

ELEGANT SAVAGES ORCHESTRA



ELEGANTSAVAGESORCHESTRA.COM

Binyamin Biraz Ouiz

Breton, b near St.-Malø c1920. May have fought with partisans in Brittany during the earliest days of the Nazi occupation of France, though it is not entirely clear whether that partisan activity postdated the *Anschluss* or perhaps originated in Breton nationalist resistance against the pre-War Versailles government. Scion of a long line of Breton cultural workers, folklorists, and political activists. The surname “Biraz Ouiz” (Gwerz: “little bird”) is almost certainly a pseudonym: such *noms de guerre* had been part of Breton resistance ever since the “Chats-Huant” (“tawny owls”; “silent ones”) who opposed Napoleon’s troop levees and plundering in the western provinces. Binyamin inherited sailing skills from his father, a fisherman and smuggler (“Biraz Ouiz” *pre* is widely credited with introducing the smuggling of *lambec* home-distillate into the illicit trade between St.-Malø, the Channel Islands of Jersey and Guernsey, and the southwest coast of Devon in England), and music from his mother, a noted church organist, who was born in the commune of Pontivy but had studied at the Paris Conservatoire before returning to Brittany to marry. There was a family story that the paternal line likewise originated in Pontivy, as a distaff branch of the [House of Rohan](#) and the Dukes of Brittany and that Binyamin was thus related to Norman nobility but the intentional confusion of surnames in the region, especially in the wake of Napoleonic repression of Breton sovereignty, makes it impossible to check the veracity of this story. In any event, an annual music festival at Pontivy, Kan ar Bobl, commemorates Madame Biraz Ouiz’s musicianship.

Binyamin learned keyboard technique and counterpoint from his mother, at the same time that he inherited a rich tradition of Gwerz, French, and English folk-ballads and sea shanties, as well as the Breton *bombarde* repertoire, from his fisherman father. It is probable that he participated in his father’s cross-Channel activities from around the age of 12 certainly seamanship and the ability to read maps would make him invaluable both to the wartime *R sistance* and to the BNRO’s later Eastern-Mediterranean touring, often undertaken in leaky coasting ships and tramp steamers. By the age of 16 he was working up and down the coasts of France and the Iberian Peninsula, and at Gibraltar (and possibly the Canaries) recounted meeting Kross (“Creole”) sailors from Guinea, Nigeria, and Gabon possibly his first introduction to the polymetric musics of West and Central Africa.

With the Nazi invasion of 1939, he fled Brittany, after assuring his parents’ safety by smuggling them into England from Guernsey; he appears to have spent time in Casablanca late in that year, where he may have first “taken the fez”, but soon departed, working his way eastward through the Mediterranean, traveling incognito as a “student” making a tour of “musical archaeology”. This provided opportunity to liaise with local resistance forces and escape networks, in the occupied cities of Montpellier, Genoa, Florence, Rome, and Foggia. It appears that this atypical *flug nach vorn* (“escape forward”), into the heart of Fascist Europe, was undertaken as the result of a

long-running correspondence with Yezget Nasilsinez brokered by Algeria Main-Smith, who met Binyamin's mother in Paris in the late '20s. A fragment of a letter dated August 1926 gives a few details:

"Main-Smyth, to YN, 14 VIII '26
...I will also share with you my meeting with the striking woman Jacqueline Biraz Ouiz, an organist well-regarded by Mdm. Boulanger, and very active in the cause of Breton 'cultural advocacy'. She is a very discreet woman, statuesque and personable, and a fine musician, though guarded about her family's other activities in the far west of that province. Her son "Benji" (given name "Benjamin") is a remarkably articulate and sophisticated child of about 6, who already displays precocious vocabulary and a voracious appetite for diverse musics, which he devours and undertakes to play with remarkable celerity. I believe this child, upon manhood, may have significant contributions to make to our long-term musical/political goals, and I have introduced both *m re et fils* into the community of Bassandan *emigres* here in the 14th *Arrondissement*..."

So it is not entirely implausible that, at age 19 and having just observed the impact of Nazi suppression on French cultural life (and with the legacy of cultural and partisan resistance he inherited from his father's family), Binyamin might have "fled forward" into the heart of Fascist Europe. He and Yezget-Bey met for the first time in the lobby of *Il Conservatorio Giuseppe Tartini* in Trieste in March of 1940; Binyamin's catholic musical interests and prior experience led to his playing a key role in the earliest performances by "The People's Liberation Orchestra," which became the nucleus of the BNRO.

A mainstay of the BNRO (and, intermittently, the late-period ESO), his very many musical interests and aptitudes (voice, conducting, composing, tuned percussion, wind instruments) simultaneously made him highly valuable to Yezget-Bey's musical conception and rendered him very much in demand by spin-off groups within and beyond the orbit of the Orchestra. He was certainly one of the essential liaisons between the BNRO and the *chimurenga* music and politics of southern Africa's Thomas Mafumō, which in turn lead one day to the Orchestra's participation in the 1980 Independence celebrations and concerts in Zimbabwe; Binyamin appears to have added the *mbira dza vadzimu* to his arsenal some time in the 1960s, one of the first Westerners to do so.

One other character note is salient: around August 1946, in the weltering confusion of post-War Bassanda, while assisting Yezget-Bey in his folklore collecting and clandestine political activity (a role for which his father's Breton experience had well prepared him), Binyamin met a young refugee girl, мелодиа ("Meyodija") Žld Mez k (b Bassanda c1922, though her papers are lost), a dancer and poet, in a caf. The bond of attraction between them was almost immediate and quite intense: Yezget-Bey later referred to them, only half-jokingly, as "[Majnun and Layla](#)" (as in *Hol a fen ben vannak Majnun s Layla?!?* ["Where the hell are...?!?"), but he was fiercely protective of them as well, and in January of 1948, as a holder of the Bassandan *Shama* bardic and spiritual tradition, at their request married them in the bombed-out ruins of the Coptic cathedral at Ballyizget. Binyamin's and Meyodija's subsequent adventures together, both within and beyond the framework of the Orchestra and the Never-Ending Tour, became one of the great love stories of Bassanda's 20th century; of that story, Yezget-Bey once commented, "Love is the only rebirth that matters."

Chaya Malirolink

Born c1925?

Flute, low whistle, dance

Somewhat mysterious character in the annals of the BNRÖ. A mainstay of the winds section, both for the Orchestra and for several related "spin-off" projects especially those having to do with dance her patrimony is nevertheless not entirely clear. She seems to have joined the Orchestra not much before 1951: the first year in which her name appears on the personnel roles, but where she was born or came from is not confirmed even her birth date is hypothetical. A highly outgoing and social person she was a cornerstone of the BNRÖ's audience education and outreach efforts she was nevertheless remarkably reticent about her origins. There is almost a sense that, as "Chaya Malirolink, flutist for the BNRÖ," she appears full-blown with little prior history.

It is possible that, in the economic turmoil and social disorder of the post-WWII era, she was in fact a Displaced Person: a refugee without proper documentation of identity. It is even possible that the striking dearth of biographical data about her was intentional, and that "Chaya" was a new identity, assumed for unknown purposes. The Band was fiercely protective of her, and it was a notable feature of their engagements with officialdom that her name appears only on personnel rosters and pay-slips: in contrast to some other orchestra members, her prior history, itineraries, etc were a closely guarded secret.

One clue may be her remarkable command of French language and culture: a fluid conversationalist, she also had an encyclopedic knowledge of art, music, and literature in the Republic between c1850-1925. There is thus some possibility that she may not have been Bassanda-born at all, but rather a refugee or escapee who had headed east rather than west in the midst of the War.

Around 1955, as the situation in Bassanda slowly rationalized under Kruschev, Terese-Marie Szabo began to refer to Chaya as a "sister to the Band," and describing her to officialdom as a "cousin". Chaya herself exuded joy in performance, though between tours, she would seemingly disappear or at least drop well below the radar of critics, reviewers, and cultural commissars. Madame Szabo, if queried, would simply say "she has gone exploring" and leave the inquiry at that. It is also relevant to note that Madame very atypically in her role as BNRÖ "straw boss" (a term Nasillsinez got from Duke Ellington) never questioned Chaya's preparedness or promptitude: no matter when the concert or recording session, or where the first tour date occurred, Madame permitted Chaya to arrive at the last moment. If Yezget-Bey or an Orchestra member expressed concern at her seeming absence, Madame would simply say "Chaya will be here. She will be ready."

She always was.

К р и с т о ф А с к о л ь д о в ("Kristofer Askol' dov") (b St Petersburg, 1902?)

Born St Petersburg, raised in Switzerland near the northern shores of the Genfersee to migr parents of notable musical acuity. His family, scions of the St Petersburg community which revolved around Rimsky and the Moscow legacy of the Moguchkaya Kuchka ("Mighty Handful"), had fled Russia after the October Revolution in 1905, his father exhibiting considerable prescience in foreseeing the unrest that would follow. After some wandering, the family settled in Switzerland,

where as a small child he mingled with the international climbing community who came to the Alps in the years before the First World War this probably accounting for his early and formidable linguistic skills, and the degree to which he felt comfortable in the high hills of both Central Europe and Central Asia (see James Ramsey Ullman's *Banner in the Sky* for a thinly fictionalized portrait of Kristofer as "Rudy Matt"). The Askol' dov clan renewed acquaintance with emigr circles after Stravinsky began summering in Leysin in the Bernese Oberland from 1910, so the boy's musical legacy of Russian experimentalism remained strong. After 1917, Stravinsky was unable to return to his former family estates in Ustilug, but the Askol' doves carried some messages to and from former friends there: it was in Ukraine that Kristof first encountered the techniques of folk music collecting as they had been pioneered by Glinka 60 years before. It is possible, though unlikely, that there was correspondence on these topics between the elder Askol' dov and Yezget Nasllsinez, then a young student at the Moscow Conservatory.

Tragically, during the annual family summer holiday at Kiev in 1914, Kristof's twin brother, Юлиан ("Yuli"), was drowned after a fall from the steep right bank of the Dnieper River at Kiev; in the wake of this sad event, the parents returned to Leysin prostrate with grief, while Kit developed a fear of water which he battled for the rest of his life. Unlike Stravinsky, the Askol' dov family had retained the income from family estates and international investments, with the result that, as Kit himself recalled, lacking parental supervision but the recipient of a substantial personal allowance, throughout the mid '20s he had "run wild" in Paris, Lyon, Marseille, and Nice, with contacts in bohemia, *belles lettres*, the remnants of *les Apaches*, and the Corsican underworld. It is likely that he met both Yezget Nasllsinez in Paris in this period, and, more significantly, Algeria Main-Smith, who was serving as patroness for the African American exotic dancer Josephine Baker's Paris debut, and as Central Asian and Bassanda cultural consultant for the Shakespeare and Co. bookshop; Jacqueline Biraz Ouiz and her son Binyamin (later of the BNRO) were part of these same circles of artistic and political progressivism.

A close friend was the Creole dancer Celeste Roulet (born c1890), who had collaborated with Bronislava Nijinska in the early planning for "Xlbt op. 16", the so-called "Bassandan Rite of Spring", on a cruise ship in the Eastern Mediterranean in September 1909. In the '20s, Roulet worked with Baker as choreographer and coach, and also particularly closely with the composer Darius Milhaud, who returned to Paris from a trip to the USA in 1922 on fire with inspiration for his watershed jazz/neoclassical ballet *La cr ation du monde*, premiered by the *Ballet suedois*, the Swiss company for whom Askol' dov worked as rehearsal pianist. Roulet served as choreographic consultant for this "New World" ballet.

The rise of *Il fascisti* in Italy (from 1922) and Hitler's abortive 1923 Beer Hall Putsch in Munich, however, by his own account caused Askol' dov to significantly re-examine his own convictions; as he later said, "I'd seen that before in Russia. I knew what happened when the workers got too desperate and the politicians started ranting about 'strength'." Throughout the '20s and early '30s, and with increasing intensity, his "surface life" as playboy, bohemian, and literary hanger-on masked a second, secretive, and very hazardous experience as political activist, translator, and pseudonymous author. He foresaw the cynical imperial opportunism that would later play out so starkly between colonial and revolutionary forces throughout the century, and travelled widely throughout Europe as a courier between various anti-fascist and freedom movements (there exists in the archive, for example, a single photograph of Askol' dov with the Kurdish nationalist leader Ihsan Nuri, taken in Turkey during the abortive Ararat Rebellion of 1930).

By 1932 he was working as a cocktail pianist on cruise ships that plied the Mediterranean coast from Valencia and Barcelona to Marseille and Mallorca; although concrete evidence has not so far appeared in the Archive, it appears likely that he was also already working as a long-distance correspondent for Yezge Nasilsinez (then in New York) and English Communist circles, who saw in the failed Madrid coup of General Jos Sanjurjo an ominous harbinger of fascism's spread. The outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, and the nearly-immediate intervention of both the USSR (supporting the Republican government) and Nazi Germany (supporting the generals and the Royalists), confirmed these fears.

Certainly, in the years after 1936, he was in and out of most of the capitals of wartime Europe, including Madrid, Paris, London, Rome, Lisbon, and Tripoli most often, in his guise as debonair international playboy and musical raconteur (Algeria Main-Smith, who remained in communication with him throughout the war years, commented in a later letter "he was a beautiful, sensitive boy not everyone saw that"). There is a debate, pursued largely through the "Cineaste" letters column of the *Yoknapatawpha Gazette*, which argues that Askol'dov may have been one inspiration behind the "Sam" character played by Dooley Wilson in the 1942 classic *Casablanca*, but that is a matter for partisan conjecture. On the other hand, the skeptics are at a loss to explain what appears to be Kristofer, in profile, as an extra in a "Rick's Caf" scene with Peter Lorre an inexplicable appearance, considering that the film was shot entirely on a movie lot in Burbank California!

Although he never served in combat, his life between 1936-45 was fraught with peril and not without personal loss: his older sister, А р и я, a poet in her own right, had served an important role as maternal authority figure, but, as a member of the *R sistance*, was betrayed to and executed by the Nazi occupiers early in 1942. He later set some of her texts as posthumous chamber works for reciting voice and piano: though Kit never sought publication, Yezget-Bey described these settings as "tiny, tragic jewels."

After 1946, he retired to the hills above Monaco, saying in a letter to Roulet, "I'm so tired. Almost everyone is gone." In that small villa, however, he built one of the great private libraries on Russian, contemporary, and Bassandan music, literature, and philosophy, which in turn made his home a way-station for visiting friends and fellow collectors from all over the world for the next three decades. A newspaper clipping in *Monaco-Actualit*, from the late 1960s, headlined "R sident Distingu Accueille d'autres Artistes," shows him in his study with the writer Paul Gallico, the singer-songwriter L o Ferr , and Madame Roulet, now retired but still very much the dowager empress of the European avant-garde; silhouetted in the doorway to the grape-arbored courtyard is the tall lean figure of Yezget-Bey himself.

Uniquely: in this image, and in contrast to all the many other photographs from all the eras of his glittering life, Kristofer is smiling.

Cifani D o m a ("Doma")

Photo-archivist, combat photographer, animal rights activist, BNRÖ/ESÖ documentarian.

Born hill country of northern Bassanda, c 1920.

Parents subsistence farmers

Cifani played shepherd's pan-flute and related instruments but was particularly known as a wilderness guide, expert archer and tracker

Recruited on the basis of her back-country skills to Red Army at 17; trained by Soviet auxiliaries in unarmed combat, field discipline, battlefield strategy and tactics.

During Soviet reconquest of Bassanda c1942, worked as combat photographer under initial brief to document "liberation of the backward feudal world of Bassanda by the enlightened democratic practices of the Soviet Army."

Appalled by human rights abuses, deserted from invasion forces and joined the partisans, but refused to carry a weapon. Legendary among combat photographers for her fearless courage under fire and the depth of her commitment to "telling the truth of what must be seen."

c1943-45, employed photography skills to document human rights violations committed by both Russians and Germans on both sides of the battlefield front, while also assisting in personal security for Yezget Nasllsinez during clandestine fieldwork and collecting in wartime Bassanda, all military zones. At Yezget-Bey's urging, developed parallel expertise as ethnographic photographer and photo-journalist, documenting folklore traditions at risk of cultural grey-out.

Her work from the late 1940s onward provides invaluable photo-documentation of the BNRÖ's earliest days, including its ad hoc performances in improvised spaces (ruined buildings, Displaced Persons camps, etc).

In the wake of the War, retired to a high-altitude hermitage in the hills of N Bassanda, though continuing her activities as photo-journalist and greatly increasing the fund of imagery of the "lost" pre-WWII world of Bassanda. Essential in the recovery of damaged or presumed-lost photographic archives: she carried on an avid correspondence with collectors, activists, and archivists all around the world for the next 40 years.

Extremely influential for her reconstructions and colorizations of very early Bassanda folkloric photography.

Noted naturalist: her photographs of rare Bassanda animal life provide some of the best and indeed only precise and sympathetic documentation of rare antelope, rabbits, and (especially) high-altitude mammals from the Bassandan Alps. The younger members of the BNRÖ were convinced that she could communicate directly with members of the animal kingdom, and there is no question that she was fiercely dedicated to animal rights: in their wide travels, if the members of the Orchestra encountered mistreatment of farm or draught animals or pets, Madame Szabo (herself a noted "animal-whisperer") would say "those who harm the helpless will have to face Cifani." Doma's

name became a byword for animal rights in Bassanda, as much as was that of Richard "Humanity" Martin in Ireland.

Also a noted hiker: it is said that she once walked from Bassanda's eastern border to its western over the course of a summer, "to clear my head." A close friend by correspondence it is not clear whether they ever met was the Welsh backpacker, author, and ex-commando [Colin Fletcher](#), author of *The Man Who Walked Through Time*. Doma may likewise have been another inspiration for Edward Abbey's fictional "George Hayduke" (a Vietnam veteran), a character allegedly inspired by Abbey's purported visit to Bassanda c1952 (see elsewhere in the Correspondence). And it is said that the poet, naturalist, and Zen priest Gary Snyder had Doma in mind when he wrote, in 1969's *Buddhist Anarchism*, of the occasional Buddhist necessity of "gentle violence, when it comes to restraining some impetuous redneck."

Syntiya Strilka Vyrobnyk

b c1910 of mixed Ukrainian and Scottish ethnicity; her father's people were established in the Scots Borders by the Middle Ages and served in Henry V's wars of opportunity; a "William MacMhuirich" is listed as armorer and master of archers at Agincourt. In the wake of the 1745 Highland Rebellion of Charles Edward Stuart, however, the Curry fortunes deteriorated and they largely left the British Isles to join the service of foreign powers; there is an Alasdair Curry listed in the Vatican Guard in the 1750s.

Syntiya's great-grandfather James Curry fought with Colin Campbell's 93rd Sutherland Highlanders "The Thin Red Line" at Balaclava in the Crimea in 1853; this action probably represents the precipitating event that led eastward. Her mother came from the hills outside Chernivets'ka oblast in Ukraine, just over the border with Romania. By the late 19th century, the family's fortunes had deteriorated so significantly that they became, effectively, stateless: Syntiya grew up on a subsistence farm in the foothills of the Bassandan Alps. Though based in a very frugal rural existence, her family life was strong and she learned practical agricultural and mechanical skills years later, her expertise with diesel engines was often crucial in repairing the aging buses and panel trucks employed by her touring ensembles. As a teenager, she travelled with the Mjek sia Tregø, the "medicine shows" beloved at Bassandan country fairs and festivals, on which circuit it seems likely that she met the visiting American musician A. P. "Pappy" Lilt (see elsewhere in the Correspondence), from whom she learned a body of Appalachian mountain songs to supplement her family repertoire.

An early marriage to an alcoholic shepherd began to unravel when Syntiya found a worn balalaika in an abandoned mountain hut and commenced singing at harvest and seasonal festivals. In 1932 she left her husband and was recruited into the Bassanda State Radio Female Vocal Choir, which as in other Soviet satellites was charged to present to the outside world (especially the West) an integrated and polished version of Bassandan "cultural diversity." Although she resented the packaging of "quaint" traditional costume, homogenized and sanitized choral realizations of traditional songs, and over-controlled concert staging, she was sophisticated and realistic, a pragmatism which served her in good stead as she negotiated the tricky realities of artistic life under the early Stalinist state. She became a starring soloist with the Choir, though Bassanda's comparative sequestration meant her voice was not widely known beyond the nation's borders in this period.

In summer 1935, on a break between tours of the BSRFVC, she was heard singing to her own accompaniment in a teahouse by a party of Western alpinists which included Roy Douglas, a collaborator and copyist for Ralph Vaughan Williams, the English nationalist composer who had visited Bassanda decades earlier in company with Bela Bartok. Douglas, a skilled amanuensis for a number of English composers including William Walton and Richard Addinsell as well as Williams, immediately recognized her unusual talent and insisted upon taking a wax cylinder of her singing the traditional song *M-am s turat de aceste oi blestemat* ("I'm sick of these damned sheep"). That autumn, upon return to Oxford, Douglas played the cylinder for Vaughan Williams, who immediately wrote to Yezget Nasilsinez in New York City, saying "I have heard a folksinger from your nation whose music you must come to know she is extraordinary".

Unfortunately, the intervention of Soviet diplomatic pressure from the East, and the growing threat of Nazi Germany from the West, meant that Bassandan travel and artistic collaboration in the late 1930s was significantly constrained. The BSRFVC toured little, which required in turn that its personnel were forced to cast about for other occupation or income. Syntiya sang in Ballyizget cafes, which linked her to diverse circles of locals and expatriates in the capital's underground musical community. But with the Nazi *Anschluss* in 1939, even that community's fragile financial network collapsed, and she was reduced to the occasional cafe performance for the occupiers, coupled with a return to her early occupation as diesel mechanic.

At a truck garage on the outskirts of Ballyizget, on 14 September 1942 (one of the few precise dates in the BNRÖ's early history, because documented by a receipt still in the Archives), Nasilsinez and Vyrobynyk met for the first time. Yezget-Bey was ostensibly seeking repair of a persistent engine-knock in the 8-seat Rolls-Royce 353 touring car with which he, Terese-Marie Szabo, Jamey Mac Pdraig Ó Laoghaire and one or two other musicians undertook the first clandestine collecting and guerilla concertizing of the "People's Liberation Orchestra" in occupied Bassanda. In point of fact, Nasilsinez had sought out Vyrobynyk: as she ran the car onto the lift, in the midst of a garage full of Nazi mechanics and chauffeurs, Yezget-Bey quietly whistled to her the melody of *M-am s turat de aceste oi blestemat*, Syntiya's wax-cylinder recording of which he had heard six years before through the efforts of Vaughan Williams. After the repair, they adjourned to a basement *raki* shop on a side street, where Nasilsinez proposed that she join the ensemble as vocal soloist and collector. Her vocal sound, particularly after completion of a unique choral approach with the arrival of Kaciaryna and Морган itmena in 1951, became a signature of the BNRÖ's arrangements.

With the departure of Soviet occupying troops in 1949, and the gradual easing of internal autocracies during the Khrushchev era, Syntiya somewhat reduced her touring activities, having moved her aged parents in the late 1950s from Ukraine to a mountain chalet in the hills above Ballyizget, which she purchased with royalties from a BNRÖ-backed recording of her signature song. She continued to appear as featured guest on certain recordings, and it was "Syntiya's Mountain Blend," a fiery brandy she distilled from Bassandan peaches, which fuelled the Orchestra's winter tours and enabled the occasional convenient ejection of intrusive Soviet *kommisars* from the band bus.

Reached by the *Manchester Guardian* at her mountain home in 1985, seeking a comment from her on the legacy of Yezget Nasilsinez in the wake of his April 1st death, she said "I am grateful to Yezget-baba. Wherever I would be if he hadn't come and found me at that garage in '42, I wouldn't be here. I will miss him."

Federica Rozhkov a/k/a Ferikarohasu (b1930)

(フェリカロハス)

Violin, dance, song.

Born Puerta Vallarta 1930 of mixed Filipino / Peruvian *hidalga* / Japanese heritage; family inherits South American creole and folkloric styles through the father's line, part of the Pacific coast communities of fishers, coasters, and deepwater sailors. It has been suggested that junks plying east from the South China Sea might have made landfall in Latin America as early as 800CE, which might in turn provide explanation for the strain of Pacific Rim culture which appears in her family's music and cultural experience.

Her father (a self-taught guitarist/violinist) had toured from the 1920s with Cuban opera companies who participated in the very swift Westernization of Japanese orchestral culture from the Meiji period. Her mother was a *Noh* dancer, and may have been a niece to the Greek / Irish journalist Lafcadio Hearn (1850-1904), who had become a naturalized Japanese citizen in 1896 and married into a Matsue samurai family. Her parents met on Montgomery Fruit Company-sponsored tours to Hawai'i, the Philippines, and Japan. May have been conceived during trans-Pacific voyage in 1929, while parents were on goodwill tour for the new revolutionary government of Plutarco Elias Calles. Other links to Japan came through the Main-Smith shipping family of Salem Massachusetts, whose ships made regular circuits to both the west coast of Jalisco in Mexico and the Japanese harbor city of Shimizu from the 1850s.

Colette St Jacques, the Haitian creole who had accompanied Algeria Main-Smith on her 1880s adventures in Central Asia, during which Miss Main-Smith first encountered the monkish tale of the Brethren (later tentatively identified as Col. Thompson and Gen. Landes) remained on the west coast of the United States after that journey. St Jacques appears to have maintained contact with both Main-Smith, but also Qingdao on the East China Sea, another port-of-call for the Smith clipper ships as late as the 1890s, and met Federica's parents in San Francisco's Japantown around 1936. It is thus possible in fact that Federica, unusually among foreign-born BNRO personnel, enters Bassanda from the East rather than West, as a result of long wanderings in Central Asia as musician and dancer.

Not much is known of her early musical training, but it seems clear that her talent was both precocious and diverse: fragmentary penciled notes in her extant music manuscript collection appear in three languages and mention ensembles from more than a dozen different nations. In her late teens, she was back in Asia, and guested as soloist and section-musician with *Nihon Gendai Ongaku Kyokai* (Japanese Society for Contemporary Music) in 1947-48.

Her stand-mate for those performances was a young Bassandan expatriate listed in the Society's programs as "Ashitaka Emishi" (明日か えみし). It is suspected that the use of this obvious pseudonym derives from "Ashitaka's" prior activities as a member of the anti-Soviet Bassandan underground; he has been tentatively identified with Asher Vidnyye (b1928), who had been a scholarship student at Owsley-Lawrence Conservatory but in 1944 joined the partisans fighting the Nazis as a teenaged sharpshooter, participating in the battles to liberate Xlbt and Ballyizget even after sustaining severe shell wounds in his right elbow and shoulder. Despite this heroism,

he was compromised to the Russian invading forces due to his family's origin in the Bassandan aristocracy, and had to flee the country to avoid being purged. No confirmed photographs are extant, but the physical descriptions from Japanese who played in the Society's concerts tally with known biographical details: "Emishi" employed an unconventional technique, bowing with the left hand and playing the violin with the strings reversed; when asked why, he would jokingly dismiss the question with the quip "oh, it's an old war wound."

At the end of 1948, Federica and Emishi departed Tokyo on a motorbike, heading west and south to Nagoya and Fukuoka Prefectures. Her infrequent diary entries suggest that, after extensive wandering and interaction with aging indigenous musicians, they took ship on a tramp steamer that called at Okinawa and then Shanghai, where they spent some time playing on soundtracks for the new Shanghai Film Studios. After November 1949, the diaries break off (or are lost).

Met the Malaysian dancer am' la Jaŋgal, a correspondent of Teresa-Marie Szabo, in Macau in 1951; whatever had become of Emishi, Federica was by this time traveling alone. Jaŋgal's letter of 2.16.51 to Madame Szabo says "She is tall and beautiful, and her violin is sublime. Moreover, she is a lovely dancer, kind and generous in her manner. But there is some tragedy there some sorrow. Perhaps she could find a home with the Bassanda orchestra?" Any correspondence between Szabo & Federica is lost, but evidently she did join the BNRÖ some time in that period: she appears in the series of photographs taken by Cifani Dhoma in the Ballyizget rehearsal hall in 1952, and she stayed with the Orchestra for a number of years thereafter.

With both Jaŋgal and Madame Szabo, was part of the collaboration of the Eagle's Heart Sisters with choreographer Bronislava Nijinsky, where her combination of very high musicianship skills and extensive early dance training made her a particularly important linchpin of the partnership. She never spoke of Emishi, though the dancers, to whom she was especially close, believed that he was alive but somehow not at liberty to join her; it has been suggested that in this period he might have been involved in Khampa resistance against the Chinese incursion into Tibet.

On February 1, 1958, at the Grand Hotel in Sofia, while on an Eastern European tour with the BNRÖ, a package was awaiting Federica upon check-in. The desk clerk later reported that it had been handed in to the desk several hours before by an olive-skinned "foreign" young man in civilian clothes, who held his right arm oddly. am' la, who was her roommate, said that the packet, which seemed to be unexpected, contained a book, an old photograph, and a note. She said "Fedi read the note, and her face lit up I didn't know she could smile like that." That night, after the evening's performance, Federica and Madame Szabo sat up very late in a corner of the hotel's lobby, talking animatedly. At dawn, they shook am' la awake in her bed; Madame said "Sam, you need to take over for Fedi. Fedi, we will take care of your other belongings. You go to him now." Federica embraced both, and Madame said to her "Someday you both will come home, to Bassanda. We will be there for you." Taking up her traveling bag and fiddle, Federica went to the door, smiled over her shoulder, and said, "Yes. We will come home some day," and was gone.

The book, a treasured artifact in the ESO archives, bears the stamp of the Tokyo Imperial University library, where her uncle taught from the 1880s; it is an 1899 edition of Hearn's folklore collection *In Ghostly Japan*. The photograph, tucked inside the flyleaf, shows Federica perched behind "Eimishi" on a motorbike, very young, smiling at the camera.

On the back is written, in a flowing, masculine kanji:

"1. II. 58. 明日かからさん、ため。永遠に。 ("Ashitaka kara Ferikarohasu, tame. Eien ni.")

aklin Paulu (b1928)

Percussion, dance, song.

Born to a farming family on the far northern tundra of Bassanda, a stark, high-altitude landscape largely given over to barley-cultivation and yak herding, which is probably the original model for the land Herodotus, in 450 BCE, called "Hyperborea" (from the Bassandan word *Хипербореа*). This region neither contained valuable mineral deposits nor represented peak farming country, and as a result was largely unmolested during the Nazi and Soviet occupations. Indeed, many "Hyperboreans" were largely unaware of the changes of regime (the folk saying was "*Q kujdeset se far b jin njer zit holl me gjak t jugut?*" ["Who cares what the thin-blooded southerners do?"]).

Visited London in 1946 on a trip with her parents, who were consulting with the Atlee government regarding the at-cost sale of Bassandan barley and dried yak-meat to supplement the rationing still in effect in the post-WWII era (Many Londoners born in the war years had fond memories of this *basturma*, marketed under the brand name "Bass-tur-mite". The guitarist Keith Richard, b1943, insists it has been essential to his long life and physical stamina, saying "Bassturmite was better for your health than that shite they were canning at home").

During this trip, she became a protégé of the American-born xylophone virtuoso [Teddy Brown](#), a star in vaudeville and "talkies" in the 1930s and '40s. It is thought that she developed her capacity for beer from the experience of taking lessons with Brown, who weighed over 400 pounds. On the other hand, it is also the case that Bassandan barley wine, typically home-brewed with a very high alcohol content of 12-14% by volume, tended to create the fabled "strong Hyperborean heads"; possibly both factors played a contributing role.

Recruited into the BNRO during a tour-stop in late 1951 in Nizhny Novgorod by the itmena Sisters, with whom she had previously shared a nightclub act in "novelty" song, dance, and percussion, just after Kaciaryna and М о р г а н had themselves joined the Orchestra. aklin had just finished a four-mallet xylophone tap-dance solo, inspired by Brown's vaudeville theatrics, at the "American Club" in [Nizhegorodsky Okrug](#) (District), when she looked up to see the Sisters across the dimly-lit basement café. As she later described it, "Katch and M said there was a place for us, a place where we could use everything we knew. They said I should come with them and with the Orchestra. And then I met Zeg and Jamey, and I thought maybe something new could come from that."

She was a driver of prodigious stamina and concentration, and regularly took the wheel of the Soviet-made ZIS-120N tractor-trailer which provided tour support for the BNRO, or the Latvian "Kuban" bus that carried the band; she once drove the latter 22 hours straight through a blizzard on the northern steppes in order to make a last-minute concert date.

Seemingly impervious to cold: she was the scion of the Ballyizget "Polar Bear Club," which made a ritual of midwinter plunges into Bassanda's frigid alpine streams. There is a photograph of Paulu in a swimsuit, with her dog Vojvoda, in mid-leap from the icy bank into the swift-flowing center stream of the Volga at Ulyanovsk.

She had also a prodigious capacity for home-brewed Bassandan beer. In fact, she was the designated representative from the Orchestra in craft beer competitions, or on the infrequent occasions when a local prodigy challenged the band to a drinking competition. In the back-country of Bassanda, it was the custom to offer liquid refreshment without let to guests this proceeding from their

Central Asian-influenced traditions of *oqoqoq oqoqoq* (“hospitality to travelers”). In rural sections, locals typically presumed that “city folk” were “too light” to be able to compete drink-for-drink. Yet *aklin*, though she weighed less than 110 pounds, was capable of drinking under the table blacksmiths and coal-miners 3 times her weight.

It was a matter of tour folklore that, if tour stipends or support cash failed to arrive from the central Soviet directorate, she could be sent out to the nearest *raki* shop to engage the locals in wagers for drinking competitions or *bilek g re i* (the particularly ferocious Bassandan version of arm-wrestling). Her “theme song” in the late-period ESO was a Bassandan-language version of Albert Collin’s s’ [“I Ain’ t Drunk”](#) (*Jag r inte berusad / jag bara dricker*), which the band would sing ironically on the tour bus when *aklin* had returned, victoriously bearing the necessary winnings, from yet another barroom competition.¹

S amus (“Jamey”) Mac Padraig O Laoghaire, b1922 in the Free State (Co. Cork)

Father an Irish national who had emigrated to America around 1912 to work on the Midwestern railroads. “Pat the Yank” Leary played shortstop for Michigan’s House of David community’s baseball team, who were notorious for a particularly literal interpretation of Biblical scripture which forbade them to cut their hair and beards: by 1918, they were a noted baseball attraction all across the country (billboards outside their stadia were purchased by the Gillette company, and the Red Sox’s Babe Ruth, the “Sultan of Swat,” was photographed, before a game against them, wearing a false beard). Though not a believer, Pat Leary allowed himself to be portrayed as a member of the sect likewise wearing a false beard, and a wig under his player’s cap. He returned to Ireland in 1919 during the War of Independence and joined a flying column in County Cork.

Mother came from the country outside of Kanturk. An admired and courageous correspondent for the IRA, Mary Margaret Daly married Pat Leary in secret in 1920, while he was “on the run.” With the cease fire in December 1921, Leary looked ahead and concluded that the fierce opposition to IRA commander Michael Collins’s treaty from Republican forces might lead to further violence a prescient observation, as Collins would be assassinated in 1922 during the internecine strife of the Civil War. Pat and Mary Leary, with the infant James, left from Cobh in September of that year by fishing trawler.

The family’s movements for the next several years are not known, but by around 1927 they were in North America there are newspaper clippings which tout the “return” of “the Battling Irishman” to American baseball, though the elder Leary avoided the now-discredited House of David, in favor of serving as coach for various teams in the National Negro League. “Jamey” grew up learning hitting from Josh Gibson and pitching from the legendary Satchel Paige. In 1931, while on the road with the Pittsburgh Crawfords, the Learys had the opportunity to hear workshop performances in Rochester New York of the *Afro-American Symphony* of William Grant Still, a family friend. As Jamey later described it “it went through me like a lightning bolt I didn’t know music could do things like that.” In the same period, Pat and James Leary met Yezget Nasllsinez, who was temporarily headquartered in Manhattan and in regular communication with Edgard Varese and Greenwich Village bohemian circles.

¹ Translation: “I ain’t drunk / I’m just drinkin’.”

From the age of 12, he studied informally but regularly with a succession of African American and progressive Caucasian composers in New York, St Louis, Chicago, and Philadelphia in the latter of which city's "Corktown" neighborhood the family settled so that the child could go to school. In tandem with his ongoing studies of music composition and theory, he learned both jazz and early ceili-band drumming in the city's dance halls, in which he performed from the age of 16, while also playing shortstop in summer leagues around the Northeast.

In 1940, at the personal request of Yezget Nasılsinez, the Roosevelt White House overrode the US Draft Board which had classified him 1B, fit for combat duty and seconded James "on overseas assignment" as part of a small communications, documentation, and propaganda team assigned to Yezget-Bey during his musical and cultural fieldwork and collecting in war-torn central Europe. With his remarkably quick ear and wide performance experience as well as his experience at negotiating the slippery and secretive social contexts of post-revolutionary Ireland and the Jim Crow US south Jamey proved an adaptable and canny musical transcriber and assistant. Throughout the war years and the first performances by "The People's Liberation Orchestra" (which became the BNRO), he anchored the rhythm section, while also "pitch-hitting" in other roles: like many drummers, he was an excellent dancer and something of an autodidact. Teresa-Marie Szabo later commented "Oh, yes is all girls on road lovink Jamey is Little Drummer Boy are seeink."

He was a subtle and sophisticated man: eternally boyish and playful, but observant, precise, and meticulous across decades of divergent musical activity. His synthesis of Irish, African-American, and Bassandan percussion approaches yielded an organic, flexible, highly polyrhythmic style, which significantly influenced the 11-year-old Steve Reich when the latter heard broadcasts by the newly-christened BNRO over shortwave in 1949. Elements of O Laoghaire's sound likewise appear in the "circular" drumming developed by another musical ex-serviceman from Michigan, Elvin Jones, later of the John Coltrane Quartet.

He spent over 30 years as adjunct instructor of percussion and composition at Owsley-Lawrence Conservatory in Ballyizget, while also touring with the BNRO's various ensembles across Europe and the Far East; John Cage and Toru Takemitsu were personal friends. He regularly captained the BNRO's "scratch" baseball team in pickup games on the road against visiting jazzmen touring for the US Information Agency; Walter Davis, Jr, pianist for the 1956 Dizzy Gillespie Orchestra, said "that little white boy could *run!*" and there is a photograph of Jamey in Ballyizget, laughing on the back of a motorbike piloted by a pipe-smoking Gillespie.

Later in life, O Laoghaire was made a Freeman of the capitol, and young local jazz musicians spoke in hushed tones of the unpredictable, unannounced occasions when "Dzejms" would show up in the city's clubs to sit in; into his 80s, he was regarded as an invaluable and unique connection to the world of improvisation and to Bassanda's musical past.

As Yezget-Bey put it "*ocuk her zaman iyi elleri vard*" ("the boy always had good hands").

Kristina Olenev

b N-Central forest highlands of Bassanda, 1918

At the age of 14, seeking as she later described it “wider horizons”, she ran away from her village to join a small *mjek sia trego* (“medicine show”), the pony-drawn carnivals which toured the mountain and steppe provinces. The *trego* was a well-loved folk art form which provided multiple generations of singers, players, dancers, acrobats, magicians, and comic actors their first performance training and inspiration for the first tableau in Stravinsky’s 1911 *Petrushka*.

She was inveigled into the troupe by an unscrupulous “manager,” Đzhozef Ceaușescu, who persuaded her that her “future lay elsewhere,” and by whom she shortly became pregnant. In the first months of their travel together, she learned circus skills from aerial stunts to novelty dance to knife juggling.

As time went on, however, during her pregnancy and after the delivery of her infant son, she found herself isolated from the outside world: poorly housed, doing hard physical labor for very long hours, and on occasion physically mistreated by Ceaușescu. The manager also exploited the *trego*’s quasi-stateless status to engage in smuggling, a time-honored Bassandan tradition at which local legal customs often blinked. However, he trafficked primarily in opium: it was in precisely this same era that unscrupulous traders and smugglers realized the fortunes to be made by shipping poppy outside the nation’s borders for refinement into opium, in Turkey and Southeast Asia. Members of the troupe, in thrall to the manager’s brutality, were reluctant participants in this trade. Madame Nijinska told a story of Kristina attempting escape, in the dead of winter, over the mountain passes into the south, carrying her child in her arms, only to be recaptured and beaten again by the show’s guards.

The cycle of abuse only ended after the troupe was joined, around 1937, by the wandering American singer and banjo-player A. P. “Pappy” Lilt (b1871; see elsewhere in the Correspondence). Members of the troupe, interviewed years later, said:

“The man with the shaved head and white beard the big man who came from the east, with the *banza* he saved her. One night after our performance, Ceaușescu tried to beat her again, and then her child, but the big man stopped him and then fought with the show’s guards with his hands” (A.P. Lilt had learned Appalachian “cotch as kin” wrestling a particularly brutal, no-holds-barred unarmed fighting technique on the Cincinnati waterfront in the 1880s, and even into his old age was a formidable opponent)

“And after the guards lay unconscious, or moaning with broken heads and limbs, or missing teeth or eyes, the big man said to Kariss, ‘Now do what you have to do to finish this to be free.’ And Kariss for the first time struck back at Ceaușescu, and again, and then again, and knocked him down, and stood over him, and drew her knife, and held it to his throat, and said ‘You will never hurt others again.’ ”

The troupe disbanded, with several of its members returning to their families and the animals adopted among them even as late as the 1950s, there were tame elephants and tigers to be found in the high mountain villages. Ceaușescu disappears from the historical record but unconfirmed rumors suggest that he might have been killed in a back alley in Piraeus in 1941 during a failed drug deal.

Olenev was devoted to children; there exists a remarkable series of photographs of her dancing with an infant in her arms identified by a penciled notation as “Kariss, with David--1928”. It is not known how she spent the years between ’37, when the troupe disbanded, and 1943, when she entered the orbit of Yezget Nasilsinez and the People’s Liberation Orchestra in Bassanda. She may

have wandered, perhaps as far as Paris, St Petersburg, and even Buenos Aires; all were centers of dance training, but exhaustive archival research has revealed no record of a "Kristina Olenov" in the known rosters of any conservatory. Either she entered a program under a pseudonym or else, despite her extensive acrobatic training and very high natural aptitude, she was adjudged "too old" or "too unformed" for classical ballet.

She appeared in Ballyizget caf culture, alone, in September 1943, a period of tremendous upheaval both within and beyond the borders. The Nazis still held the capitol, though Operation Barbarossa had stalled at the gates of Moscow and the Allies had already landed in Sicily. The nucleus of the People's Liberation Orchestra (later the BNRO) was coalescing, with Teresa-Marie Szabo, Anthea Habjar-Lawrence, and the teenaged Binyamin Biraz Ouz, Thorvaldur Ragnarsson, and Jamey O Laoghaire touring and "collecting folklore" throughout the countryside. Madame Szabo first saw Olenov dancing "novelty" dances in a caf frequented by Nazi officers the same, in fact, in which Ragnarsson played accordion: a message-drop for the Bassandan underground.

With her prior experience as multi-faceted touring performer, and her hard-earned knowledge of smuggling and other clandestine activity, Olenov became an invaluable part of the partisan networks whose actions materially accelerated the German withdrawal from Ballyizget, and (subsequently) substantially mitigated the worst excesses of the Soviet "liberators." Her acrobatic skills proved useful in the occasional night-time raid on Nazi records offices, and more than once her back-street skill with a knife both throwing and fighting protected her colleagues from assault or worse by the occupiers.

She joined the nucleus of the *Orla Serdtse Sestry* (Eagle Heart's Sisters) dance company under Bronislava Nijinska's direction, though its personnel was not finalized until the entrance of Federica Rozhkov in early 1951. From very early in their history, Olenov bonded with Nijinska, with whom she shared an age and a number of formative personal and artistic experiences. In later years, interviewed for the EHS History Project, she spoke quite eloquently of having discovered in the camaraderie, creativity, and community of modern dance an antidote to the narrow horizons she had experienced as a child, the traumas of her previous performance experience, and in the closed world of the classical ballet.

She was present on 23 October 1956, while on tour in Budapest with the BNRO/EHS, at the public demonstration against government repression which opened the Hungarian Uprising; there she heard a firebrand young writer and former exchange student, who called himself Laszlo Olafia, read the students' manifesto, which included the phrase "All peoples are free peoples." She instantly recognized this as a proverb (*"N pek szabadon n pek"*) from the Bassandan steppes where she had been born. Pushing her way to the front of the crowd, she called to the young man, in her cradle tongue: *David, sht se ju?* The boy leapt down from the statue to which he had clung while reading, and responded, *N n, N n sht se ju?* They embraced, weeping, and then, dodging the KCB men who were seeking to identify and arrest the ringleaders, fought their way out of the crowd.

Within the month, as the revolution collapsed and the Soviet Army tanks rolled in, they had been smuggled out of the country by a sympathetic senior officer on the legal staff of the Judge Advocate General at the US Embassy. Mother and son returned to Bassanda, and were never separated again, even as the BNRO (later ESO) / EHS tours continued. Late in life, matriarch of a vast extended family, she retired to a dairy and vegetable farm at the head of a fjord in Bassanda's far north. The American officer who had effected their escape remained a friend and annual visitor.

A photograph elsewhere in the Archive, possibly taken by Cifani Dhoma, shows Olenev reunited in the summer of 1971 with Madame Nijinska, on one of the latter's last visits to Bassanda: they are depicted in the sunlit loft of Olenev's barn.

Both are dancing.

Alcaeus Papandreou (A.P. a/k/a "Pappy") Lilt (b Asheville NC 1871-d Mt Airy ?)

Born SC to an immigrant mother, Constantina Papandreou, who came from the Peloponnesian village of Arachova in Central Greece, as a teenager, to Charleston around 1860. She was affianced to an older Greek immigrant peanut-seller but for unknown reasons the marriage was never celebrated. Instead, Constantine worked for two years as a seamstress and sail-maker of the city, where she appears to have learned a substantial body of Anglo-Celtic ballads and play-party songs from the mountain women who worked alongside her. Around 1867, in the welter of the post-War period, she met Cameron "Cam" Cannon Lilt, a fiddler and sign-painter from the piney wood uplands around Asheville, which had been populated by Scots-Irish immigrants since the early 18th century. Cannon Lilt appears to have been the offspring of such Scots-Irish mountain stock, and served, if only briefly, as a drover in the Army of the Confederacy. It is certain that Alcaeus had as extensive an inheritance of Border ballads and piping tunes from his father as he did of Cretan and Peloponnesian tunes from his mother. The elder Lilt's repertoire also included proto-blues songs learned from black trail gangs engaged in building the narrow-gauge railroads which would eventually ensure Northern victory and open the southern Appalachian interior.

Alcaeus was born on the waterfront of Charleston, but the family returned to the hill country of the western region while he was still a child so that his parents could find work in the timber camps. He often summered with his father's people in the hills, where it is clear that he absorbed a very wide range of musical influences, both Anglo-Celtic and African American. He also accompanied his father on annual journeys over the mountains to the west, where he would first have encountered the creole riverboatmen who were one source of his very large repertoire of minstrel and medicine-show songs and facilitated the addition of banjo and guitar to his musical arsenal. In 1890, he was briefly resident in a Utopian community in New Harmony IN, from whose Moravian musical practice he acquired both the bass viol and the pardessus de viol. It is probably also there that he developed expertise in a range of practical skills, including especially sign-painting, carpentry, and agriculture: the New Harmony community experimented widely with such cottage industries as a source of hard currency. Lilt is reputed to have been an expert rope-walk and an authority on the cultivation and uses of hemp.

In the autumn of 1892, seemingly on a whim, Lilt took leave of the New Harmonyites and, banjo and pardessus strapped to his back, hopped a freight train north, through Indianapolis and Gary; in his oral memoir, he is quoted as saying "the brethren and sistren tol' me 'bout this' yere Parlymint in Chicagerr figgered I mought go' n see what' s about." He can only have been referring to the Parliament of World Religions in Chicago, in that year, which convened in anticipation of the opening of the 1893 World Columbian Exposition, a watershed moment in American cultural consciousness, which built an entire city of plaster and lath on the South Shore of Lake Superior, introduced ragtime pianists, Egyptian dancers, Berber musicians, and Thomas A Edison's creative team to one another, and heralded what was predicted to be "the American [e.g., 20th] Century." The Parliament brought religious leaders and scholars from all over the world,

particularly including North America, Europe, South Asia (India & Java) and East Asia, in a remarkable spirit of mutual respect, exchange, and enlightenment. It marked the first public introduction, particularly, of Buddhist teachers and practitioners to the West; the Ceylonese Buddhist scholar and author Angarika Dharmapala (1863-1933) gave addresses and participated in public lectures and private conversations with many other leaders. Lilt claimed that, while busking at the front entrance of the Chicago Public Library in October '91, he was overheard and engaged in conversation by the Japanese Zen Buddhist roshi Soyen Shaku (1860-1919), who later said, from a lecture platform at the University of Chicago "I have met one Bodhisattva in Chicago already. His is the music of Han-Shan and Shih-Te, the poet-fools of Cold Mountain. This man comes from the mountains as well, and the mountains are in his music."

Equally significantly, if less notably, Lilt is confirmed by independent sources to have met Algeria Main-Smith, who, then aged 30 and a keen student and "friend" of eastern philosophies, was in Chicago to meet clandestinely with representatives of the *Iliot* lineage, the shamanic indigenous religion of Bassanda, then under threat of Czarist political and religious repression. The *Iliot* shamans were seeking both moral and financial support from American progressives in their fight against Czarist hegemony, and it may have been during this same trip that the muckraking journalist Jacob Riis (1849-1914) and the I.W.W. organizer Big Bill Haywood (1869-1928), both intimates of Main-Smith, were introduced to the cause of Bassanda. Certainly there is a photograph of a party at a South Side Chicago tavern which is purported to depict Main-Smith, Haywood, Riis, the *Iliot* shaman Anakan Imir, and Lilt himself, listening to the "scientific" ragtime music of Scott Joplin (1868-1917).

There is a parchment scroll in the Main-Smith archives at the Harvard Peabody Museum, in Salem Massachusetts, in an obscure Tibet-Bassandan dialect not easily translated, but annotated in an untutored block handwriting with commentary and notes in Greek, Tibetan, German, and English. It has tentatively been identified as one volume in a hitherto-unknown Fourth Vehicle in Buddhism, the Bassanda-Yana. The outside of the scroll, whose parchment appears to be at least 600 years old, bears a wax seal imprinted with the Main-Smith crest and, in the same block capitals, the inscription "Chicago, 1893. Notes by A. P. Lilt, for Miss Main-Smith."

The biographical sketches for Lilt in the decade between 1895-1905 are sparse and incomplete, but it is certain that he traveled very widely, working as musician, carpenter, signpainter, and ironworker, and that he had experience of the Midwest, the Northeast, the Southwest, and the West Coast. He appears to have participated in a number of actions by the I.W.W. and related proto-unions, and most definitely associated with both Joe Hill (1879-1915), prior to his "legal" murder by Utah police, and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn (1890-1964), "The Rebel Girl" of Hill's song: Lilt is said to have been the source of some of the melodies which Hill employed for his widely-sung parodies and organizing songs.

As he aged, into the 1920s, Lilt appears to have spent more and more time in the southern mountains of his birth, especially in winters, but he continued to wander widely, both across North America and, seemingly, Europe and Asia as well. He met Colonel Thompson at the latter's retreat in the hills of Northern New Mexico in the early '20s, when the tiny Anglo colony of Taos included Mabel Dodge Luhan, D.H. Lawrence, Ansel Adams, the folklorist Juan Bautista Rael, and, periodically, both Alfred Steiglitz and Georgia O'Keefe, and it is known for a fact that he accompanied Miss Main-Smith on a return visit to Asia, most notably to Kyoto in Japan, where he renewed Buddhist acquaintances made 30 years before at Chicago. Though unconfirmed, there is a story told in the high hills of Bassanda that a "Mountain Man" had come "from the East," "bearing songs and strange instruments and the friendship of Bassanda," some time before the

Second World War. Certainly this would appear to accord with the introduction of North American songs into the repertoires of the Bassandan medicine-shows, which for centuries had combined music, song, dance, juggling, and physical comedy in troupes who traveled and performed throughout the country. Lilt's influence may likewise account for the presence of certain Appalachian tunes and songs in the repertoire of Yezget Nasllsinez which then recur in the corpus of the Bassanda National Radio Orchestra.

By the 1930s, Lilt was mostly headquartered in and around his birthplace of Asheville, at the family homestead in the hills, where he painted both signs upon commission and renderings of "imaginary" scenes, including animals, dancers, warriors, musicians, and artisans. Though highly personal and eccentric, the topics and techniques of these paintings which were eventually purchased by the Main-Smith Family Trust for preservation may represent, not fiction, but rather a m range of persons, events, mythical characters, places, and deities significant in Lilt's long life of wandering.

A single confirmed photograph of Lilt exists, taken at the age of 67, when he is recorded at the 1938 banjo contest in Airy, where he met Clarence "Tom" Ashley (1895-1967), to whom he may have given the classic banjo song "The Coo Coo," itself based upon very ancient Scottish antecedents. Much of our biographical information on Lilt is derived from an extensive fieldwork interview at Airy, conducted by the young Alan Lomax for the Library of Congress as part of the Farm Security Administration folklore project. Though Lomax, scion of a noted American intellectual family and a Harvard student, was in no wise naive, the young folklorist appears to have been completely swayed by Lilt's storytelling and "special blend" of hemp tobacco certainly Lomax's questions betray none of his trademark critical analysis. Unfortunately, the Lilt interviews are print only: there is no musical notation or other ephemera; yet even a simple list of the song and tune titles he references, from a 50-year career as wandering artisan, teacher, and musician, includes hundreds of pieces in dozens of genres and presumably represents only a sampling of a musical repertoire which must have been staggering in its depth and diversity.

Though there is no record of the date or circumstances of Lilt's death, there exists a torn, weathered photograph of a wooden headstone, possibly in the Mt Airy cemetery, which reads simply "A.P. Lilt, 1871-[obscured]. Thus have I heard." The headstone, and the precise site of the photograph, have never been recovered, but Lilt's repertoire and expressive ethos lived on in the repertoire and tribal family of the BNR0/ES0.

Орла Сердце сестры ("Orla Serdtse sestry") The Eagle's Heart Sisters

Small 5-member women's modern/folkloric dance company consisting of female relations of Teresa-Marie Szabo. Largely of Romany gypsy (and other) ethnic creole extraction; they appear to have been siblings, or possibly nieces or cousins, or even aunts, of Madame herself. Precise ages and family relationships are not readily recoverable because, as was common with many Central European persons of Romany extraction, Madame was extremely reticent about documents, legal records, and genealogies: one dance critic, interviewing the "sisters" for a French periodical around 1947, asked "and so, Miss Szabo, precisely what is the relationship between you young ladies?" and Madame, with that blood-freezing glare which made hotel managers and corrupt border officials fear her, and journalists carefully review in advance their interview questions, replied simply and forbiddingly, "We are Sisters."

Their troupe style was noted for its ferocity, intensity, and sense of collaborative inter-group loyalty: another critic, slightly more poetic, and slightly less influenced by the patriarchal biases of the period, said “they are Amazonian warriors of the creative heart, and in them Bronislava Nijinska has found her archetypal collaborators.” The Sisters, in turn, fiercely protected Nijinska and each other, and it was not unheard-of that a naive or overbearing masculine admirer (or prima danseur), in caf , nightclub, or in the studio, were he to intrude, might find himself knocked cold. They brought this same intensely female physicality to the choreographies created for them, and their collaboration with Madame, though unrealized (until tonight’s premiere), represents what could have been a watershed moment in the liberation of the dancing female body from its passive domination by masculine ballet masters.

The Srcetovredi Brothers

Viliyam Daviv (BNRO nickname “Willie” ; b January 23, 1923) and Dzejms Rasel (“Jack” ; b August 29, 1925) were the children of Marya and Viliyam Srcetovredi, who disappeared in the pogrom that followed immediately after the German *Anschluss* of Bassanda in 1939. The family had owned and operated a metal-works factory, but after the disappearance of the parents, the business was “requisitioned” by the Nazis and its stock, equipment and other assets disappeared. The brothers, then 14 and 16 years of age, respectively, became wards of the state in effect, orphans.

In addition to the metallurgical skills and wise-cracking folk humor they inherited from their father, a noted raconteur, Willie and Jack were also aspiring musicians, and had been recruited around 1936 for positions with the Bassanda Youth Orchestra, founded by Terese-Marie Szabo, under the general supervision of Yezget Nasilsinez, as de facto employment training for orphans and refugees of the worldwide Great Depression. The BYO would eventually serve as one of the few brief points of stability in the brothers’ careers, providing them food and shelter, and engendering a fond recollection of their early home-life, and of the repertoire of folkloric songs they had from their mother a younger contemporary of Yezget-Bey and one of his informants.

However, the instability of the post-invasion environment, anger at the loss of their parents, and a general lack of structure and order outside the BYO rehearsal room, led them toward the dangerous thrills of flying as part of the Bassanda Air Corps (in exile). Having been raised by their mechanically-gifted father in the hobby of Bassandan base-gliding that is, hang-gliding from high peaks they had both an instinctive and learned expertise with the aerodynamic considerations of flight. By 1941 they were in England, where they met (or were reintroduced to) Alexei Andreevitch Boyar (1922-2010), paratrooper and folklorist/organist, who may in fact have sponsored their enlistment in the Royal Air Corps.

In June 1944, at the age of 19 and 21 respectively, they piloted two of the gliders that dropped Boyar’s 101st Airborne paratroopers over Vierville in Normandy. After the drop, while banking toward the beaches where the gliders would be ditched, Jack’s aircraft was ambushed by a lone Me-109 and shot down. The Luftwaffe pilot did not live long enough to celebrate his “kill”, as Willie, who had been shadowing his brother’s glider closely

with his own, dove silently down upon the Messerschmitt, and, in an extraordinary feat of sharpshooting, put four slugs from a Webley .45 revolver into the fighter's radiator it crashed and burned outside Vierville (a corporal in the 101st, observing the brief dogfight from the ground, later recalled "it was the most friggin' amazing thing I ever saw that second glider dropped on the 109 like a stone, and we actually *heard* those four rounds from his .45").

Despite significant injuries from his glider's shattered canopy glass (his left eye was permanently damaged and a small piece of shrapnel lodged near, but not in, his frontal lobe), Jack successfully pancaked his aircraft into the sea just off Utah Beach, and the brothers swam ashore.

Jack was honorably discharged with the Purple Heart, and both received the Bronze Star for "conspicuous courage." After convalescence, the two made their way eastward, following the advancing allies across France and southern Germany. In the first week of May in 1945, they crossed the unguarded frontier into Bassanda. In the turbulent environment of the liberation, when local partisans were struggling to impose order and minimize displacement and persecution of ethnic minorities by the Russians advancing from the East, they reconnected with Madame Szabo. Though permanently injured he lost the sight of his left eye, and the unremoved shrapnel in his cranium caused peculiarities of behavior, about which unimpressed brother Willie said "*Chert, net, on vseгда byl takim!*" ("hell, no, he's always been like that!") Jack insisted upon attempting to reactivate the partisans to resist the Soviet incursion.

Instead, Madame Szabo sought to persuade both that they could most valuably contribute to the long-term recovery of Bassanda by rejoining the BNRÖ, now as full members, and helping to rebuild the BYÖ's youth outreach and advocacy programs, though it was only through the direct intervention of Yezget-Bey (whom they called "Baba") that the Brothers finally agreed to serve. They were cornerstones of the Orchestra's strings section for decade, their seemingly-spontaneous (and possibly inadvertent) comedy routines punctuating BNRÖ concerts at both opportune and inopportune moments, while remaining stalwart upholders of the ensemble's motto "Fierce dedication to the traditions and to one another."

Kaciaryna and М о р г а н (" М о р г а н ") Т М Э Н А , The itmena Sisters

Half-sisters, born 1924 & 1923 respectively. Voice, dance, brass, winds.

Due to Bassanda's long-standing matriarchal traditions, by which both inheritance and family name descend through the female line, Kaciaryna and М о р г а н , half-sisters by different fathers to the same mother, shared a surname as well. They encountered the band relatively late around 1951 after a reasonably successful duo career in the Bassanda music hall tradition. Kaciaryna's father, of Central Asian descent, came from the easternmost mountains of the country, which shared flora, fauna, and some DNA with Tibet and Nepal (see "Taking the Hippie Trail to Bassanda," in the Correspondence). М о р г а н ' s father, from the country's Southwest steppes, was another exponent of the Bassandan hang-gliding tradition, like Alexei Andreevitch Boyar and the Srcetovredi Brothers, and it may be either nature or nurture that made М о р г а н a skilled

armorers: she had excellent skills as both metallurgist and engineer. Both were dancers their music hall act had depended heavily upon their repertoire of folkloric and “novelty” dances and both had strong secondary skills as instrumentalists. Kaciaryna carried the tradition of the horse-copers and smugglers’ songs of Eastern Bassanda, through her father, while МОРГАН had a substantial repertoire of unique and esoteric soloistic dances some shamanic in origin which she would deploy only in certain situations or when Yezget-Bey specifically requested them.

Their mother Vilma itmena, a contemporary of Yezget Nasilsinez who had collaborated with him in the clandestine escape networks of the German and Soviet occupations, had instilled in them a fierce sense of female empowerment and sibling loyalty. It was sometimes said that the Sisters could communicate with each other telepathically, across long distances, and more than once, in the life of the Band, Yezget-Bey took advantage of this seeming clairvoyance, when the Sisters found themselves and their Band-mates separated at either licit or illicit border crossings, saying to Kaciaryna “what does МОРГАН tell you?” and vice versa. Later queried by a skeptical Western journalist about the “credulity” of this, Nasilsinez said merely “it saved us, or others, more than once. I don’t have to believe in it in order to employ it to save lives.” Other members of the BNRO likewise depended upon this sisterly sympathy, relying upon it for everything from finding petrol while touring remote areas to in the more recent era locating mislaid satellite phones and lorry keys.

Likewise with the dances: МОРГАН would only consent to perform certain pieces if Yezget-Bey specifically requested them. More than once, these shamanistic dances appear to have been deployed for extra-musical reasons: there is said to be a photograph, still unlocated in the Archive, of МОРГАН dancing a particular sword-dance at a border crossing, whose guards, waving the BNRO’s caravan through their checkpoint, appear to be unable to see her.

The itmena Sisters’ unique combination of sensitivity and stamina Kaciaryna’s humor and МОРГАН’s physical courage were cherished by other members of the Orchestra; one said “the Band became the Band when the Sisters came on board.”

Etxaberrri كزاف ييه le Gwo

Violin, banjo.

Born Galveston Island, 1931.

Though conventionally understood as a place-name (the village of *Xabier* in the Basque country of northern Spain), another etymology suggests that the name “Xavier” is actually Moorish, from the Arabic *Ga’afar* meaning “splendid”, “bright”. In the case of Etxaberrri le Gwo, the Arabic derivation becomes more plausible in light of genealogical research which has suggested that his mother’s family was actually 16th century American *criolla*, descended from Esteban de Dorantes (c1500-39), the Moroccan-born black African who came to New Spain with the Narv ez expedition, after prior stops in Hispaniola and Cuba. It is generally accepted that Esteban died in the Zuni Uprising of 1539, but another, possibly romantic school of thought argues that he was not killed; rather, that he and *Indio* friends faked the death as a means of winning his freedom and that he

lived out his life, fathering an extensive clan, in the New World. Some folklore legends even hold that the dark-faced Zuni Kachina dancer [Chakwaina](#) is based on Estevanico.

Etxaberri's own father was of Caribbean Creole ancestry; he thus inherits the tradition of Barbadian *rukatur* acoustic music, and the lineage of the smugglers and privateersmen who shipped out of Barbados during the War of 1812. There are likewise family connections with the communities of pirates and slavers that revolved around Jean Lafitte (1776-1823), who fought at the Battle of New Orleans after settling at Barataria Bay (Louisiana) and Campeche (Texas). Etxy himself was extensively tattooed, which lends credence to the possibility that he may have also had South Seas heritage (one grandfather is said to have come from Rokovoko, the home island of the harpooner Queequeg in Melville's 1851 *Moby Dick*). Given his father's Haitian and Barbadian maritime experience, and the evidence of his Eastern Mediterranean encounters in the very late 1940s, it therefore seems possible that, prior to his European sojourn, Etxaberri might have shipped out to the South Seas as a teenaged deckhand.

Another branch of his father's family served as informants for Lydia Parrish in her 1920s Southeast collecting for the 1942 book *Slave Songs of the Georgia Sea Islands*: the book contains a photo labeled "Snooks dancing 'Juba'," which may be an older cousin, around age 6.

Revealing mention of "Etxy" himself comes in a 1947 letter from the New York-based Ukrainian film-maker (*Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti*) and collector Maya Deren to Yezget Nasilsinez, whom she had met at Cannes in 1946, while she was in New Orleans just prior to her departure for Haiti. That initial introduction may have come through NOLA's Caribbean expat community:

"...I also make known to you the young American violinist Etxa le Gwo. He is about nineteen [actually seventeen], from a Haitian Creole family I think [NB: actually Barbadian]. He has extraordinary aptitude for concert music, but surely within him there is also the music that comes from his family lineage.

He is fit and energetic I went with him on horseback to a family gathering southeast of the City, beyond the paved roads, in the watery Plaquemines Parish, at a place called Bay Tambour, and he is a remarkable horseman. The music played, featuring the unlikely combination of accordion, violin, guitars, percussive triangle, and laundress's scrub-board, was energetic and infectious.

"He has very little money and I think it unlikely that he would be able to travel to Bassanda without assistance. I leave for Port au Prince within just a few days, but I enclose his mother's mailing address in Houston Texas. Perhaps there may be a way for you to employ him in the future..."

In the event, despite Deren's enthusiastic introduction, there is no evidence of immediate correspondence between le Gwo and Bassanda at this time.

What we do know is that he left school at 17 to ship out as deckhand on Caribbean sugar boats, which further explains his familiarity with Haitian *vodun*, Cuban rhythms, and especially Jamaican musics. Not all of his voyages are documented, though his music and accent showed influence from all these island nations. He certainly visited the Eastern Mediterranean, as well as the South Pacific, in the late '40s; and he is said to have played with the saxophonist Zoya Carutas on

shipboard as she was completing her service with the United Service Organizations, just before she met Nasllsinez in Odessa in early 1949. It seems possible, therefore, that Zoya brokered the re-introduction of le Gwo to Yezget-Bey early in 1950.

An additional reunion was made, with the drummer R szeg Vagyok, when Etsy joined the band though Vagyok's Displaced Persons papers were almost certainly forged through Madame Szabo's contacts in the international Roma underground and they were first "introduced" in a Ballyizget rehearsal hall in June 1950. At sight, they called one another "Zag" and "Zayv," and in that first rehearsal it became apparent that they had musical repertoires and even possibly prior experiences in common. Though the following is unsubstantiated, if Vagyok was in fact an American ex-serviceman (see elsewhere in the Personnel files), the two's shared experience with music of the English-speaking Caribbean might have occurred as members of various South Atlantic maritime communities just after World War II.

The period during which Etxaberri joined the ensemble is conventionally regarded by scholars as marking the historical watershed in which, for both practical and formal purposes, the *ad hoc* "People's Liberation Orchestra" morphed into the Bassanda National Symphony Orchestra. During these years, the war-time chamber group (Nasllsinez, Szabo, Thorvaldur Ragnarsson, Binyamin Biraz Ouz, Syntiya Strilka Vyrobnyk, Samus Mac Pdraig O Laoghaire) was swiftly augmented: in 1946 by the Srcetovredi Brothers Willie & Jack, and R szeg Vagyok; Jakov Red inald (a former member of the BYO) around 1947; Zoya C ruřas in February 1949; Chaya Malirolink and Etxaberri himself around 1950; the itmena Sisters in 1951; and Federica Rozhkov a/k/a Ferikarohasu some time before 1952.

This explosion of personnel recruitment precipitated most probably by the social unrest, mobility, and economic uncertainty of Bassanda's post-War reconstruction led to a vast expanse in the ensemble's expressive range and orchestral capacities, but also in its financial obligations. Nasllsinez and Madame Szabo, the latter a particularly canny businesswoman, appear to have concluded that the only way to sustain the group's sheer survival, as its payroll list expanded, was to diversify and formalize its relationship with the new Socialist regime put in place by the Soviet occupiers. BNRÖ historians suggest that this enhanced financial stability is the most plausible, if not the only, explanation why Yezget-Bey, a notoriously anti-authoritarian and anti-bureaucratic individual, might have agreed to submit to formal "State Ensemble" status.

le Gwo, a strong section player and although the collectivist ethos of the BNRÖ/ESO tended to eschew focus upon the bravura individual a fiery soloist, became a sought-after guest artist with Eastern Bloc orchestras and chamber groups. Decades after joining the BNRÖ, and especially after 1985 (the death of Yezget-Bey) and the re-re-christening of the group as the Elegant Savages Orchestra, he continued to spark chamber ensembles and youth orchestras, both in the former satellites and also in the West.

Interestingly, "Etsy" was also an instinctively skilful chef: during his time with the band, he introduced both Jamaican music and iTal (holistic) cooking into their touring regimen. Junior members, for example, swore by both Madame Szabo's *Guly s leves* (paprika soup) and Etsy's *callaloo* to ward off winter colds and the notorious Bassandan Seasonal Flu.

In later years a particularly imposing presence, with white beard and dreadlocks, le Gwo was nevertheless a kind and patient teacher whose students, of all ages and skill levels, loved and revered him. He was a key liaison between the BNRÖ and Thomas Mapfumo's *chimurenga* group "Blacks Unlimited" for their watershed collaborative performance at the chaotic Independence Celebrations in Harare, Zimbabwe in 1980, where he also met Bob Marley for the first time.

Of him, the roots reggae singer Winston Rodney (Burning Spear) said, "I and I know him righteous man; Irie to all who love Jah and Bassanda. Me know Etsy as Bredraahn."

"R szeg Vagyok" (b? at? no birth certificate)

Drums, percussion, piano.

Held papers, issued at Budapest in November 1946, listing him as a Displaced Person under the above name, and claiming a birth date of Ballyizget in 1924, but these are certainly falsified (possibly with the assistance of Teresa-Marie Szabo herself). However, not even a manual alteration of the dates can explain the sheer chronological span of his active career: he is claimed to have first recorded on wax cylinder in the 'Teens, but in band photographs as late as the 1950s, he is to all appearances no older than Teresa-Marie Szabo (c1920), and he was still teaching and playing in Ballyizget into the 1980s.

First known gig with the PLO, in February 1946 in Bremen, was impromptu. Jamey O Laoghaire, who was already driving for and collecting with Yezget Nasillsinez on tour, heard Vagyok playing improvised percussion in an informal jam session with Jamaican-born US Navy deckhands in a wine cellar in the American Zone a fortuitous event, because, of all PLO/BNRO personnel other than Yezget-Bey himself, Jamey (who was a percussionist, American born, and learned a range of vernacular musics while his father was on tour with the Pittsburgh Crawfords baseball team in the Negro League) was best equipped to recognize both the sophistication and the stylistic diversity of Vagyok's rhythmic conception. A scrap of a note (which appears to employ Irish, a language that Nasillsinez and O Laoghaire had in common, as a code) survives:

2. 12. 46 1:30AM

Baba: teacht l ithreach chuig Weinkeller Siglind ar, ar Kobler-Strasse as an tosaigh chuain Schlachte. T drumad ir is g duit a chloiste il.

[Baba: come immediately to Siglind's Weinkeller, on Kobler-strasse off the Schlachte harbor front. There is a drummer you need to hear.]

J

Two nights later, at "Die Glocke" concert hall, Vagyok made his onstage debut playing "found percussion" (brake drum, anvil, bass drum) with the PLO.

Though it does not answer all questions of chronology, the likeliest partial biographical explanation is that "R szeg" (known within the band by the nickname "Zeg") was actually an American ex-serviceman. No concrete documentation confirms or contradicts this, but on the evidence of the extant recordings, his playing displays familiarity with African American swing-jazz and Dixieland jazz styles on drums and piano and see below for additional possible "sightings" in the historical record.

May have had family connections in the Caribbean; on tour, he occasionally received packages postmarked Port of Spain, Kingston, or Nassau, and it is certain that he was able to locate Cuban cigars and Barbadian rum in the most unlikely Eastern European and Central Asian locales an ability that endeared him to Madame Szabo. More significantly, he displayed, over the course of his BNRÖ tenure, a wide and sophisticated player's understanding of Trinidadian steel pan music a post-World War II idiom which grafted onto indigenous Bassandan mallet percussion traditions very readily.

Claimed to have played with New Orleans cornetist Buddy Bolden some time before 1907. There is also a story in the Habjar-Lawrence family that a Cajun or possibly Quebecois percussionist called "Zigaboo Barwn" played tambourine with the Trinidad Banjo, Mandolin & Guitar Orchestra in Port of Spain in 1912, alongside the "black sheep" elder son Jefferson Washington Habjar-Lawrence (mandolin). Studio logs confirm that it is certainly this "Zigaboo" playing timpani on the wax cylinder recording *La Paloma* by the "Indestructible Symphony Orchestra," issued in 1911. There is however no apparent explanation for the wide disparity of dates; e.g., how R szeg could have played snare drum with Buddy Bolden in 1907 and recorded calypso tambourine in 1912, yet appear in Budapest in 1946 seemingly without aging.

Legendary capacity as a self-described "scrounger" (tellingly, this is U.S. Army slang): able to locate petrol, diesel parts, bass strings, rosin, and manuscript paper in the most unlikely contexts; finding alcohol in the most inhospitable contexts was likewise a specialty. It may have been his extroverted manner, which seemed to erase all kinds of linguistic or cartographic boundaries, but years later, ensembles and soloists repeatedly commented "we never ran dry on the road." For decades, junior members continued to employ his meticulously-assembled ledgers, providing contact information for home distillers in dozens of cities along the BNRÖ's tour routes.

Notoriously prone to tardiness, but Yezget-Bey typically declined to reprimand this tendency, saying "yes, he'll be five minutes late. And then he'll have what we need. Zeg works in mysterious ways." This tendency also, however, gave birth to a bit of band shorthand: assigned a deadline or concert call time, band members would typically inquire "Baba, is that 'Band Time' or 'Zeg Time'?"

In the Soviet era, on the not-infrequent occasions when additional "tour managers" (thinly-disguised KGB kommissars) were imposed upon the band, it was frequently R szeg who took the lead in initiating the drinking bouts which made possible the kommissars' discrete ejection at the side of the road. He had a remarkable tolerance for "Mountain Blend", the peach brandy distilled by Syntiya Strilka Vyrobnik in the hills above Ballyizget about which tolerance Yezget-Bey said, sardonically, "that's because he's so careful to inoculate himself with it."

Later fathered a child with Teresa-Marie Szabo. Their liaison was inaugurated in 1951, around the time of the notorious incident in which the Romanian 4th Territorial Army Corps barracks at Cluj-Napoca were burned to the ground following a BNRÖ concert. Though never confirmed, it was band folklore that the fire had broken out in the building's basement, where Szabo and Vagyok had been smoking cigars and drinking *slivotiz* with Madame's Roma relatives among the janitorial staff.

In later years, played cabaret and restaurant gigs around Ballyizget on piano and indigenous Bassanda xylophone. Occasional service as lecturer in Trinidadian steel pan at Habjar-Lawrence conservatory as well. His students recall him as a meticulous but relaxed teacher, and valued their time with him though they do acknowledge that he occasionally "went walkabout" (his term)

for periods of months, after which he would return deeply tanned, and carrying rum from Barbados and La Flor de Cuba cigars.

Ter sa-Marie Szabo

(b Hungary c1920 d Central Europe? 2004?)

violin, voice, dance, rpetiteur, impresaria, political activist; Bassanda National Radio

Born c 1920, vicinity of Gyongyos (northern Hungary), Sopron Mountains. Father Romany gypsy (from a Bassanda tribe), mother Hungarian lady of quality. Learned Roma violin in traveling encampments, but also attended Franz Liszt conservatory from age 15 on "genius" scholarship. May have served as informant and folk-music source for B la Bart k prior to his flight to America from Budapest.

Appears to have met Yezget Nasilsinez around 1939, while he was working sub rosa in Bassanda to set up escape routes for Jews, gypsies, homosexuals, dissidents, musicians, and others targeted by Nazi party. Unclear whether she was one of those rescued, though there is a story, told around Romany campfires, that the two first met when, aged 17, she accosted YN in the lobby of the Hotel Astoria, as he was departing for an early morning train journey, and insisted that he speak privately with her "on a matter of great urgency to my people" hence, some possibility that the initial work with YN was supporting the escape networks of Roma and other persons targeted by the Hungarian Arrow Cross (fascist) Party.

Performed in various YN chamber groups and samizdat recordings from age 19. Also took early and leading role as "straw boss" (tour, ensemble, and rehearsal manager a term YN appears to have got from Duke Ellington c1935), dance captain, and repetiteur. As the one-off projects began to expand (1943-45) into what became the earliest versions of the Bassanda National Radio Orchestra, T-SM moved into role as concert-mistress. Was crucial ongoing link between BNRO and Displaced Persons networks who smuggled refugees, instruments, supplies, recordings, and scores into and out of the Eastern Bloc in the 1950s it now appears that the BNRO not infrequently assisted those fleeing to the West by passing them off as Orchestra personnel, family members, support staff, drivers, etc. More than one successful escapee claimed to have crossed the frontier carrying an empty violin or saxophone case, as T-SM distracted border personnel with arguments in a m lrange of Hungarian, Czech, German, French, English, and Bassandan.

T-SM identified as a strong performer of Central European and new music, particularly adept at dance- and dance-inspired repertoire. Is known to have inherited Hungarian, Czech, Turkish, and Romany dance from her father's family. YN once said "the impeccability of her technique is matched only by the inadmissibility of her language," but he refused to require that she ameliorate her manners, commenting "that's why she plays as she does."

Reputed to have once burned a Socialist army theater to the ground following a concert, though whether intentionally or inadvertently is unclear: it was later established that T-SM had been smoking cigars and drinking slivovitz with the Roma janitorial staff in the basement, but by the time investigators followed up on this allegation, the BNRO was across the border into the neighboring satellite, and the Roma workers were nowhere to be found.

Noted ties to extended Roma community, seemingly worldwide: both prior to and after perestroika, BNRO (later ESO) concerts were typically marked by presence of a large or small (but vocal) contingent of T-SM "relatives", seated together, and vociferous in their praise both of her playing and the breadth and inclusivity of the Orchestra's repertoire; her father, who heard the BNRO play Roma repertoire for the first time just before his death, after the concert embraced YN with tears in his eyes, exclaiming "Mindannyian egy!" ("We are all one").

Subsequently adopted as "daughter" by Algeria Main-Smith (1863-1947), though they met only briefly in Paris, through YN, in early September 1944 in the wake of the August 25 German evacuation; Main-Smith's Paris pied-a-terre had apparently served as a clandestine clearing house for Resistance activities immediately before and after the Allied landings at Normandy in the previous June. It seems that Main-Smith passed-on to T-SM various Bassanda relics records of the Smyth and Nasilsinez families, various personal mementos, diaries and journals associated with the Thompson/Landes expeditions of the 1880s, and "a bit of Bassanda itself" (T-SM's personal diary is cryptic regarding this last reference) which had been in her keeping for nearly 60 years.

Resisted being photographed, and declined to acknowledge audience at beginning or end of concerts, reserving her attention for the ensemble and the conductor. Frequently dressed in extremes of Central European fashion of the day but refused to wear shoes in any context.

Mother of at least two children, both boys, who frequently traveled with her on the Orchestra's tours. T-SM's boys subsequently described by ensemble members, with considerable affection, as "the children of the Band."

In the wake of YN's death in Helsinki in 1985, became de facto leader of the ESO, though she refused to take up the baton: this is the source of the post-'85 ESO tradition of requiring an empty conductor's podium and music stand, with T-SM leading the Orchestra from the first violins. Strong disciplinarian but fiercely protective of the musicians, families, and extended entourage. Widely credited with managing the financial strategies again, possibly with the help of sub rosa Romany "banks" that enabled the Orchestra's transition to market economy. Established procedures and in-group organization that greatly facilitated ESO's self-reliance and autonomy: touring, housing, transport, venues, legal staff.

Last reports have her teaching private studio of selected students many the offspring of BNRO members or alumni in Prague, c2003, largely retired from touring but maintaining strong impresaria and international-banking responsibilities for Orchestra. Ensemble members refused to allow any other representation in negotiating recording or concert contracts, leading to the remarkable image of Madame T-SM, in her eighties, rapping out negotiating points across four languages and three different time-zones using an early version of video-conferencing.

On 1 May 2004, her grandson, then resident in Prague and in the habit of checking daily on her wellbeing, stopped by her tiny apartment, which was crammed with music, photographs and memorabilia from seven decades touring with the BNRO/ESO. He found the door ajar and his grandmother gone. The apartment was in perfect order, her multiple cats fed and watered, and its contents intact, with the exception of her missing violin and ever-present box of La Flor de Cuba cigars.

On a small side table, near the front door, was an envelope containing a note to her family, as well as her will and personal documents (including passport, driver's license, all other photographic identification, and titles to BNRO/ESO copyrights) and a small enameled box of

unidentified dirt. It appears then that Madame departed wearing the clothes she stood up in, carrying her violin and cigars, and nothing else.

Crossing the threshold exiting the apartment, the grandson saw the imprints, on the polished wooden floor of the hallway, of two small, bare feet. Glancing at the note, unfolded in his hand, Madame's grandson read the short message "I am going Home."