyed certain privileges, ensemble members were still subject to the unprinted, unpredictable whims of SS men. Like all other prisoners, they were forced to work, although assigned to less laborious work details. Other prisoners were frequently jealous of the privileges and there was fierce competition for the favor of Kapos and SS men.

57:03 Yale Strom: Next to the Sonderkommando prisoners, the musicians in the various ensembles in Auschwitz-Birkenau had the highest, had the second highest rate of suicide - which I found interesting. Some say it was because they were forced to play during the selection process and they witnessed their family members being marched to the gas chamber. So you can imagine, you're having to play a song and you see your mother going to the gas chamber. The purposes of the camp orchestras depended largely on the quality of the musicians involved, and also on the interests of the camp administrations, as well as the type of camp. Like compulsory singing, the camp ensembles were also used to provide the rhythm, which helped keep the marching columns. You know, the Germans are about order, so singing keeps order, right? They were about order. You had to stand up straight, march in the column, keep the columns of prisoners and step as they left the camp, or as they returned to the camp. Many of the statistic, sadistic mass

murderers were at the same time sensitive music lovers, like SS man Thies Christophersen, an SS officers at Auschwitz. He enjoyed what he called Gypsy music and so when he was assembling his work detail, he preferred the Roma-Sinti musicians. In this way, musicians and singers with musical gifts or with their musical training were turned into a sort of personal musical slaves, available at all times. They can be said to have had a dangerously dependent relationship to the SS or to prisoner functionaries. They could not with impunity refuse to comply with their desire for musical entertainment.

58:27 Yale Strom: On the other hand, their special status provided the musicians with a certain degree of protection from random brutality and accorded them privileges, which in some cases ensured their survival. But as soon as the musical slaves had done their duty, all of their protections were taken away. I played that song, *The Polish Woods*, this is from the band - Leopold Koslovsky was a prisoner in the Janowski labor camp, outside of Lviv, told me, I often was forced to accompany this Roma violinist who knew my father before the war and played with him in some restaurants. But after a month, I never saw him again. And then I had the luck to perform with my brother. He played on the same, on that very same violin. Playing in the camp orchestra, playing the death tango, saved our lives until we transferred to [unclear] and we eventually escaped to the forest. So that was the partisan song I learned from him, where he played the accordion. In the years 1942-43, many camps saw the development of very different kinds of musical ensembles, such as jazz, big band, big band jazz, and - I put ironically - degenerate music. Do you know about, right? That was called degenerate art and here, and here the the Nazis want to hear jazz. Uh, this band was in Buchenwald, and then there was also harmonica ensemble in Sachsenhausen, and a Roma orchestra at Falkensee, near Berlin, and a choir of Soviet prisoners of war that performed at Flossenburg. At most camps professional musicians, and in most camps professional musicians played with talented amateurs.

59:49 Yale Strom: Despite the language barriers, barriers music gave the prisoners a sense of community, and solidarity during their imprisonment. Because of the constant cloud of fear that hung over every prisoner and their physical condition, aesthetics, and musicianship were not the first priority. Right? It's not how great a musician you are, or how great you're emoting, or wow I can, and that's really what Schumann meant there. They didn't give a shit about that, right? Because they only cared about instead, fostering a sense of community, a formal resistance, as the prisoner lived from one hour. I remember a man said, day to day? He said, what do you mean day to day? I lived hour to hour. Some said live minute to minute. That was their main mission. Most musical activities at concentration camps and extermination camps took place without preparation. It was just spontaneous. Those who did not know the lyrics just hummed along. Spontaneous singing often happened when the prisoners were being marched to the gas chambers. It was their last poignant act of resistance. The prisoners from Czechoslovakia sang their national anthem in Birkenau. The Jews, the Jews - especially the Zionists - sang Hatikvah. Other Jews, as well as non-Jews, sang what became the hymn of many Jewish prisoners in the camps throughout Europe, and of course, that's Hirsh Glik's *Zog nit keyn mole.* It menat, *Never say Never*. He wrote while in the Vilna ghetto. And the Roma sang, the Roma sang The Lament Auschwitz, which was first recorded in 1960 by Ružena Danielová, a

survivor from the Czech town Mutenice. Sung in Romani the song draws on things common to the repertoire of Romani folk laments, notably the singer's feelings of isolation and despair, and the symbolic image of a dark bird bearing a message from the land of the dead.

1:01:35 Yale Strom: Finally, during the last months of the war, conditions in the camps deteriorated to such an extent that the most, that most music ensembles ceased to exist. And when the military situation worsened for the Germans and their collaborators, the death marches got underway, and most musical performances ceased. So I will end this uh talk with this song. Uh, one of the few that we know from the informants that survived - Jews remember melodies but wait there's, we, we don't have it yet. Still doing the research from the Jewish informants remembering the words, the Romani words. They can humm, you know this is the one that was, the words. And it simply says, oh the blackbird went into my heart and stole it - ah here I live in Auschwitz - here in Auschwitz - I'm hungry - there isn't a piece of bread to eat - there is nothing to eat here - it is all my bad luck - at one time I had my home - I'm so hungry I could kill - oh oh jesus oh oh. And the melody goes like this.

1:02:46 Yale Strom: [playing the violin]

1:04:15 Yale Strom: Thank you very much. Wow, I was thinking about some of my friends who suffered, Roma friends, when I played that song. Well, you know pain like that just doesn't go away, huh? And it shows you the power of music, you know. It just, it took me back when I in Eastern Europe, sitting at their feet, listening to them tell me their stories, seeing the number on their arms - just like Jews - only they had a z right, for Zigeuner, because they're Roma, you know, asocials, asocials. You know that there were Roma who fought in the Wehrmacht - Wehrmacht - during World War II? Only to come home and in 1942 Himmler says, that's it. We don't need you anymore. These were the Sinti. The Sinti said, well, they're sort of Aryan, or they are Aryan. You know, they're going all their phrenology, you know, measuring the scalp and the, the, your head and all that ridiculous nonsense. But they're Aryan, so again, Commissioner Himmler, you're a man of science. Because that's, they are coming from India and so, at first, they they didn't they took the Roma but not the Sinti to the camps. But then, yeah, we don't need them as well, and so there were soldiers who went to the gas chambers, who fought in the Wehrmacht. So just, the irony and the twists and turns of World War II. I see, I saw a hand there. Sir, or anybody question or comment. Yes, sir?

1:06:10 Speaker 2: You, in the beginning of your talk, you mentioned that the Roma are the most unexplained people in Europe, and of course, I've seen the wagon, wagon, you've seen the the wagon camps in, in luxury hotels in the Netherlands, and in France, and all of Europe. And we can't understand them. Why do you, in what way do you say that they were the most misunderstood minority in Europe? What do you think of when you say that?

1:06:49 Yale Strom: Well, well I, I would say they're misunderstood, certainly still today. Um, uh well one reason we know factually that uh, that the main pariah today, of Europe, from, from Ireland, Scotland to the Ural mountains are the Roma. I get, I get constantly, because I'm part of the European Roma Rights Council, and I get every day, you know I have to delete you know, because I'd just be doing nothing

else, but reading accounts of bias, of beating up, of pogroms, of murder, of rape. And I'm not talking about once a week, every day. So, they are the, right now, I mean it's not like, and it's not like the Jews and Roma, we're trying to battle. Let's, let's get to who wants to be the the most vilified, but we find ourselves here, the Jews as well. I mean, I just talked to a friend yesterday in Hungary. The uh, the Hungarians just had their elections and it was not a happy one. Um, but anyhow, changing subject. Well it's actually, for the Jews and the Roma, it's not a happy one in Hungary. Um the right wing, the neoconservative, they're very neo-fascists basically, [Viktor] Orbán's uh, power, party's even stronger than it was, three days ago. So, but I see they're the most unders- uh, they're, Europeans need someone to vilify. Also because they don't understand, oh they steal or, why don't they educate, or they still marry off their girls at 12 or 13. Well, no wonder why there's, keep, the poverty as this. They don't, you know, some of this still happens but a lot of the, gadjo, goyim, as they call right, that's their word, uh the gentiles, the non-Roma, uh have used them. It's well, I don't understand them, I never will, I don't trust them, I fear them. And you know, I enjoy their music, or their art somewhat, but I don't want them in my neighborhood.

1:08:45 Yale Strom: And it's a good question but you know, that's like the question, you know, why do we still have race in the United States? I mean, the great democracy of the United States right, we still have racism. Well, because you know why? Because people look at it, the simple ques- is, the easiest answer is - people look in the mirror and say you know, what? It's not me. It's him. I can't be the problem, not me. I love myself. It's him or her. That is in the genes of all humanity, of all how many, seven billion people we have in the world. And so, it just so it happens that in Europe you've got a lot of people wake up every day and say it's them - the Roma, the țigan, the [unclear] they call them, the blacks. That's how they, you know, in Romania the [unclear]. They call them the [unclear] that's another nice word to call them; that's a derogatory word. That's like using the n-word here in the United States and you, you constantly hit down at people. You know, it, you know, and so it's a, it's a sad situation. Things are getting better, they are, and how? Because of education. People are learning. They said, wait a minute, this is ridiculous. I don't have to have the same stereotypes as my parents or grandparents. I go to school with Roma. I have Roma friends. I maybe have a Roma girlfriend, a Roma boyfriend. So things are, but it's, it's, it's taking time. But it's economics, right? People, you know, wait, you know, if you don't have enough on the table, or you don't have work, or you're not, or you don't feel good about your work. I'm doing this work and it’s drudgery. It's not really what I want to do. You take out, sometimes, you take your frustration out and others, and sadly uh, many are taking out. And not in just Romania and Hungry, the more backward former East Bloc countries. In good old of England, the great democratic country of England, the great democracy of Italy, the great democracy of France where the Roma are being discriminated, pushed out, put in prison, kicked out. Well, you heard about that girl. If you follow news, oh your parents, the girl is French, she speaks French. She doesn't know a bloody word of Albanian and they take her. And could you imagine, not even having the courtesy to wait after high school? To go in the middle of the school day to humiliate her in front of all her friends in high school. And high school is a tough age for all people, particularly young women, right? And to immediately take her out and and deport her with her parents to a place she knows nothing about, Kosovo. And they say, oh, you know, yeah. We

made a mistake. We'll let you back. She says, what? I'm not coming back. I'm not leaving my mom and dad. This is France, liberty? So that's that's how I answer that question. Yes.

1:11:13 Speaker 3: I grew up in Transylvania.

1:11:16 Yale Strom: Ah, where?

1:11:17 Speaker 3: In Brașov.

1:11:18 Yale Strom: Oh, I know Brașov, yes.

1:11:20 Speaker 3: I was wondering, this last piece that you played was very Hungarian in melody. And of course, I was exposed to a lot of Roma music, and I had friends, Roma friends. I went into the camp, the campings, sang and they played, because I was a violinist, and I love their music. And I noticed that there were different phraseologies for different uh, part, depending on where they lived they picked up from those nationalities or those rhythms. Could you?

1:11:59 Yale Strom: Yes, you're right. Well, good ear because this comes from Eastern Slovakia which was Hungarian influence. So yes, probably, most likely, more Hungarian sounding tune certainly different from some, like what Beigelman uh, the Polish-Jewish composer. Um, the Jews and the Roma, if you're going to be a musician you got it - and is this about practicality, um, not about aesthetics, okay? Ukrainians, I've got to learn some Ukrainian songs. Roma, I'm going to learn these Roma music. Poles, I'm going to learn - because if they said, what do you play, Jewish music? They say, get out of here, that's all you play? We got, you got to play this, this, this, and this. And so, they knew. They said, we have to study the repertoire of all these people when we travel and because the Klezmers traveled too, sometimes they travel. So that's how they did, and the style changed but the Roma, they're, a lot of the more glissando, kind of a really, kind of a syrupy feel, kind of a, you know, let's say, if I could [playing the violin] Yeah, yeah. You know, and now the Jews know glissando, but the Jews would do [playing the violin] yeah because that was the kinp they say. That's a little pinch the [unclear] in the heart because it's hazonish, it's cantorial, you know.

1:13:29 Yale Strom: And it's, it comes from our, it comes from our Middle Eastern background. You listen to the muezzin, he's not going, he's not calling the prayer uh-uh-uh. It'll be, how boring would that be? The muezzin was in, sings in the beautiful mellow, melismatic way those Middle-Eastern scales, right? [playing the violin] and one thing that the Roma didn't do as much, but the Jews did, [playing the violin] oh they love to hang on a note [playing the violin] And you're going, oh, all right release me already. Now that you said, I got you in my palm [playing the violin] so that was right [playing the violin] So that's it, there was a lot more of the added, um, ornamentation that the Klezmer's - and some Roma copy that, learn. Now there's a style of violin playing that the Roma taught the Klezmers in the Bessarabia region, in Iași, in Kishinev, and I learned it from an old - he since has passed on and you might know him if you like Roma music - the group was called [unclear]. They travel all over the world now and they're from the town of Zece Bazin, which means the ten fields. It's a village, but it's like - must be in the water, everyone's a killer musician, you know. I go there and I'm ashamed to play my

violin, you know, I got these three-year-olds and playing circles around me. So he would say, Yitzhak, this is how you have to play this melody, like this. So he'd start off like this, he'd go [playing the violin and whistling]

1:16:11 Yale Strom: He said, you have to hear the wind first. [playing the violin] He'd say, can you hear it? Can I hear what? Listen, you're not listening. I'm listening, what am I supposed to hear? He's, he said you dumb gadjo. Then he said, no, you're not. You're a Jew. That's one thing though, let me tell you, I'd go up to, oh I'm not Roma. [unclear] Jew? Ahh. The gadjo, the gadjo ethnographer would not have it as easy as a Jew, and they, they trust - oh it's a fact - they trust you right away, much more. Why? We suffered. We, it's sad to say that but they say, we know each other. We suffer; people don't like us. Why? We don't know but we're friends. So he would go like this [playing the violin] and then he'd go [playing the violin]. And I go, what are you doing? [unclear] Rip the strings. Rip your heart. [playing the violin] And then it would be quiet. There'd just be [playing the violin]. Oh man, do I wish I had a bassist right now? And so that would be your bass line, right? [playing the violin and singing] And then he would just throw it around the room. Who's playing next, come on. Man, let's go. Wake up. So that was his style. So he taught that Klezmer's learned from the Roma as well, but the Jews really did influence a lot in the style of violin playing. Oh, I'm sorry Deborah, and then Denise. Deborah, yeah?

1:18:32 Deborah Hertz: Well thank you very much. I'm really glad you didn't go to law school. I have two questions and a request. So the first question has to do with religion, if you could talk a little bit about Roma religion and how it was seen by the Nazis. The second one has to do with a comment you made in a kind of offhand way that they were Aryans. So they weren't blonde and didn't have white skin but they were Aryans which should have exempted them for persecution, and if you could talk a little bit about that. And then the third thing is if you could play us um, I can't say Yiddish, but the *Never Say Never* anthem and talk a little bit about it.

1:19:10 Yale Strom: I did bring this. Okay, okay, so uh, religion well of course the Roma, coming from India you know, having, you know, various aspects of Hinduism, Eastern religions, and they maintained that. But then, as they stayed in Europe and, and they came uh, around the tenth, around the 10th century, they're pushed out and eventually, they make it to Turkey - the gateway to Europe, right, the Balkans, and they make it uh, around uh, oh the 14th century, the Roma were very clever. They say, you know what? We will become whatever the religion of the country is. They won't bother us as much. And so they became Muslim, that they were forced. They became Christian, some even. Now, they didn't become Jewish. They figured, you know, why? You know, why have three strikes against you? You know, but there were Roma that did marry Jews, you know, um, uh. Today. interestingly enough, many are Pentecostal. That's a big movement, particularly in Bohemia and Moravia. So they're mostly Christians, like my personal friends uh, I'll be seeing in a couple weeks in New York, uh, Peter. He grew up Roman Catholic, not really practicing but Catholic uh, Orthodox I should say, Orthodox because it's from Romania. So that is their, their religions, the Catholicism. Though, though uh, now that I think about it in, in East Jerusalem, and in the in in the Gaza there is a group called the Domari that are Gypsies, Roma Gypsies, and they are Arabs but no, no, no not Arabs, excuse me. They are Roma that are Muslims, but they're not Jews, and then Muslims look down upon them because they're not Arabs, and the

Jews look down upon them because they're Muslim, and it's a very small minority. And most people don't know about them, and matter of fact, I took my Israeli cousin, you know, she's Israeli. She's been there, she, she's uh, she knows all about Israelis and [unclear]. And she says, you know it took you to come here and bring me. I didn't know about these people and - a very interesting group called the Domari.

1:21:10 Yale Strom: Um, your other question was - yes, the Aryan thing. Well, go figure. I mean, you know, I can't, I don't, I, you know, that's not a that's a, an area of expertise but um I think what trumped it uh, uh, certainly was that well, they, they had Aryans stock, but know what it was, the blood had been tainted. That's with it, their thing was not about religion anymore; it was all about the blood. I mean, that was with the Jews. What Hitler said, he said, yeah there was antisemites in the 1890s. What Hitler said is, but the problem is with you guys, you, you made it about religion. So if he converts and becomes a great Catholic, guess what though, if he sleeps with your wife and has a kid - that kid's tainted because it was the blood thing, right? So it's the blood thing. So he saw that these Roma, their blood had been tainted. It was defiled uh, impure. As I said, they called them asozial, you know, asocial people. So I think that's why, unfortunately, even though anthropologically yes, you could say, but, you know. I think if you, if we try to put anything logical with it, with Nazi ideology, it just goes out the window. And what was the third? What's that? Oh, can I play and *Never say*, yes I can. I, you'd think I'd memorize this one but it's not what, it's not like it's, not something we play normally in the band - because it's a, it's kind of a sad song, actually. Um, but I have it right here actually, because I knew I'd be asked, just in case.

1:22:32 Yale Strom: And here it is yeah *Zog nit keyn mol az du geyst dem letsn veg* and sadly the man who wrote it, he also passed away. Let me see if I can remember. Oh, you know what I might have to do it like this. Actually, hey can you just turn this page for me? It's good to have an assistant here. Okay, right? So you hear, very march-like and it should be because they, it was to rally the spirits. Real good, I just want to read real quick. *Never say Never come to the end of the way - the leaden skies blot out the light of the day - the hour we all long for will surely appear - our steps will thunder with the words we are here - from lands of palm trees to far off lands of snow - we come with anguish we come with grief we pain and woe - and wear our blood flow right before our eyes - there our power bloom our courage will arise - the glow of morning sun will glide, will guild a bright today - night's darkness vanish like the enemy cast away - but if we perish before this dawn's begun - this song's a message passed to daughter and to son - in blood this song was written and not with pen or quill - not from a songbird freely flying as he will - sung by a people crushed by falling walls - some with guns in hand by those whom freedom calls.*

1:24:00 Yale Strom: [playing the violin]

1:24:57 Yale Strom: And we, and as it says, *we will always never say never as you go the last step, we will always be there*. So that, and that became a Partisans and Jews were singing it, and, and it's a hymn. And it's, and also another great recording

Paul Robeson, Robeson, you know, recorded some great songs - not only of Yiddish - but of many languages uh, of songs about uh, you know, about people that have come under intolerance. Denise, you had a question.

1:25:26 Speaker 4: Um, the Israeli National Anthem, *Hatikvah*, I had read that it had Roma roots to it.

1:25:33 Yale Strom: The, the roots, the melody of *Hatikvah* - those who don't know means the hope - it's the, it's, it's the national anthem Israel. Real quick, it's a Bohemian folk melody. It's Bohemian and that's why that, even long before the state of Israel, if you're a, a classical aficionado out there, and have ever uh, listened to the very beautiful play, or music called the *Bartered Bride* - it was written by Bedřich Smetana - I love that name, Bedřich sour cream. That's what his name means. Bedřich sour cream, his mom gave birth to sour cream, you know? Um, Bedřich Smetana, and because I remember playing in the youth symphony, and I'm playing, and I go what the hell, man? We are like 14. Hey, this is *Hatikvah*. You know, of course, the conductor - Strom, you're bowing up - we're going down. You know, oh okay, yeah, right, you know. But I mean, that's why I was the last chair in the second swing, back next to the trombones, and the tuba, or something. Um, so it's a Bohemian and uh and then uh Naftali Imber, Imber um, uh, you know eventually went to Israel. And you know, he went to the kibbutz. He was supposed to work hard, and he found the work too difficult. He was not one of these tough-toiling Jews. He said, what the heck? I can’t do, the heat, the this, I get my hands. You know, I'm an artist. And uh, so he says, well we don't need you. Get out of here. Wait a minute, wait a minute. I'll write us a song, how's that? Okay. He wrote the words, of course, the rest is history, and then it became. But he took it. He took a folk melody that was [unclear] If you're not familiar though, I shouldn't assume anyone knows.

1:27:06 Yale Strom: [playing the violin]

1:28:02 Yale Strom: So, the old Bohemian melody that’s now a national anthem. Yes. Any questions, last one or two comments? Yes, sir.

1:28:10 Speaker 5: Well uh, you remind, you reminded me uh, I talked to my uh, cousin who described um, her stay in Auschwitz and in a way, her description of the most horrendous experience was when the Gypsies were marched out of their barracks.

1:28:30 Yale Strom: Right. Well, and you all heard that and, and from the description that I read and wrote about and, and talking to others, Zev - and Elizabeth knows who I'm talking about. I made a film about uh, a survivor named Zev Godinger. It's called the *Carpati: 50 Miles, 50 Years* and Zev told me clearly, he says, I'm at Lager C, and I'm looking out for the fence, and it's pitch. It's nighttime. It's dark out and uh, you know. It's on a warm night. It’s humid, you know. It’s, it's August 1, 1944, but he's the screaming. I mean, the curling screaming and thus, this is why

they kept, you know that was the only people that were allowed to have a family camp, because they and, and you know, uh, uh. He said, there were, and he also saw guards, he said, guards that had scratch marks of blood and stuff because they fought. They were just, they became like, what's the word? Uh, so wrought with emotion and and, and would not listen and uh, yeah. He said it, you know. I mean, it was all terrible. He lost his family. He survived. He was the only one to survive but he said that screams, the shreyen, he said the the the curdling screams, and with the dogs and just everything happening. And he said, and you couldn't, it was dark. So you're just seeing images, you know, shadows. Uh so um, yeah a very sad moment for the Roma. And there were many Jews that had Roma friends, and Roma had the Jewish friends. [Unclear] You know, prisoners become friends, because you need each other. And so, it was a very sad situation there. Last uh, anything else?

1:30:14 Yale Strom: Um well uh, before I say thank you, I just want to let you know of one particular concert uh, that I'll be doing here in San Diego. Uh, June 2, I'll be playing a concert at the San Diego Repertory Theater, but I have my ensemble called Hot Pastrami, but then we're going to be joined by three others. So it'll be a nonet, we'll be nine people, and just something a little bit different from them, from today. It's called, the concerts called *My Yiddishe Mambo* or my, *My Jewish Mambo,* or my play on *My Yiddishe Mambo*. And what it is is Jewish music meets Latin rhythms, and it was just, and we didn't make it up. In the [19]50s and the [19]60s Jewish musicians, you got to be clever. Like oh, the stuff I'm playing, they're not listening to. Ah, Latin rhythm's hot. Like, what if I take this whole tune, and a Jewish gentleman would just add a little congas to it, little bongos? And in the [19]50s and the [19]60s actually, it was a big rage for a while, Jews playing Latin, to Latin rhythm. So we're doing Jewish melodies to Latin rhythms and we have a great Latin percussion section, uh, as well joining us. So that would be June 2, 7:30 at the San Diego Repertory Theater. And I want to thank Susanne. We, we email many times and uh, and I, I know she'll tell you, but I encourage you, on May

1:31:36 Susanne Hillman: I was just going to - [crosstalk] May 8th, 7th.

1:31:40 Yale Strom: May 7th, So one month and less than a day from from today, you certainly want to hear Dr. Ian Hancock, one of the leading uh, Roma scholars of the Porajmos, of the Holocaust. He was on the Holocaust commission, and on the UN [United Nations] there was a seat and, and help, and helping with the exhibit in the Holocaust Memorial Museum in, in Washington DC and uh, and one who sends me zillions of emails every day too what's what's happening to the Roma uh, not just in Europe but actually, interestingly enough here. And I'll, just one last note, because you sometimes, you know, you hear all this - I'm giving you numbers, and sadness. And okay, you're gonna go out, okay, as you should, as students - particularly I'm talking to the students. In your everyday life yeah, it's like go have fun, you're a student. Here in the United States, there's a program called

My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding. Do you ever watch that bullshit garbage? That's all I can think of it. That's on reality tv that we pay advertisers to back that crap. That's uh, that has me angry. Could you imagine my big fat Jewish wedding, my big fat black wedding, my big fat 'Spic wedding, a big fat Mexican wedding? It's, you know, no. *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding*. So we don't have to go to Europe to look at how we treat and think about the Roma. We can just turn on our bloody-ass tv, reality tv, junk tv, garbage. It gets me pissed off because I work in film and watch that, and the dribble, the stuff that they put out there, and people don't know. Oh yeah, that's, that's how the women act. That's how they dress. That's how the men act and I guess that you know, so it just, it just reinforces my stereotypes. So we don't have to go across the pond. We can just look here in the United States and that's why I make it a point to do the research I do on the Roma. I can, I'm only one person, so I can't research every minority. So I research my own, me - a Jew - and the Roma. Thank you very much.

1:33:40 Susanne Hillman: Thank you very much. Thank you Yale for an enlightening talk and truly uh, beautiful music. Thank you so much and as you said uh, education is key. So uh, I would like to second Yale's um invitation for uh, May 7th uh, Ian Hancock and Yale will be here again to introduce Professor Hancock. Thank you for coming and have a good day.