

VOICES OF ROMA

Lecture, readings and theatre play on the occasion
of the launch of RomArchive – Digital Archive of the Roma

Date: February 28th, 2019

Venue: The State Jewish Theatre in Bucharest

RomArchive – the Digital Archive of the Roma is now online: **www.romarchive.eu**.

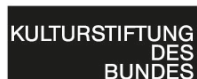
RomArchive is an international digital archive for Romani arts and cultures – a constantly growing collection of materials from all artistic fields, complemented by historical documents and scholarly texts. Through narratives told by Roma themselves, RomArchive will create a reliable source of knowledge that will be accessible internationally on the internet in three languages (English, German and Romani) to counteract stereotypes and prejudices with facts. RomArchive will make the arts and cultures of Roma visible and illustrate their contribution to European cultural history.

Currently structured in sections dedicated to dance, film, literature, music, theatre and drama, visual arts, as well as interdisciplinary and thematic sections – such as Flamenco, the Politics of Photography, the Romani Civil Rights Movement, and the persecution of the Roma under the Nazi regime –, the archive will evolve, reflecting the heterogeneity of the diverse national and cultural identities of Roma. The launch event in Bucharest, part of a larger series of events throughout Europe, focuses on the latter section and draws also on the Music section of the archive.

Initiated and managed by Franziska Sauerbrey and Isabel Raabe, RomArchive has been shaped and developed from 2015–2018 by a diverse group of more than 150 participants (curators, artists, scholars, and activists) from 15 countries across Europe and beyond, most of whom come from a Roma community. RomArchive is funded by the German Federal Cultural Foundation. Other sponsors are the Federal Agency for Civic Education and the German Federal Foreign Office. The Goethe Institutes supported the work on RomArchive with their own events. The partner for the technical implementation is the Stiftung Deutsche Kinemathek. Following its launch in 2019, the coordination of RomArchive will be transferred to the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAC).

The RomArchive launch in Bucharest is also supported by ERSTE Foundation and in cooperation with the State Jewish Theatre in Bucharest and the National Centre for Roma Culture – Romano Kher.

RomArchive is funded by the German Federal Cultural Foundation.



Partner responsible for the technical implementation



The launch in Bucharest is also supported by



RomArchive is further supported by



and takes place in cooperation with



Program

6:00 pm

Welcome remarks: **Mihai Neacșu**, Manager al Centrului Național de Cultură a Romilor – Romano Kher

PRESENTATION ROMARCHIVE by **Nicoleta Bițu**, Chair of the RomArchive board, **Isabel Raabe** and **Franziska Sauerbrey**, RomArchive initiators and directors

6:10 pm – 7:30 pm

VOICES OF THE VICTIMS

The RomArchive section “Voices of the Victims” is a pilot project. It tells, for the first time, the story of the genocide committed against the Roma minority exclusively from the perspective of the victims. The project focuses on sources from the time of the persecution or shortly afterwards. These early sources are very rare, but due to their closeness to the experience of persecution they possess a particular vividness and intensity that conveys an impression of the suffering endured in a way still poignant today. The voices of the victims are a powerful testimony of self-assertion in the face of extermination. Voices of the Victims conducted research in several archives to find early witness accounts from mostly 1933 to 1945, extending into the mid 1950s.

More information about “Voices of the Victims”:

<https://www.romarchive.eu/en/voices-of-the-victims/>

Introduction

Dr Karola Fings, curator of Voices of the Victims, will give an insight in the curatorial approach. In a short interview with **Dr Viorel Achim** the deportation of Roma in Romania to Transnistria during World War II, its aftermath and its representation after 1945 will be introduced.

Reading of “Voices of the Victims”

The “Voices of the Victims” are drawn from letters, witness statements, and accounts from a Roma perspective. Actors **Vera Linguraru**, **Nedjo Osman**, **Oana Rusu** and **Sorin Sandu** will read, in Romanian and Romani, the voices of those persecuted under Nazi rule as Roma, Sinti, Kalderasch, Lalleri, Lovari, Manouches, or as members of any other Romani-speaking group. Between 1933 and 1945, hundreds of thousands were subjected to racist stigmatization, violence, and murderous crimes in the German Reich and the countries it had occupied or which were collaborating with it.

VOICES OF THE HOLOCAUST

Listening is a way of acknowledging Roma subjects and in our panel we ask: can we hear the Roma? Music records ethnic histories; as such Roma music recounts centuries of Roma history—500 years of Roma enslavement on Romanian territory, Roma genocide, and continued marginalization, racism, and discrimination. Romani ethnomusicologists and RomArchive contributors **Dr Petra Gelbart** and **Ioanida Costache** will discuss how Roma, against a historical background of oppression, have maintained a strong sense of identity, nationhood and pride through cultivation of musical practice, despite efforts to erase them. **Gicu Petrache** (voice) and **Nicu Ciotoi** (violin) will perform songs drawn from the Romani musico-oral repertoire which serve as sites for historical, self-reflexive remembrance of trauma. These songs recall and memorialize the persecution and genocide of Roma during WWII as well as the enduring legacies of this persecution.

More information about the RomArchive section on Music:

<https://www.romarchive.eu/en/music/>

7:30-8:00 pm BREAK

8:00 pm

KALI TRAŠ (BLACK FEAR)

A Theatre Performance by Givulipen Theatre Company

Directed by Mihai Lukács, *Kali Traš* is a dramatisation of Roma author Valerică Stănescu's *Cu Moartea-n Ochi* (*Facing Death*) book. *Kali Traš* tells the gut-wrenching story of the Roma Holocaust under the political regime of Antonescu, perhaps the most brutal, significant and widely overlooked chapter in Roma history. We follow a travelling theatre company of Roma performers in the 1940s as their lives are impacted by the immediate threat of deportation to Transnistria.

Kali Traš is part of "Roma Theatre is not Nomad: Memories of Transnistria", a project initiated by Givulipen Theatre Company and made possible with the support of the National Cultural Fund Administration, which recently awarded it the 2018 Social Inclusion and Intercultural Dialogue Award. "Co-creating *Kali Traš* with another minority state theatre – the State Jewish Theatre", write Givulipen members, "is a great opportunity to further the claim for the development of a State Roma Theatre in Romania. Our long-term goals are to expand the contemporary Roma theatre repertoire, increase the visibility of Roma cultural output, and connect Roma theatre to mainstream audiences."

Actress Mihaela Drăgan: "*Kali Traš*, the Romani for Black Fear, is one of the names given by Roma people to the Holocaust, a subject almost forgotten in our collective consciousness. Romania took too much time admitting to the Roma genocide, therefore there are so few representations of deportation of Roma to Transnistria in art, media, history books or public discourse. For '*Kali Traš*' we had to use all our artistic resources, our passion, grief and burden, in order to reproduce such a dark history. We aim higher than simple documentation of history. We aim for a performance which will linger in the hearts and minds of the audience, long after they leave the theatre. Albeit painful, we unearth the history in pursuit of answers to modern injustice."

With: Zita Moldovan, Mihaela Drăgan, Claudiu Dumitru, Ninel Petrache, Mircea Dragoman

Written and directed by: Mihai Lukács

Dramaturgy: Mihaela Drăgan

Set & Costume Design: Iulia Toma

Choreography: Paul Dunca, Ana Costea

Language: Romanian and Romani

Duration: 100 minutes (without intermission)

Admission

Admission to the RomArchive launch event is FREE. We recommend you register in advance at rsvp@romarchive.eu.

TICKETS for the performance of KALI TRAŠ (BLACK FEAR) are 30/20 lei and 12 lei for students & seniors.

Tickets can be purchased at

<https://teatrul-evreiesc.com.ro/portfolio/kali-tras-frica-neagra>.

About the participants

Dr Viorel Achim is a historian based in Bucharest and obtained his doctorate from the Nicolae Iorga Institute of History of the Romanian Academy, where his research work is based today. His specialist research areas include the history of Roma, ethnic minorities in Romania between 1918 and 1948, Romania's population policy during the Second World War, and the Holocaust. He is the author or co-author of eight books and the author of around 100 book and journal articles, as well as the (co-) editor of four essay collections. Many of his publications examine the deportation of Romanian Roma to Transnistria in 1942-1944. He edited a collection of documents on the subject published in 2014. In 2015 he published *Forced Labour in Transnistria. The 'Work Organisation' for Jews and Roma, December 1942-March 1944* (in Romanian).

Dr Nicoleta Bițu is the co-chair of the newly established European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAC), and former president of the Democratic Federation of Roma from Romania (a federation of the most active Romani organization in Romania). She has been active in the field of human and women's rights for over 27 years, at the forefront of the European mobilization of Romani women activists and of advocacy for the rights of Roma. A recognized and published expert in her field, she has worked for Romani CRISS, the Open Society Foundations, the Council of Europe, the European Commission and Romano ButiQ. Her work has provoked the Romani and feminist movements to think and act based on the universality of human rights when it comes to Romani women. Dr Bitu is the Academic Advisor for RomArchive.

Ioanida Costache is a PhD candidate in Music at Stanford University. Her research explores issues of race and ethnicity, the performance and construction of identity/subjectivity, cultural memory, affect and the production of history as they intersect in Romani musico-oral traditions of Romania. Ioanida earned a B.A. in Music from Amherst College and completed a Fulbright Research Grant in Romania.

Mihai Lukacs is a theatre director, researcher/artist, theorist. Lukacs holds a PhD in comparative gender studies from Central European University Budapest with a thesis on the male hysteria of the modernist directors Stanislavsky, Meyerhold and Artaud. His recent performative practices talk about the relationship between the Romani people and the gadje (*The Jester; Or How to Embody the Archive*, Hong Kong 2018; *Kali Traș/The Black Fear*, Bucharest 2018; *Bambina, The Queen of Flowers*, Bucharest 2017; *blue/orange*, Bucharest 2017; *Who Killed Szomna Grancsa?*, Bucharest 2017); public humiliation (*Public Humiliation # 1-3*, Vienna 2013; *PRIMVS*, Hanover 2014); sexual liberation (*Queer Worker*, Vienna 2013; *Queercore*, Bucharest 2012), faith and exclusion (*The Congregation of the Castoffs*, Bucharest 2015; *The Sermon of Saint Haralambos*, Stuttgart 2014), forced evictions and homelessness (*Razzing*, Bucharest 2014; *Signs for Adult Homeless Persons*, Cluj 2013) and they generally speak about vulnerability, weaknesses and inter-subjectivity. He is currently writing a book about Romani slavery abolitionism and modernity.

Mihaela Drăgan is an actress and playwright who lives and works in Bucharest and Berlin. In 2014, she founds together with other Roma actresses Givulipen Theatre Company, a "revolutionary theater" according to Reuters, for which she is an actress and playwright. Givulipen's performances have a feminist agenda and bring to life issues such as early marriage, anti-gypsyism hate speech, hyper-sexualization, eviction, and heteronormativity in order to promote discussion and critical thinking. In 2015 she plays in *Aferim!*, Radu Jude award-winning film, and in 2017 is the main character of the short *Magie Noir* directed by Fanny Ardant. She is currently working in Berlin at Maxim Gorki

Theatre. She is also a trainer at Theatre of the Oppressed where she works with Roma women on their specific issues. She has been a speaker on topics such as Producing Roma Feminist Theatre, including for TEDxEuroil and Creative Mornings. She is one of the six finalists for The 2017 Gilder/Coigney International Theatre Award from New York which acknowledges the exceptional work of 20 theatre women around the world, and acknowledged by the 2018 PEN World Voices International Play Festival in New York as one of the ten most respected dramatists of the world.

Dr Karola Fings is a historian and Deputy Director of the National Socialist Documentation Centre of the City of Cologne. She earned her doctorate at the Heinrich-Heine-University in Düsseldorf with a study about the system of concentration camps. The Nazi persecution of Sinti and Roma and the manner in which the minority was dealt with after 1945 is one of her research priorities. Since 1990 she has published extensive portrayals, local and regional studies and special investigations into this subject and contributed towards establishing the topic both in research and in education. Dr Fings current publication "Sinti und Roma. Geschichte einer Minderheit" (Sinti and Roma. History of a Minority) was published in August 2016 and is an overview which deconstructs stereotypical viewpoints by embedding the history of the minority in general historical, cultural and economic development. She is the curator of the Voices of the Victims section of RomArchive.

Dr Petra Gelbart is a Romani educator, scholar, and musician. She was first introduced to Romani music and language by her family while growing up in Czechoslovakia. She earned her PhD in musicology/ethnomusicology at Harvard University and went on to co-found the Initiative for Romani Music at New York University. Her research interests include interethnic communication, the psychology of music, the Holocaust, and institutional ethnography. At the university level, she has taught the theory, practice, and cultural context of Romani music as well as other subjects. Dr Gelbart is also a board-certified music therapist specialised in rehabilitative and developmental therapy. In addition to practising in New York City, she works with Czech foster and adoptive families raising Romani children. She is the curator of the Music section of RomArchive.

Isabel Raabe studied stage dance and, later on, cultural management in Berlin. As a cultural producer she worked for various institutions in Berlin's cultural scene. After extensive research on the artistic and cultural self-presentation of the Romani people, Isabel Raabe initiated the project "RomArchive – Digital Archive of the Roma" together with Franziska Sauerbrey and currently directs it until 2019, when RomArchive will be transferred to an international Romani NGO.

Franziska Sauerbrey studied cultural studies, theatre studies, and business administration in Vienna, Paris, and Berlin. She worked for several German and international cultural institutions. In 2015, after a two-year preparatory research phase, Franziska Sauerbrey and Isabel Raabe initiated the project "RomArchive – Digital Archive of the Roma" and currently direct it until 2019, when RomArchive will be transferred to an international Romani NGO.