

CHICAGO

41.8781° N - 87.6298° W



CIVITAS + GIPSY WAY

ALLA ZINGARESE

CEDILLE

DISC 1

CIVITAS ENSEMBLE +
PAVEL ŠPORCL & HIS GIPSY WAY ENSEMBLE

- 1 JOHANNES BRAHMS, ARR. LUKÁŠ SOMMER
Hungarian Dance No. 1 In G minor (3:33)
- 2 GEORGES BOULANGER, ARR. LUKÁŠ SOMMER
Sérénade Tzigane (2:48)
- 3 JENŐ HUBAY, ARR. PAVEL ŠPORCL + LUKÁŠ SOMMER
"Hullámzó Balaton," Scène de la Csárda No. 5, Op. 33 (7:13)
- 4 PABLO DE SARASATE, ARR. LUKÁŠ SOMMER
*Zigeunerweisen*** (9:35)
- 5 LUKÁŠ SOMMER
*Gipsy Odyssey** (5:14)
- 6 PAVEL ŠPORCL
Gipsy Fire (9:21)
- 7 JOHANNES BRAHMS, ARR. LUKÁŠ SOMMER
Rondo alla Zingarese (8:14)

DISC 2

CIVITAS ENSEMBLE

- 1 SYLVIE BODOROVÁ
Džá More for Solo Violin (5:15)
- 2 FRANZ LISZT
Hungarian Rhapsody No. 12 in C-sharp minor (10:30)
- 3 LUKÁŠ SOMMER
*Cigi-Civi** (3:47)
- 4 LEÓ WEINER
Peregi Verbunk for Clarinet and Piano (5:53)
- 5 DAVID POPPER
Hungarian Rhapsody, Op. 68 (8:20)
- 6 GEORGE ENESCU, ARR. CLIFF COLNOT
Romanian Rhapsody No. 1 (7:21)

TT: 88:11

* WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

ALLA ZINGARESE

NOTES BY RACHEL DEWOSKIN

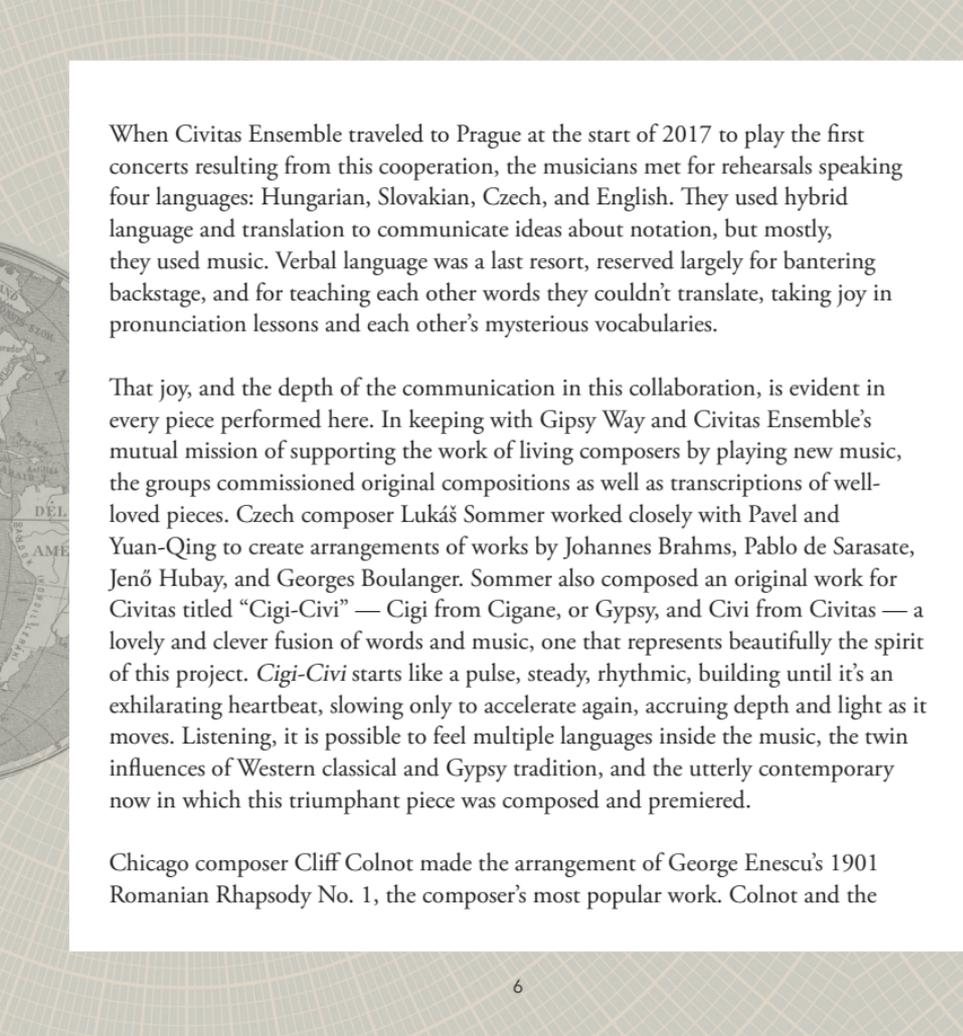
The *Alla Zingarese* project is a fusion of Western classical music and gypsy music, an exploration of what happens when distinct cultural and musical traditions join together. It was inspired by a 25-year friendship between two violinists — YuanQing Yu from Shanghai and Pavel Šporcl from the Czech Republic — as well as by the shared desire of their groups, Chicago’s Civitas Ensemble and the Czech Republic’s Gipsy Way Ensemble, to connect people and music across ages and oceans.

Named for the last movement of Brahms’s G minor Piano Quartet, *Rondo alla Zingarese*, or rondo “In the Gypsy style,” these performances represent the culmination of an intense two-year collaboration between Western classical and Gypsy musicians and composers, one that brought the two communities together in both Prague and Chicago to honor the mutual influences of Gypsy and Western classical music. Whereas Western classical music has a clear and well-documented lineage through the Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, and Romantic ages, the diversity captured under the rubric “Gypsy music” is itself already a rich tapestry of folk traditions from all over Central and Eastern Europe as well as interactions with non-Gypsy traditions. Thematic materials and strategies, structures, and instruments have a long history of eclecticism fueled by such interactions. In that sense, the *Alla Zingarese* project honors and updates the connections between Gypsy and Western classical music over several centuries, bringing the past a little bit closer to the present, and enriching a musical language in which musicians from unique, but long-interacting traditions, communicate. Happily, that musical communication

happens not only among the musicians, but also with those lucky enough to get to listen. And it happens joyfully and deeply, allowing us to hear music that is at once antique and brand new, music that tells us something both distinctive and coherent about history, sound, and ourselves.

Violinists Pavel Šporcl and Yuan-Qing Yu met at Southern Methodist University in the 1990s, when they were students sharing a studio. They stayed in touch for decades and decided two years ago to fuse the formidable forces of Civitas Ensemble and Gipsy Way toward making a complex and original kind of meaning with a new musical partnership. Both groups are civic-minded, dedicated to outreach and progress in their music and in the world. Pavel had returned to the Czech Republic after his student days and founded Gipsy Way because he grew up enthralled by the sounds of Gypsy music, and because Gypsy communities worldwide face — and have always faced — persecution. While some of America’s one million Gypsies came to the U.S. voluntarily, many were deported from or forced to flee their home countries; and in both the Czech Republic and America, Gypsies continue to face discrimination and are forced to hide. This cultural reality was always present in the minds of the composers and performers who worked on this album, and part of the inspiration and impact of these pieces is to showcase the rich Romani musical heritage.

By exploring and celebrating Gypsy music, *Alla Zingarese* helps to de-stigmatize the word “Gypsy,” to return to that word nuance, beauty, and a recognition of possibilities — for crossover and commonalities, places and pieces where we meet.



When Civitas Ensemble traveled to Prague at the start of 2017 to play the first concerts resulting from this cooperation, the musicians met for rehearsals speaking four languages: Hungarian, Slovakian, Czech, and English. They used hybrid language and translation to communicate ideas about notation, but mostly, they used music. Verbal language was a last resort, reserved largely for bantering backstage, and for teaching each other words they couldn't translate, taking joy in pronunciation lessons and each other's mysterious vocabularies.

That joy, and the depth of the communication in this collaboration, is evident in every piece performed here. In keeping with Gipsy Way and Civitas Ensemble's mutual mission of supporting the work of living composers by playing new music, the groups commissioned original compositions as well as transcriptions of well-loved pieces. Czech composer Lukáš Sommer worked closely with Pavel and Yuan-Qing to create arrangements of works by Johannes Brahms, Pablo de Sarasate, Jenő Hubay, and Georges Boulanger. Sommer also composed an original work for Civitas titled "Cigi-Civi" — Cigi from Cigane, or Gypsy, and Civi from Civitas — a lovely and clever fusion of words and music, one that represents beautifully the spirit of this project. *Cigi-Civi* starts like a pulse, steady, rhythmic, building until it's an exhilarating heartbeat, slowing only to accelerate again, accruing depth and light as it moves. Listening, it is possible to feel multiple languages inside the music, the twin influences of Western classical and Gypsy tradition, and the utterly contemporary now in which this triumphant piece was composed and premiered.

Chicago composer Cliff Colnot made the arrangement of George Enescu's 1901 Romanian Rhapsody No. 1, the composer's most popular work. Colnot and the

musicians give Romanian Rhapsody a sound at once full of the depth of music fine-tuned by history, and yet so fresh it feels newborn. From its airy, whimsical opening, with notes twirling and trilling, the piece speeds to such fast exuberance that it becomes wildly raucous. Even in its deepest, most serious moments, it remains shot through with the audible delight of the *Alla Zingarese* endeavor.

The first of the two sold-out concerts the groups played in Prague in January 2017 was a fundraiser for children with autism. The second was held in the giant Church of Saints Simon and Jude, where Pavel Šporcl's family fed the musicians apple strudel backstage before the groups thrilled the audience with their inimitable mix of orchestral repertoire and Gypsy-inspired music. They gathered again in May 2017 for a third concert in Chicago, inviting local musicians to join. Also sold out, the Chicago concert featured pieces played on a cimbalom made by Chicago's Alex Udvary. Invented in Budapest in 1870 by Jozsef Schunda and then carried all over Europe and the Middle East by Asiatic Nomads, the cimbalom is 125-stringed instrument on a soundbox, struck by two eight-inch mallets. It's difficult to overstate the delight of listening to the layers of history, beauty, work, and love at that concert in Chicago, where listeners danced in their seats until finally leaping up in a roaring ovation. All three concerts were made possible by generous support from the Judy and Scott McCue Fund at the Chicago Community Foundation and the MacArthur Foundation. Funding from the Sage Foundation allowed for Civitas and Gipsy Way to make a video documentary project. The groups also played on *Live From WFMT* and were interviewed and featured on WBEZ's *Worldview*.



Photo Credit: Doug Haight

This album features not only music premiered both on WMFT and at the concerts, but also includes compositions by Sylvie Bodorová, Franz Liszt, Leó Weiner, and David Popper that highlight the individual instruments of each Civitas member. Pavel's original *Gypsy Fire* was inspired by Gypsy music's grand introductions; it begins as if on fire, sparking and flashing with dash and verve. Likewise, Lukáš Sommer's *Gypsy Odyssey* is so electrifying, vibrant, and virtuosic that hearing it inspires incredulity, dancing, and laughter.

This project came into the world by way and in honor of far-reaching cultural friendship, musical brilliance, and a deep curiosity about what it sounds like to connect across distances that could, in a world without music, divide us. Bubbling over with exuberance, *Alla Zingarese* is an inimitable collection at once steeped in diverse tradition, vividly new, and spectacularly fun.

CIVITAS ENSEMBLE

In 2011, four of Chicago's top musicians — Yuan-Qing Yu, Kenneth Olsen, Winston Choi, and Lawrie Bloom — joined forces to found Civitas Ensemble, a chamber music group dedicated to presenting engaging live performances of new and traditional works, inspiring a young generation of classical musicians, and bringing the healing power of music to those with limited access to live performances.

What make Civitas unique is its artistic excellence, its cross-disciplinary programming, its daring presentation of both old and new works, its connection with living composers, its international reach, and its robust outreach program. Civitas has presented many interdisciplinary programs such as showcasing Ravel and Poulenc's music with French posters by Lautrec and Chéret, and has commissioned and premiered numerous pieces by living composers. The Ensemble is regularly invited to perform at prestigious venues such as Chicago's Art Institute, Symphony Center, and WFMT.

As an advocate of music education, Civitas offers free tickets to all current students, free masterclasses to several Chicago Public Schools, and serves as the Ensemble-in-Residence at Valparaiso University in Indiana, where it gives three public chamber music concerts and six coaching sessions annually.

Praised for the quality of its performances, its innovative programming, and its community engagement efforts, Civitas Ensemble was invited to perform with Yo-Yo Ma at the Chicago Humanities Festival and participate in a panel discussion on the topic

of “Artist and Citizenship.” Since its inception, Civitas has performed over 40 outreach concerts for hospitals and senior living facilities across Chicagoland and in other major cities while on tour. Civitas receives rave reviews from the *Chicago Tribune*, *Chicago Classical Review*, and *Chicago on the Aisle* for its artistic excellence and its devotion to the community.

Civitas Ensemble would like to acknowledge the Judy and Scott McCue Fund at the Chicago Community Foundation, MacArthur Foundation, and Sage Foundation for their generous support. The *Alla Zingarese* project would not have been possible without them and many others.

Yuan-Qing Yu | **Violin**

Assistant Concertmaster of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra

Kenneth Olsen | **Cello**

Assistant Principal Cello of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra

J. Lawrie Bloom | **Clarinet, Bass Clarinet**

of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra

Winston Choi | **Piano**

Head of the Piano Program at Roosevelt University CCPA

www.civitasensemble.org



Photo Credit: Doug Haight

PAVEL ŠPORCL & HIS GIPSY WAY ENSEMBLE

Pavel Šporcl is one of the world's most prolific violinists and high-profile recording artists, with 17 full albums and more than 90 performances a year, playing to sold-out concerts. His recordings on Universal, EMI, and Supraphon have sold more than 250,000 copies, and he appears regularly as soloist with major orchestras, including the Czech Philharmonic, Orchestre de Paris, and Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, among many others. He has performed in prestigious venues such as Carnegie Hall in New York, Suntory Hall in Tokyo, and Walt Disney Hall in LA. Throughout his career, Šporcl remains dedicated to bringing music to the broad public and inspiring new generations of young violinists. He donates numerous concerts to charitable causes and plays for presidents as well as people from small villages. His virtuosic playing — on his signature blue violin, made for him by Luthier Jan Špidlen in 2005 — and his charisma are constant inspirations for young musicians. Šporcl's commitment to music education is evident in his many endeavors, including the production of 28 mini TV series called *Hudební Perličky* (Musical Beads), an educational program for children about classical music. His passion about the heritage of the Czech violin school led to his documentary series on the great Czech violinists, which was broadcast by Czech Television.

Pavel Šporcl's love for different genres of music and his desire to push the boundaries of classical music inspired him to search for a unique musical voice. In 2008, he started playing with Gypsy musicians and later formed Gipsy Way Ensemble. The Ensemble has stayed in its current formation since 2012, with Ensemble members Zoltán Sándor,

viola; Ján Rigó, double bass; and Tomáš Vontszemü, cimbalom. Sándor, Rigó, and Vontszemü are virtuosic musicians in their own rights, performing actively in their own communities. Together with Pavel Šporcl, the Gipsy Way Ensemble shines on the major stages. Since its inception, it has played in many countries including China, performed more than 350 concerts, and recorded two albums: *Gipsy Way* (2008) and *Gipsy Fire* (2014). Its repertoire is full of festive rhythms, joy and melancholy, with music stemmed from the classical Gypsy tradition and popular music from Hungary, the Balkans, and Russia. The Ensemble also performs its own arrangements of Gypsy-inspired pieces from the classical repertoire, adding the unique sound of the cimbalom, along with Pavel Šporcl's improvisatory flair, which give these well-loved works a fresh sound.

Pavel Šporcl's civic-minded approach and advocacy for classical music earned him the Medal of Merit, an award of the Czech Republic, in 2015. He has been the Director of Kocianovo Usti International Festival as well as the Patron of the Kocian Violin Competition since 2016.

www.pavelsporcl.com



Photo Credit: Laurent Bugnet

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