

at improvisation being an art of the moment. The creativity and spontaneity of improvisation are stressed upon in various attempts at definition of this concept in musical theory as: an artistic process in which the product is created immediately in the moment of its performance; spontaneous process of creating music giving possibilities of impulsiveness, surprise and experiment; simultaneous composition and performance [Аридли, 1982:19]; always changing and resisting analysis [Bailey, 1992:ix]. Though associated most often with jazz, improvisation is a marker of oral ethnic music [Reck, 1997:416, 421-428, 433, 469].

The Roma musicians associate improvisation with their ethnically characteristic style of performance in which even when “foreign”, e.g. Bulgarian folklore music is played, it is presented without strictly following form-constructing norms established by the tradition. Some players call improvisational playing cover version that makes music varied and interesting.

*Zurnaci* improvisation is connected with the musicians’ instinct of movement and change. The musicians interviewed call it *beautifying* the music. To them, rich ornamentation and open over-demonstration of technique marks the beauty of their music. The transformations of the musical prototype as a form of improvisation differentiate the *zurnaci* (Roma) playing from, say, the *gaydar* (Bulgarian) one. At the same time, improvisation differentiates the style of a given performer from that of another.

When Bulgarian folklore melodies are performed by *zurnacies*, one can find improvisation through ornamentation, “playfulness”, register colouring of the melody to such an extent that it is hard to recognize the original musical artifact. It seems in a way to disappear in the luxury and redundancy of the improvisation as musical speech. The improvised performance goes totally astray from the theme of the melody and especially Bulgarian melody, for example when *zurnacies* from Kavrakirovo are interpreting Bulgarian songs such as *Lale li si, zyumbyul li si* (Are you a tulip or a hyacinth), *Izlele Delyo haydoutin* (Delyo the Outlaw has gone out) or *Bilyana platno beleshe* (Bilyana was whitening a cloth).

Watching live performances of Roma musicians shows that they can improvise in their choice of repertoire and treatment of it according to audience and situation. Once when American tourists were present, the *zurnacies* wove into their traditional dance repertoire the *Macarena* hit.

The tactics of *zurnaci* improvisation can be defined as interaction between the “front” of the solo player (the *maistor*) and the “rear” of the rhythm-harmonic partners (the *glashnik* and the *tapanci*). Similar to jazz improvisation, Roma musicians have the ability of strictly preserving the tempo, especially in dance music. The good rhythm accompaniment provided by the *tapanci* stimulates the improvisational jumps of the *zurnaci*.

The change of various musical components in the process of performance require quick reactions from the improvising solo player. This reaction is equally spontaneous, intuitive and pseudo-intuitive after a certain “scenario”. Quite often the *maistor* has to improvise over unknown or forgotten melodies – for example, when playing before unknown audience or with unknown musicians. Then the solo player and his partners synchronize after several “scenarios”. The first is careful listening to the partners: the *glashnik* follow the elaboration upon the melody with adequate according to them tones, seeking harmony with the solo player. The *maistor*, on his part, finding themselves in a problematic situation of improvising (not knowing the melody of the song ordered or playing for