

Rother Baron:  
**Musical Summer Journey 2022**  
*From Portugal to Finland*

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A song from a foreign country opens a window into another world. The musical summer journey 2022 leads from Portugal via Spain, France, Italy, Greece, Kurdistan, Romania, Hungary, Ukraine and Poland to Finland, with a detour to Estonia.

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## Preface



It is now six years since I first set out on a musical summer journey. At that time, my main motivation was to counter the uniformisation tendencies of the music industry.

I didn't want to put up with the dynamics of target-group-centered marketing, where everyone remains locked in the bubble of their respective musical tastes. The presentation of the same sounds over and over again sets a vicious circle in motion through which the immense diversity of musical worlds fades more and more into the background.

In addition to target group orientation driven by sales interests, national barriers also lead to a restricted view of the world of music. Many songs do not end up in the charts in another country only because the corresponding bands are not signed to an internationally operating label or because the language contradicts the listening habits in another country too much.

Yet it is precisely the foreign language and the culture associated with it that can provide spiritual enrichment. Thus, a single song – as inconspicuous as it may seem at first hearing – can open the window to a whole new world upon closer inspection.

This is precisely the experience I made again during this summer's musical journey. If you don't look for the fleeting listening thrill, but get involved in the nuances and cultural references of a song, you can gain a rich spiritual harvest with many songs. The music is then like a sounding bridge that carries you off into another world.

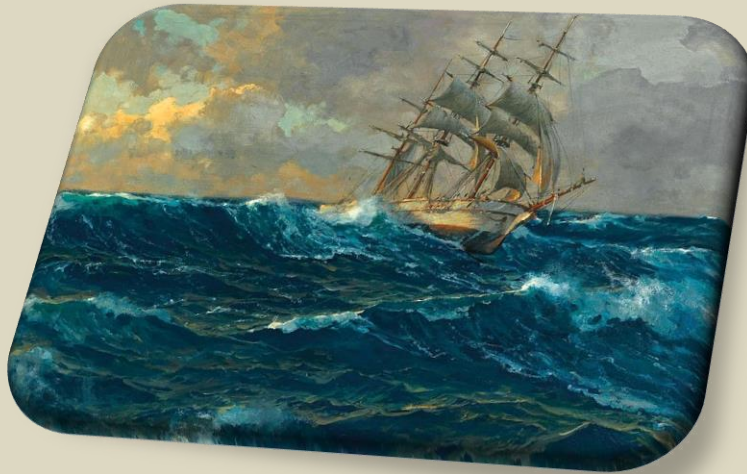
In purely geographical terms, this year's musical summer tour is a mirror image of the 2018 music tour, when the route led from Finland to Portugal. This time, the journey begins in Portugal and leads via Spain, France, Italy, Greece, Kurdistan, Romania, Hungary, Ukraine and Poland to Finland. Estonia is represented by a joint Ukrainian-Estonian project.

This travel book invites you to listen to the music tour again without the stress of travelling – either to the tour as a whole or as short trips to the individual music destinations. Both have their appeal.

Hoping you'll enjoy it either way –

**DJ Rother**

Happiness is like a butterfly that eludes us as soon as we try to catch it. But if we could catch it, happiness would no longer be what it is.



**Portugal:**  
**Wave Ride into the Unknown**  
***Ornatos Violeta: Capitão Romance***

**Captain's Romance**

My longing does not look for destinations.  
It only wants to ride the crests of the waves,  
without dreams, without tears,  
without wishes, without melancholy  
and the harbour's motherly gaze.

I am riding towards the spring  
hidden deep inside of me.  
Everything I knew, I want to forget.

Everything I was capable of, I want to unlearn.  
I only want to be at one with the sea.

Through eternal waves I will ride,  
waves that gloomily embrace me,  
that always capsize anew with a crash  
like people who elude their goal  
before falling into the eternal depths.

Tired of the dungeon of my life,  
I have devoted myself to the dance of the waves,  
sailing as a shadow of my former self –  
and have touched none of the things  
that you have touched in me.

/ I could see it,  
but I didn't reach for it. /

I am sailing towards the miracle  
and the pain that dwells in it.  
When the wave horses  
cast me on a desert island,  
I will dig there for the treasure of meaning.

I want to learn the language of courage,  
the courage to listen to my heart  
and to wake up one day from the drunkenness  
of the voyage to a revived peace  
and set sail once more into my life.



/ I could see it,  
but I didn't reach for it. /

Ornatos Violeta with Gordon Gano: Capitão Romance  
from: *O Monstro Precisa de Amigos*  
(The Monster Needs Friends; 1999)

[Lyrics](#) (letras.com) with link to the [album version](#)  
[Live recording](#) (2012, unplugged)

### Wrong Exit on the Highway of Life

It is a feeling we all know: that feeling of having taken a wrong turn on the great highway of life. If only we had taken a different exit, we would have the most wonderful life!

In the song by the Portuguese band *Ornatos Violeta*, this feeling seems to refer to a lost love; to the lack of courage to fully commit oneself to another person. The missed exit might then have looked like this: Another person had struck a chord in you that made your whole life appear in a different light. Everything was suddenly filled with meaning, everything had a goal, everything emanated an unprecedented harmony.

In order to continue on this path, though, it would have been necessary to leave the previous life behind. Unconditional love always entails a different view of the world. Certainties that were previously considered unquestionable are suddenly shaken. Quite a few people shy away from this.

However, the lost happiness can also refer to other areas of experience: a job that allowed for self-fulfilment, or a place of resi-

dence where a life in harmony with oneself and the world was possible. The crucial thing is that happiness is irretrievably lost. The insight that the previous life situation brought more satisfaction than the current one comes too late. There is no way back.

### **Saudade: Longing for the Unattainable**

In all this, however, we must not forget that we are in Portugal with the song. In the land of *saudade*, that emotional complex of faraway yearning, melancholy and indefinite nostalgia that is so closely associated in music with one of Portugal's most famous cultural treasures, the *fado*.

One characteristic of *saudade* is that it always locates complete happiness in unattainable spheres: in childhood, in distant lands or an idealised past. *Saudade* is thus also closely connected with Portuguese history, with the faraway yearning of a seafaring nation and the phantom pain of a lost world empire.

It is therefore telling that the pain in the song is supposed to be cured by a departure into the unknown, a voyage into the nowhere of the endless sea. In addition, however, this also testifies to a feeling of fundamental unhousedness in life and existential strangeness in the world.

### **"Where you are not, there is happiness!" – Saudade and Romantic World-weariness**

This feeling is not originally Portuguese, but something generally human. It has its origins in the awareness that we are only guests in this world and not – as promised by religion – integrated into a form of supernatural existence that outlasts our own lives.

Thus, the Portuguese *saudade* is also closely related to the romantic *Weltschmerz* (world-weariness) that spread in the 19th century in the wake of Enlightenment and secularisation – because this emotion, too, is essentially based on a wistful longing that is aware of the fundamental unattainability of its goal.

The best-known expression of this feeling is perhaps the poem *Des Fremdlings Abendlied* (The Stranger's Evening Song) by Georg Philipp Schmidt von Lübeck. In the song version by Franz Schubert (entitled *Der Wanderer*), the concluding verse reads: "There, where you are not, there is happiness!"

### About *Ornatos Violeta* and Gordon Gano

Formed in 1991, *Ornatos Violeta* (Violet Ornaments) became a cult band in Portugal with two albums released in 1997 and 1999. After disbanding in 2002, a short-term reunion took place in 2012 for a few performances to mark the tenth anniversary of the band's break-up. In 2018, there was another reunion, this time permanent. However, another album has not yet been released.

Alongside and after their work with *Ornatos Violeta*, the band members have also been involved in other musical projects. This is especially true for frontman Manel Cruz, who has written most of the band's lyrics. Apart from working on solo projects, Cruz has worked with the bands *Pluto*, *Foge Foge Bandido* and *SuperNada*, some of which he co-founded.

**Gordon James Gano** (born 1963), guest musician on the studio recording of *Capitão Romance*, is best known as the co-founder of the folk-punk band *Violent Femmes* from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Moreover, as he is close to the Baptist faith, he has formed a

gospel punk band (*The Mercy Seat*). In addition to collaborating with other musicians, he has also performed as a solo artist.

### About The Stranger's Evening Song / The Wanderer

The poem, originally comprising five stanzas, was first published in 1808. The first musical settings were by Carl Friedrich Zelter and Friedrich Kuhlau, with partial changes to the text in each case. In 1813, the poet revised his work and added three stanzas.

Franz Schubert's setting of the poem dates from 1816 and was published in 1821. The composer based this on another printed version, again with only five stanzas, and made further changes to the text. Due to the popularity of the song, the version of the text used in it is the most familiar today.

The various versions of the poem and song text can be found with information on the genesis and publishing history as well as a song version by Peter Schöne (voice) and Boris Cepeda (piano) in: Schöne, Peter: [Der Wanderer](#) – Dritte Fassung (Third Version). D 489 - Opus 4 / 1; [schubertlied.de](#).

An English translation of the poem with annotations is available on *The LiederNet*, here with reference to the first verse: [Ich komme vom Gebirge her](#) (I come down from the mountains).



Those who go their own way can only get in their way themselves.  
But those who feel too strong can also lose themselves in fantasies  
of omnipotence.

**Spain:**

**"The bear's only enemy is the bear himself"**

***Javier Vielba ("El Meister"): El Oso***

### **The Bear**

At the top of the pyramid,  
when there is no other outside threat,  
when everyone begins to tremble  
in his presence,  
when everyone is doomed to death  
under his paw,  
the bear's only enemy is the bear himself.

The bear's only enemy is the bear  
himself.

A giant is he, white and powerful,  
big, white and mighty.  
He is always full of strength,  
the bear.

Where instinct prevails,  
there is no mercy and no punishment.  
He's the one who controls the fate,  
nothing and no one can stop him.



If everyone flees as soon as he comes near,  
when every day the Grim Reaper haunts the house,  
the bear's only enemy is the bear himself.

The bear's only enemy is the bear himself.  
A giant is he, white and powerful,  
big, white and mighty.  
The bear's only enemy is the bear himself.

El Meister: El oso  
from: *Bestiario* (2014)

[Lyrics](#)

[Song](#)

## A Russian Bear in Spain?

Was Javier Vielba, who has adopted the pseudonym "El Meister" for his solo career, thinking of Vladimir Putin when he wrote the lyrics to *El oso* (The Bear)?

That is not out of the question. The album *Bestiario*, on which the song is featured, was released in July 2014, shortly after the first Russian invasion of Ukraine. But of course, such music projects usually have a longer lead time, which makes a direct connection rather unlikely.

Against the backdrop of the current second invasion of Ukraine, however, the association with Russia is almost inevitable. After all, the bear in the song is white, of all colours. In other words, it's a polar bear, which reinforces the association with the proverbial Russian bear and the Russian cold.

## The Fear of Others as the Strength of the Bear

The main connecting factor for this association, though, is the way the bear is described in the song: He is "big", "mighty" and "strong", everyone is afraid of him, he alone determines the course of events. This is exactly the image that Putin and his followers have of themselves and spread around the world: Don't you dare stand in our way – otherwise your life will be behind you as early as tomorrow!

Interestingly, the threatening effect emanating from the bear in the song is described with conditional sentences. The fact that the "only enemy of the bear (...) is the bear himself" is thus not only due to his strength, but above all to the fear others feel about this strength. If they did not take flight as soon as he roared, they could defend themselves much better against him. This can be applied quite well to the fear-driven attitude of the world community towards Russia.

But as already mentioned, these associations are most likely due to the current political situation and not intended by the artist. On the other hand, the lyrics of the album *Bestiario* are – as Vielba himself emphasises in an interview (see below) – intentionally designed in such a way that they are open to various interpretations. In the songs, clusters of human characteristics are sketched in the mirror of various animals, without, however, assessing them morally.

## Ambiguous Parable

With this approach, the album clearly differs from the medieval bestiaries to which it alludes with its title. These were collections of fables in the classical sense – short stories that used animal metaphors to clearly characterise certain human behaviours and explicitly linked them to specific moral concepts.

The lyrics of the album *Bestiario*, by contrast, are more like parables that are open to various interpretations. In the bear from the song *El oso*, for example, we could – unlike in the above interpretation – also see a human being who is strong as long as the awareness of one's own strength is maintained.

Seen in this way, the bear's strength would consist precisely in knowing his way and persistently following it. Only when he falters, when he loses his inner compass, does he lose the ability to determine his own destiny. In this sense, only he himself can get in his way, i.e. become an "enemy" to himself.

## About Javier Vielba / El Meister

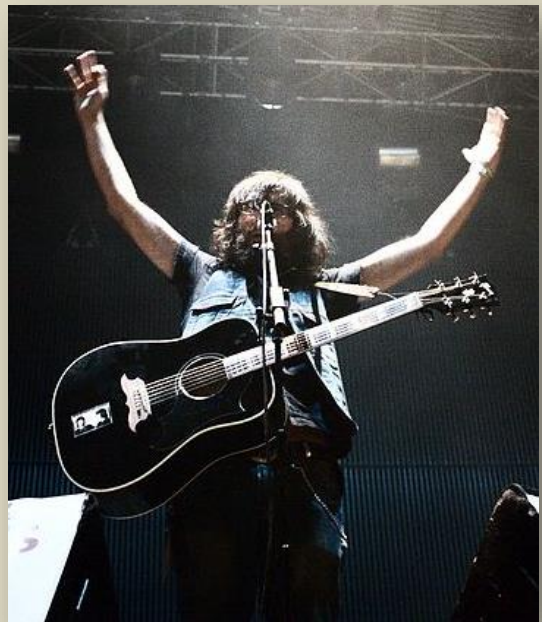
Javier Vielba, native of Valladolid in northern Spain, first established himself as the frontman of the indie rock band *Arizona Baby*, of which he was one of the co-founders in 2003. In 2010, the group merged with the band *Las Coronas* to form the *Corizonas*.

Vielba continues to be involved in this band, but has also started a solo career, in which he tries out other musical styles that are more in the singer-songwriter tradition. *Bestiario* is Vielba's first solo album, which has been followed by three more – one of which is a direct sequel to the first (*Bestiario 2*, 2020).



As the singer recounts, the stage name *El Meister* (The Master/Maestro) goes back to his student days and sums up his areas of interest at that time. Vielba studied German, prepared himself for a job as a teacher – and was, of course, a passionate musician even then. Since "maestro" in Spanish can refer to both the teacher and the esteemed musician, Vielba was – alluding to his German studies – jokingly dubbed "El Meister".

**Interview with Javier Vielba** (Spanish): Ylenia Álvarez: [Señoras y señores, con ustedes El Meister](#); hoyesarte.com, August 22, 2014.



The Mediterranean Sea could be a unifying element for its 21 littoral states. But the reality looks quite different.



**France:**

**The Mediterranean Sea:  
Peaceful Appearance, Deadly Reality  
*Georges Moustaki: En Méditerranée***

### **On the Mediterranean Shores**

Black-eyed children play and laugh here,  
three continents meet and ancient stories,  
prophets, gods, the Messiah himself  
enjoy a beautiful summer  
that does not fear autumn

on the Mediterranean shores.

On the shores hovers the smell of blood  
from so many open wounds. Starving countries,

barbed wire islands and prison walls  
shade a beautiful summer  
that does not fear autumn

on the Mediterranean shores.

Olive trees bend in the hail of bombs  
here, where the first dove rose into the sky.  
Forgotten peoples, maltreated by war,  
lose a beautiful summer  
that does not fear autumn

on the Mediterranean shores.



Here is where I used to play as a child,  
feet in the water, the wind in my nose.  
My playmates, my brothers,  
abandoned by the world,  
have long since grown into men

on the Mediterranean shores.

Mourning dyes the sky above the Acropolis,  
and "freedom" is a foreign word in Spain.  
Yet one can dream of Barcelona and of Athens  
and a beautiful summer  
that does not fear autumn

on the Mediterranean shores.

Georges Moustaki: En Méditerranée  
from: *Il y avait un jardin* (Once there was a garden, 1971)  
[Lyrics](#) mit Link zu einer [Live-Aufnahme](#) aus dem Jahr 1971

## The Two Faces of the Mediterranean Sea

The Mediterranean Sea – children playing on the beach, gently  
splashing waves, mild climate well into autumn, the glitter of the  
sun on the ripples, in the distance a ship blurring into the horizon  
...

The Mediterranean Sea – people drowning in the floods as they  
flee from hunger, war and persecution, the open-air prison of the

Gaza Strip, Egyptian torture prisons, the divided Cyprus, the permanent crisis in Lebanon due to the mutual blockade of the individual religious groups ...

On the Mediterranean shores, picture-book landscapes and post-card idylls meet a social reality that is the exact opposite of outward appearances. The vastness of the sea is contrasted by the narrowness of the hearts, giving rise to mistrust and fear, violence and death.

Yet the Mediterranean is actually predestined by its location to act as a unifying element for peoples. No fewer than 21 countries border on this sea. Trade and cultural exchange could create an oasis of peace here. Instead, disputes over sovereign rights and the associated rights of disposal over fishing grounds and raw materials prevail.

### **The Janus-faced Mediterranean in Moustaki's Chanson**

This sad contrast between external appearance and social reality, theoretical possibility and factual reality, is also addressed by Georges Moustaki in his chanson. Written in 1971, the song alludes to the political situation of the time – the Franco dictatorship in Spain and the military junta in Greece, which had been in power since 1967 (and was to determine the country's fate until 1974).

Apart from that, Moustaki also seems to allude to his own origins from a Greek-Jewish family in Alexandria, Egypt, in the fourth verse of the song. The nostalgic undertone of the look back may also be related to the fact that the once flourishing life of the Jewish minority in Egypt gradually dried up after 1948 as a result

of the wars with Israel, which drove the country's Jewish population into emigration.

However, with the reference to the indestructible beauty of the Mediterranean Sea at the end of each verse (with the exception of the fourth), the chanson also highlights that peace and a harmonious coexistence of people remain a concrete option. The dream of a better, more peaceful future can come true at any time – if only people really want it and make a serious effort.

### About Georges Moustaki



Georges Moustaki (1934 – 2013) was born to a Jewish-Greek family of booksellers in Alexandria, Egypt. His family, however, belonged more to the group of assimilated Jews. In the parental home, Italian rather than the Jewish-Greek

dialect Romaniotic was spoken. In addition, Moustaki grew up speaking French, which became his second mother tongue at the French grammar school in Alexandria.

In Paris, Moustaki met the chansonnier Georges Brassens in 1951, who encouraged him in his own ambitions as a singer and songwriter. Out of gratitude, Moustaki later changed his original first name Giuseppe to Georges.

Before launching his solo career in the late 1960s, Moustaki mainly wrote songs for other celebrities of the chanson scene, including Yves Montand, Juliette Gréco, Edith Piaf and Barbara. With Piaf

and Barbara he had a particularly close relationship; with Barbara he also went on tour.

Moustaki reflected on his Jewish roots, among other things, in the book *Fils du Brouillard* (Son of the Fog), which he published together with Siegfried Meir in 1999. Meir, who was born in Frankfurt/Main, had been deported to the Auschwitz concentration camp by the National Socialists as a child.

After Moustaki had to retire from the stage in 2009 due to pulmonary emphysema, he died four years later in Nice in the south of France.

#### **Another Post on Moustaki:**

[The Strangeness of the World](#). Paul Verlaine / Georges Moustaki:  
*Gaspard* (Kaspar Hauser)



For humanity, the apocalypse towards which it is heading with its destruction of nature would be a catastrophe. For Mother Nature, however, the end of the human world would only be the beginning of a new chapter in her history.



**Italy:**

**Peace after the End of the World**

***Angelo Branduardi: La favola degli aironi***

### **The Fairy Tale of the Herons**

There it is,  
where the earth has bent down  
to gather up all the things  
that time has abandoned  
and left behind.  
There, where the restless wind  
gnaws at the dunes,  
the dunes with the ashy sand,  
where now the ravens of winter  
have settled down,



there it is,  
where the horizon disappears.

There it is,  
where even the last seed  
hasn't molted into a fruit.  
There, where the earth has forgotten  
that such a long time ago  
the fragrant breath of the wind  
moistened the iridescent wings of the herons,  
there, where the ravens of winter  
now darken everything,  
there it is,  
where the horizon disappears.

Angelo Branduardi: La favola degli aironi  
from: Alla fiera dell'est (1976)

[Lyrics](#) by Branduardi and his wife Luisa Zappa Branduardi

[Album version](#)

[Live recording](#) (1985)

## Peaceful Apocalypse

In his song, Angelo Branduardi depicts the situation after the ultimate apocalypse: The trees no longer bear fruit, the white sand of the beaches is permeated by the ashes of the vanished civilisation.

The atmosphere of the end of time is emphasised by correspondingly apocalyptic images. The clearest metaphor here is of

course represented by the ravens, which darken the sky as messengers of death and make the iridescent wings of the herons seem like a fairy tale from ancient mythical times.

In addition, the wind again blows across the earth as it did at the dawn of time. Instead of the promising fragrance of the blossoms, it now disseminates the lament about the downfall of the world.

As a matter of course, this pessimistic outlook is accompanied by subdued sounds. The amazing thing, however, is that the musical background of the apocalypse as a whole exudes a rather peaceful, comforting mood. It is almost as if Mother Earth, having swept up the rubble of human civilisation, is breathing a sigh of relief that she can now open a new chapter in her history.

### **Mother Earth and Humankind: Who Needs Whom?**

Thus the song admonishes us not to confuse our own well-being with that of the planet we live on. The demise of our world is not synonymous with the demise of the entire world. To say it in the imagery of the poem: The very moment our horizon disappears, a new horizon will open up.

Mother Earth has already reinvented herself after much greater catastrophes than that of human civilisation running off the rails. She does not need us – we need her. Only if we learn again to listen to her language and tune our lives to the inherent laws of her development will we be able to find our way out of our current crisis.

## About Angelo Branduardi



Born in 1950, the cantautore was trained as a violinist at the Niccolò Paganini Conservatory in Genoa and studied philosophy in Milan.

He gained international recognition as a musician when he combined elements of folk music with traditional song texts and fairy tales in the 1970s. For example, one of his best-known canzoni, *Alla fiera dell'est*, is based on the Jewish Pessah song *Chad*

*gadja* (Little Lamb). Branduardi also took up the poem *Under der linden* ("Under the Lime Tree") by the minnesinger Walther von der Vogelweide in a song of the same title (*Sotto il tiglio*).

Another focus of Branduardi's work is Renaissance music, to which he refers in numerous pieces. The accompanying texts sometimes have an explicitly religious nature. This is especially true of his album *L'infinitamente piccolo* from 2000, which is dedicated to St. Francis. His Church Tour, in the course of which Branduardi performed in several German churches in 2014, can also be seen in this context.

Due to the frequent references to fairy tales and legends, Branduardi's lyrics often sound "fairy-tale-like" even when – like

*La favola degli aironi* – they do not explicitly go back to folk sources. The lyrics to this song, as in many other cases, were written as a joint project by the musician and his wife Luisa Zappa Branduardi.



In 1972, the Club of Rome published its groundbreaking study on the *Limits to Growth*. The Greek song *The Nightmare of Persephone*, released in the same year, seems like the accompanying music to the report.



**Greece:**

**An Early Manifestation of the Environmental Movement**

***Nikos Gatsos / Monas Hatzidakis / Maria Farantouri:***

***O Efialtis tis Persefonis***

### **The Nightmare of Persephone**

Where once wild mint and fennel grew,  
where the first violet stretched out of the earth,  
now cement lies on the blossom magic,  
and birdsong chokes in the dust of the chimneys.

Shroud yourself tightly, Persephone,  
in the sheltering bosom of the earth!  
Do not step out again  
on the balcony of the world!

Where once, trembling at the mystery,  
the initiates joined hands,  
today tourists creep with empty looks  
through the dust of progress.

Shroud yourself tightly, ...

Where once the sea whispered prayers  
around the blessings of the fields,  
now the lorries feed the shipyards  
with iron, metal sheet and soulless hands.

Shroud yourself tightly, ...

Maria Farantouri:

O Efialtis Tis Persefonis (Ο Εφιάλτης της Περσεφόνης)

from: To paráloga (Τα παράλογα / The Absurd, 1972)

[Poem](#) by Nikos Gatsos, set to music by Manos Hatzidakis  
(with link to the [album version](#))

[Recording from Maria Farantouri's concert](#)

at the Olympia Music Hall in Paris, 1984

(released as a double album)

## Ancient Spirituality vs. Modern Materialism

In his poem *The Nightmare of Persephone*, set to music by Manos Hatzidakis, Nikos Gatsos contrasts the spirituality of ancient Athens with the materialism of modern Greece.

Criticising uncontrolled tourism and a closely related building frenzy on the coasts, industrialisation without regard for nature and exploitative, soulless capitalism, the song, published in 1972, is an early manifestation of the environmental movement. In a sense, it can be regarded as a poetic equivalent of the ground-breaking *Limits to Growth* study.

The Club of Rome report, also published in 1972, predicted the collapse of the growth economy, the consequences of which we are facing today. This is not only reflected in climate change and the worldwide extinction of species. The harmful effects on nature and the social costs of mass tourism are also becoming more and more apparent – and have already led to concepts for limiting and more strongly controlling tourism in many places.

## Initiation into the Essence of Being: The Eleusinian Mysteries

As a counter-image to the materialism of the present, the poem evokes the ancient cult of the Eleusinian Mysteries. This is done both by mentioning Persephone, who plays a central role in the cult, and by alluding to the initiation rites to which the participants subjected themselves.

In ancient Athens, the Eleusinian Mysteries began with an annual procession from Athens to Eleusis, 30 kilometers away. The cult



revolved around the myth of Persephone. As the daughter (Kore) of the fertility goddess Demeter, Persephone had been abducted by Hades, the god of the underworld. From then on, she had to spend part of the year with the latter. The rest of the time she was allowed to live with her mother as before.

That which was to be experienced in the mysteries was something essentially inexpressible. Something that eludes our

understanding because it contradicts our everyday perception – but which nevertheless has a consoling effect for those who consciously face this experience.

In essence, it was about the fact that life has to return to the womb of death in order to be born anew. That death is the fertiliser of life. That a secret longing for death is inscribed in life, but that the living is stronger than death for that very reason – because it only enters its harbour in order to emerge from it transformed.

The myth thus reflects the eternal cycle of becoming and passing away, the fact that the grain dives into the "dark" earth in autumn only to emerge again from it in spring as a new, nourishing plant. It was this mysterium of the constant self-renewal of life that was to be made tangible for initiates at the holy places of Eleusis.



## Feeling the Pulse of Nature: The Redeeming Power of the Mysteries

The very word "Eleusis" has a magical sound – after all, it is reminiscent of the "Elysium", the "place of the blessed", to which, in Greek mythology, those people were taken who had achieved outstanding merits for the community. The unique thing about this was that they were granted the special favour without having to suffer death beforehand.

The Eleusinian Mysteries also promise such an overcoming of the suffering from death. Admittedly, death is not eliminated for the initiated either. But initiation is supposed to take away the horror of death by making it possible to experience death as part of life.

The poem contrasts this conscious confrontation with the essence of existence with a way of life that remains attached to the outer, material shell of being. The resulting alienation from the natural laws of life and from the cycle of becoming and passing away leads to a lack of sensitivity in dealing with natural resources, the destructive consequences of which we are experiencing so painfully today.

The conclusion to be drawn from this should be an increased return to contemplative practices, with which the sensitivity for natural processes and the involvement of human beings in them could be experienced anew. Instead, however, the end of the Fossil Age merely leads to a re-accentuation of the ideology of growth. The exploitative attitude towards nature is thus only perpetuated under different auspices.

## About Nikos Gatsos, Manos Hatzidakis and Maria Farantouri

**Nikos Gatsos** (1911 – 1992) started his career as a poet in the 1930s, when he came into contact with modern Greek literary circles in Athens. His lifelong friendship with Odysseus Elytis, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1979, also dates from this time.

The particularity of Nikos Gatsos' poetry lies in the combination of motifs from Greek folk art with surrealist writing styles. He has also become famous for his collaboration with Greek composers. Apart from Mikis Theodorakis, Manos Hatzidakis was of particular importance to him. Gatsos, Hatzidakis and the singer Nana Mouskouri formed a musical trio in which poetic writing, compositional creativity and singing were perfectly attuned to each other.

**Manos Hatzidakis** (1925 – 1994) is an extremely multifaceted Greek composer. To the wider public, he is best known for his composition of the music to popular songs. His greatest successes were probably *Ta Paidia tou Peiraia* (The Children of Piraeus) and *San sfirixis tris fores* (When you blow your whistle three times).

Hatzidakis has also devoted himself to the so-called "Rembetika", the songs of the refugees who came to Greece in the course of the armed conflicts with Turkey in the early 1920s. He made the music of this former Greek minority in Turkey respectable by both theoretically appreciating it and taking it up in his compositional work.

The most famous song cycle by Hatzidakis is entitled *Megalos erotikos*. The "great love poems" set to music in it cover a very broad spectrum, ranging from the ancient poets Sappho and Euripides to modern Greek poets such as Odysseus Elytis and Nikos Gatsos and to parts of King Solomon's Song of Songs from the Bible.

From 1966 to 1972, almost during the entire period of the Greek military dictatorship (1967 – 1974), Hatzidakis lived in the USA. There he worked with various American musicians, which added new accents to his music.

After his return to Greece, Hatzidakis, who has also written film music, musicals and chamber music, took on various posts in the Greek music business. He temporarily conducted the Athens National Orchestra and worked at the Athens State Opera as well as for the Greek National Radio.

**Maria Farantouri**, born in Athens in 1947, is considered one of the most important musicians in Greece. Her fame is due to both her qualities as a singer and her political commitment.

Farantouri's musical career is closely linked to the famous Greek composer Mikis Theodorakis, with whom she collaborated on his most important projects. Probably best known is her vocal contribution to Theodorakis' setting of Pablo Neruda's poetry cycle *Canto General*. Apart from that, however, Farantouri has also worked with other musicians.

During the Greek military dictatorship (1967 – 1974), Farantouri participated in the resistance against the junta with countless concerts abroad. Later she was active in the peace movement and was also temporarily (from 1990 to 1993) a member of the Greek

parliament for the socialist PASOK. Through joint projects with Turkish artists – for example with the musician, writer and filmmaker Ömer Zülfü Livaneli – she has been committed to Greek-Turkish reconciliation.



The Kurdish folk song *Lo Şivano* (The Shepherd) is a poetic expression of the Kurdish people's desire for cultural self-determination. A particularly beautiful version is by Mehmet Atlı and the string quartet *Anadolu*.



**Kurdistan:**  
**Longing for a Sheltered Culture**  
***About the Folk Song Lo Şivano***

**The Shepherd**

Shepherd, oh shepherd,  
I adore you, guardian of the living!  
Even if the sheep are scattered over the mountains –  
with you on their side, they do not have to fear any wolves.

Shepherd, oh shepherd,  
play your flute with all your heart!  
Oblivious, the sheep are grazing –  
accompany them with your tunes!

Shepherd, oh shepherd,  
wind is rising, rain is falling.  
May your gaze and your magic flute  
always embrace the flock!

Lo Sivano: [Lyrics](#) with Turkish translation  
[Live performance](#) with Mehmet Atlı and the *Anadolu Quartet*  
at the Diyarbakır Conservatory

### Little Song, Big Meaning

*Lo Şivano* – performed here by Mehmet Atlı and the Anadolu Quartet in a version for string quartet – is a traditional Kurdish folk song. As inconspicuous as it may seem at first glance, on closer inspection it opens up a complex horizon of meaning.

First of all, the song can, of course, be related to the shepherd boys who the flocks in the mountains. Given the fact that the products of livestock farming have long been essential for the survival of people in the barren highlands, and still are today in remote regions, this task entails a great responsibility. Every lost sheep can weaken the livelihood of families.

### The Good Shepherd and the Kurdish People

Beyond that, the veneration of the shepherd also recalls the biblical story of the good shepherd. From this perspective, the fact that no sheep should be lost points to the importance of every single human life – to the fact that before God, every human being is equally significant and worth protecting.

This thought is particularly consoling in the Kurdish context. For a very long time, the Kurdish people have been denied what other peoples take for granted: the right to cultivate their own language and culture and to determine their fate themselves. In Turkey, this goes hand in hand with a more or less strong suppression of the Kurdish culture and language.

Against this background, there is a third perspective of interpretation for the shepherd in the song: he can also be seen as the guardian of the community – as the one who watches over the people preserving their identity and asserting themselves in their cultural identity against the assimilation pressure of the majority society. This is also indicated by the fact that "Şivan" is used as a male first name.

### Utopian Flute Playing

The utopian character resulting from this image of the shepherd is additionally emphasised in the song by the allusion to the Greek shepherd god Pan. This association arises in particular from the reference to the shepherd boy's flute playing. For it is precisely for this instrument that Pan, with the "pan flute" named after him, is famous.

Just as Pan enchants the nymphs with his pan pipe, the shepherd boy playing the flute as the guardian of the community evokes the utopia of protected freedom – understood as life in a community in which spiritual development is not the privilege of a minority, but a right to which every individual is naturally entitled.

## About Mehmet Atlı



The musician was born in 1975 in the Kurdish-Anatolian city of Diyarbakır to a family of railway workers. He studied architecture in Istanbul and also worked there as an architect for ten years. In 2010, he moved back to his hometown of Diyarbakır and started working there as a university lecturer in architecture.

After participating in various music projects during his studies in Istanbul, Atlı started a solo career after graduation, parallel to his work as an architect. His first two albums were released in 2003 and 2008.

With his third album *Birîn*, released in 2014, Atlı made a break with his previous musical projects in several respects. On the one hand, he turned explicitly to Kurdish folk music and poetry. On the other hand, it was on this very album that he sang in Turkish for the first time. Obviously, the more intensive commitment to his own Kurdish identity was the prerequisite for him to use the majority language in his music as well.

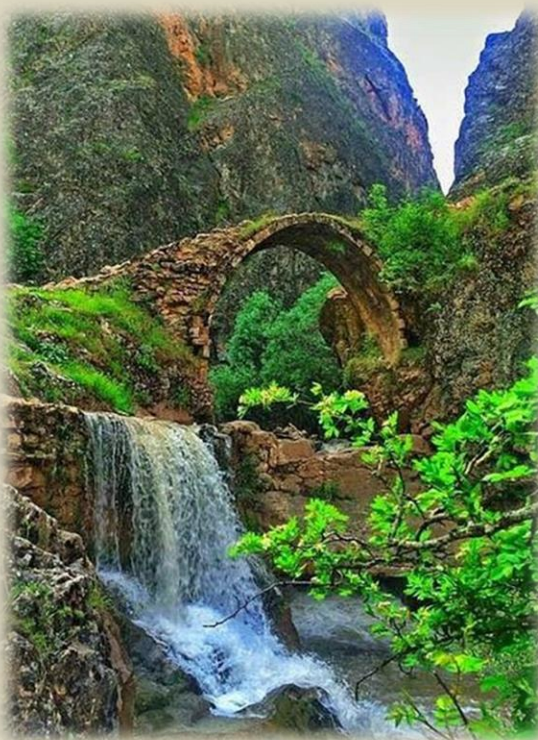
Atlı himself provides a revealing justification for his reservation towards Turkish in his music:

*"I have no (...) problems with the Turkish language. Actually, I love Turkish (...). But I am totally against the role assigned to the Turkish language to make me forget my Kurdish identity. For this reason, I created and performed a repertoire exclusively in Kurmanji and Zazaki [languages spoken in the Kurdish settlement areas] for twenty years, as if I knew no Turkish at all."*





*Because here it was a matter of resistance, of life and death. Thousands of people died, tens of thousands were imprisoned and exiled for defending this language. It would be good for Turks and for Turkish if Turkish were freed from this cursed role that has been assigned to it."*



**Quotation taken from:** Ana Sayfa: [Mehmet Atlı: Ben asimile olmaktayken anadilime tutundum](#) ("I held on to my mother tongue even when I was assimilated"; interview with Mehmet Atlı, Turkish); Ilke Haber, August 17, 2014.

**Another Kurdish song** with English translation can be found In RB, *A Summer Full of Love* ([Erdoğan Emir: To Şiya](#) – You went away).

A people that is outwardly destroyed still remains untouched in its spiritual identity. But as long as this inner fire continues to burn, its future is not lost.



**Romania:**  
**The Fire of Rebirth**  
*About the Folk-Song Focuri Vii*

**The Fire of Life**

In a forest of rotten leaves  
a girl weeps for the fallen men.  
Spring weeps with her, the oak embers  
choke in the desert sand of grief.

But in the sepulchral silence awakens  
a new fire of life on the mountains.  
Behold, the celestial stallions already spray  
their redeeming rain of sparks into the valley.

Comfortingly, the wind whispers in her ear:  
Even if the tree dies, the forest survives.  
In your soul the vanished live on,  
forever their fire will burn on your land.

And in the sepulchral silence ...

So fly down, celestial stallions!  
Break the chains, stir up the oak embers,  
feed the wellsprings with your fire, fertilise the land  
with your flame that germinates in other worlds.

And in the sepulchral silence ...

Focuri Vii: [Lyrics](#) with link to the [version by Focul Viu](#)  
from: *Pământul Frate* (Brother Earth; 2002)  
[Recording by Cineva de Undeva](#)



## An Ancient War of Annihilation: Dacians and Romanians

From the middle of the first century BC, a new rival gradually emerged for the Roman Empire in the Black Sea region. Through internal unification processes and the subjugation of other peoples, the Dacians, ethnically related to the Thracians, had developed into a regional power in the area of present-day Transylvania.

For 150 years, the Dacians were able to withstand the overwhelming power of Rome. But then, at the beginning of the second century AD, the Roman Emperor Trajan defeated them in two wars, whereupon they had to submit completely to the Romans.

Not only were settlement areas of the Dacians demoted to a Roman province. Trajan also turned the campaign into a veritable raid and carried off 330 tons of gold and 165 tons of silver to Rome. In addition, he abducted 50,000 prisoners of war to the capital, who were enslaved there, forced into gladiator fights or simply executed.

While the emperor's deeds were glorified on Trajan's Column in Rome, the Dacian king Decebalus and his generals took their own lives. A humiliated people was left behind, marked for many years by the wound of the doomed men.

This is the background against which the song *Focuri Vii* must be seen. Why the fate of an ancient people is sung about in a Romanian folk song? – Because a large part of the Dacian settlement area coincides with present-day Romania. In some historical studies, the roots of the Romanian people are therefore also traced back to the Dacians.

## Living Fires and the Water of Life

The Dacian past is present in the song in several ways. First of all, the Dacians are explicitly mentioned in the original. In addition, the "focuri vii" (or "focurile vii", literally "living fires"), which give the song its title, are an indirect reference to them.

This term – or the singular term "focul viu" (living fire) – is used in Romania to describe a natural phenomenon that also occurs elsewhere in the world, especially in connection with volcanic eruptions. In this process, gases – most frequently methane – escape from fissures in the earth and ignite as a result of friction with the earth as well as contact with the air. In Romania, the phenomenon occurs particularly on the mountain slopes of the Carpathians, but also in some places in the Transylvanian Basin.

In former times, when the causes of these fires were not yet understood, spontaneous combustions were perceived by the people as something very mysterious. Since the fires ignited as if by magic, were unpredictable in both extent and duration and could also occur in the cold season, they were associated with another, subterranean world that made itself felt in this way.

For the people of the regions concerned, it was therefore natural to see in the fires a greeting from the vanished Dacian ancestors. At the same time, the embers were seen as an indication of hidden treasures.

This could of course also include material treasures, such as a fabulous treasure of gold. More important, however, was the supernatural treasure that some suspected to be hidden in the place of the "living fires" in the mountain: the water of life. For this would have made every warrior invulnerable and thus opened up

the possibility of redeeming the disgrace suffered in the battle against the Romans.

### Grieving Widows and Utopias of Peace

Songs written from the perspective of war widows, like *Focuri Vii*, often contain an undertone of violence. The reason for this is that the consolation for the inconsolable is also drawn from the prospect of future retribution. As hopeless as the situation may seem for oneself, future generations might be able to rebalance the scales of life.

From an objective point of view, this gives rise to a spiral of ever new violence and counter-violence. From the viewpoint of those affected, however, such a perspective is quite understandable – because otherwise they would have to admit to themselves that the death of their husbands, fathers, sons and brothers was completely senseless, that all the deceased were nothing but the ground on which the enemy had established his rule.

However, the hope for a better future does not necessarily have to be exhausted in such fantasies of strength and superiority over one another. The utopia of a carefree life, as promised by the metaphor of the "water of life", can also be related to changed framework conditions and attitudes that open up paths to harmonious coexistence and make wars superfluous.

To also allow for such an interpretation, the English adaptation deviates in some points from the Romanian original. In this way, the universal character of widows' mourning can be made clear and transferred more easily to other circumstances. What the Roman were for the Dacians in ancient times, the Russian army is



for the Ukrainian people today. The emotional situation of today's Ukrainian women will therefore not differ greatly from that of their Dacian fellow sufferers two thousand years ago.

### About the Version of the Song *Focuri Vii* Presented Here

The song *Focuri Vii* was originally recorded in 2002 by the Romanian folk band Focul viu on the album *Pământul Frate* (Brother Earth). Both the band's name and the song title allude to the "living fires" – and thus underline their importance for Romanian folk culture.

The popularity of the song in Romania is reflected, among other things, in the numerous cover versions that can be found on the net. One of them stands out in several respects. First of all, the female voice in which the song is performed has an almost magical character. The singing, at once powerful and gentle, combines the pain of the grieving widow with the consolation drawn from the hope for a better future.

Furthermore, the song version is also remarkable because the female singer apparently wants to remain explicitly anonymous. The name of her YouTube channel – *Cineva de Undeva* ("Someone from somewhere") – is obviously to be understood programmatically. On Planet Literature, we – whose voice also floats "from somewhere" into the nowhere of the world – can identify with such an approach to some extent. That's why this Nobody version is our favourite. But of course we also link to the original version.

## Links

### **On the phenomenon of "living fires":**

Farnoaga, Radu, Geological Institute of Romania: [The Romanian Eternal Flames](#); geoera.eu, 24. September 2021 (illustrated).

Lica-Butler, Mihaela: [The Living Fires of Lopătari – A Must See in Romania](#). April 26, 2020; argophilia.com.

### **About legends related to the fires:**

Carnoouh, Claude: [Review \(French\) of a book by Jean Cuisenier: Le Feu vivant: la parenté et ses rituels dans les Carpates](#). Paris 1994; persee.fr.

CultureTalk Romania and Moldova Video Transcripts: [More Mountain Legends](#) (PDF). Five College Center for the Study of World Languages and Five Colleges, 2012.

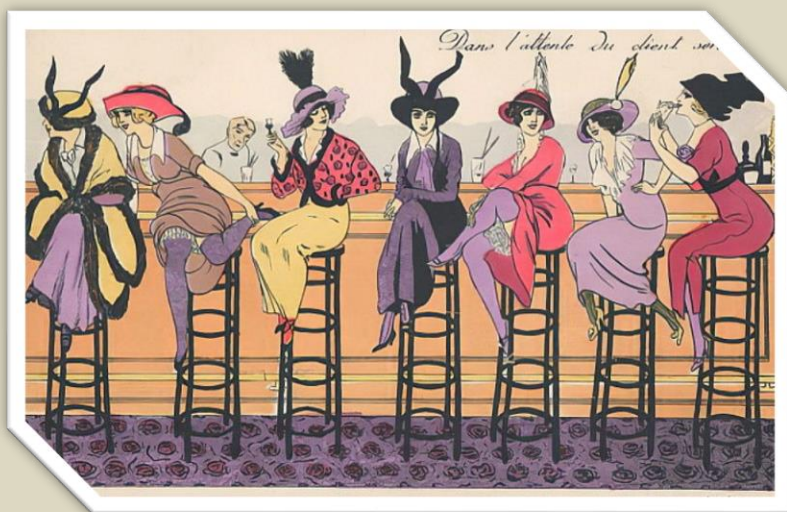
### **About the military campaigns of Emperor Trajan (Traian) against the Dacians:**

Curry, Andrew / Garrett, Kenneth (photos): [Trajan's Amazing Column. A War Diary Soars Over Rome](#). National Geographic, 2015 (with an interactive graphic of the column).

History Time: [Decebalus & The Dacian Wars](#); nine-minute info film.



In the waiting room of life we can wait fearfully for death – but we can also enjoy every moment of waiting. The absurdity of life thus dissolves into cheerful serenity.



**Hungary:**  
**Happy Celebration in the Waiting Room of Life**  
*Kispál és a Borz: Csillag vagy fecske*

**Star or Swallow**

I sat in a bar waiting for you,  
with only time by my side.  
So I made friends with time  
and waited, with her by my side,  
in pubs and bars and clubs for you.

Patting each other on the back,  
we sent drinks to other tables,

where women sat with tangerine dresses  
and faces that knew nothing of yesterday.

Just stay at home and watch TV!  
All the channels show dark trains in winter,  
rushing lonely through the night.  
The only place with buzzing life  
is in the crowded dining car.  
Over there, the one who feels sick – that's me!  
What an awkward ride through the picture –  
just a moment ago I was praying to God.

Waiting for you, we didn't start with anything,  
me and Time, my new playmate.  
What should we have begun  
with the few moments until your arrival?

But when you didn't come,  
me and Time, my lifemate,  
gradually turned life  
into a train of waiting rooms.

Just stay at home ...

Maybe it's better that way,  
how could you have come,  
you who are a swallow by day  
and a star in the sky by night?

All the fields are tilled,  
all women are well,  
all the rest I leave to you,  
you swallow or evening star.

Just stay at home ...

Kispál és a Borz: Csillag vagy fecske  
from: *Turisták bárhol* (Tourists everywhere; 2003)

[Lyrics](#)

[Live performance](#) by Kispál és a Borz  
with the János Csík Orchestra (*Csík zenekar*)



## Waiting and the World of the Absurd: Beckett and Kafka

A man who waits in vain for a woman in a bar and who, when she doesn't come, turns his whole life into a waiting room – of course, this is strongly reminiscent of the great dramas, stories and essays from the world of the absurd.

Thus, the two tramps in Beckett's groundbreaking play *Waiting for Godot* also spend their time waiting fruitlessly. The same applies to the "man from the countryside" who, in Franz Kafka's famous short story *Vor dem Gesetz* (Before the Law), asks in vain for "entry into the law" until the gatekeeper closes the gate at the moment of his death.

Admittedly, such analogies also immediately reveal the differences to the song of *Kispál és a Borz*. Both the protagonists in Beckett's play and Kafka's short story miss the goal of their lives by waiting. Instead of actively striving for meaning and self-fulfilment, they wait for this to be granted to them by a foreign power.

On the one hand, this can be understood in a metaphysical sense – which in Beckett's case is also indicated by the name "Godot", obviously alluding to "God". In the case of this play in particular, however, the passive waiting also refers to the failure to confront one's own culpable involvement in past crimes or, more generally, the blindness to human destructive power and the lessons to be learned from it.

At the time the play was written, this referred primarily to the atrocities of the Second World War. However, the fact that we must not close our eyes to our destructive potential and its threatening character for the survival of our species is again be-

coming abundantly clear today in the context of the climate crisis and new wars of extermination.

### Different Activities of Those Waiting: Albert Camus and *Kispál és a Borz*

The tragic atmosphere that surrounds the protagonists in Kafka's and Beckett's works is missing in the song *Csillag vagy fecske* (Star or Swallow). Here, the hero does not at all appear unhappy, and within the scope of his possibilities, he is also quite active. Yet this activity – as the activity of someone waiting – is in itself absurd.

The cheerfully waiting man in the song thus rather reminds us of Albert Camus' interpretation of the myth of Sisyphus. After all, Sisyphus does not passively accept his fate either, but actively takes it on. Again and again, as imposed on him by the gods, he rolls the boulder up the mountain, even if it only rolls back down once it reaches the top. Nevertheless, according to Camus, this is precisely the happiness to be drawn from the absurd: to rebel against the futility of one's own actions while being fully aware of this futility.

However, it is exactly this aspect of rebellion that distinguishes the hero of Camus' essay on Sisyphus from the protagonist in the song by the band *Kispál és a Borz*. For there is not much sign of rebellion here. Instead, the basic attitude is more like: *Maybe I'll win the lottery tomorrow – or maybe the sky will fall on my head. But in any case, I want to enjoy my life until then.*

## Carpe Diem: Make friends with time instead of lamenting its passing

Consequently, the anti-hero in the song makes friends with time – which is actually our greatest enemy – instead of fighting it. This is a very coherent image of a carpe diem attitude to life, where every moment in the waiting room of life is enjoyed instead of struggling doggedly for a golden future.

This attitude to life can probably be attributed in part to socialisation in a totalitarian state – which Hungary once was and is threatening to become again. In a state where personal initiative tends to be punished rather than encouraged, focusing on the joy of the moment is a logical reaction.

Yet the cheerful settling down in the waiting room of life does not necessarily have to entail a carelessness and forgetfulness of history that undermines one's own future. It can, on the contrary, also result in a serenity that does what is possible instead of falling into despair at the impossibility of utopia.

### About Kispál és a Borz and Csík zenekar

The group, founded in Pécs in 1987, is one of the most famous alternative rock bands in Hungarian music history. Originally, they were to be called simply "Borz" (Badger). However, frontman András Kispál saw this as a bad omen, as all his earlier, less successful bands were named after animals. As a compromise, the name *Kispál és a Borz* (Kispál and the Badger) was chosen.



The band's most creative and successful period was in the 1990s, when the group released a new album almost every year. In the first decade of the new millennium, the band gradually lost its creative momentum due to many changes in the line-up and finally dissolved in 2010.

After a few short-term reunions at festivals, the band declared their definite reunion in spring 2022 and also announced a new album.

**Csík zenekar** (literally "Csík orchestra") – the group with which Kispál és a Borz perform in the live recording of *Csillag vagy fecske* – is one of Hungary's most popular folk bands. It was founded in 1988 by János Csík in Kecskemét.

## Links

Franz Kafka: [Vor dem Gesetz](#) (1915) / [Before the Law](#).

Samuel Beckett: [Waiting for Godot](#) (1952; premiered January 1953); performance of the *San Quentin Workshop*, 1988, directed by Walter D. Asmus based on the direction of Samuel Beckett for "Beckett Directs Beckett" (1985).

Albert Camus: [Le Mythe de Sisyphe](#) (1942; PDF) / [The Myth of Sisyphus](#) (translated by Justin O'Brien, 1955).

The land of freedom may be far away. But if we want to reach it, we must first travel into our own selves.



**Ukraine/Estonia:**  
**A Journey to the Land of Freedom**  
***Svjata Vatra: Revolutsioon***

**Revolution**

Beyond the seven seas lives a man  
of whom I want to tell you a story.  
He wanted to cross three countries,  
beyond which, he hoped, would be the land of freedom.

When the time had come, he set off  
in the deep of night, his heart in the clouds,  
his feet on the ground. Promisingly  
the moon shone on the narrow path.



A revolution waits in every heart,  
let your heart speak!  
A revolution germinates in every soul,  
let your soul breathe!

The first land was completely covered  
by the weeds of his mirror images.  
Cursing, he got caught in faded pictures,  
in the ghostly procession of bygone days.

Steeplly, the trouble mountain pushed him off,  
the wind of doubt blew in his face,  
the burrs of misgivings clung to him –  
yet his eyes remained fixed on his destination.

A revolution waits in every heart ...

The second land was made of narrow borders,  
of fences and of name tags.  
All roads were short and straight,  
time was a ring around an empty center.

The straight lines bent his soul,  
his nameless heart got lost in the forest of names.  
So he strode straight through the land,  
his eyes fixed on his destination.

A revolution waits in every heart ...

In the third land, the dreams danced around him,  
he travelled right to the end of his longing.  
There the wind sang a song of distant worlds,  
of other lands yet unknown to his heart

Tired of dreaming, he woke up.  
He did not find the land beyond the lands,  
but travelling, he found himself,  
his eyes fixed on his destination.

A revolution waits in every heart ...

Svjata Vatra: Revolutsioon  
from the debut album [Svjata Vatra](#) (2006)  
full album available on Bandcamp

[Lyrics](#)

[Lyrics Video](#) with pictures of performances by Svjata Vatra  
[Estonian dance performance](#) to the song



## Inner and Outer Revolutions

"Revolution" – when an Estonian-Ukrainian band records a song with such a title, we immediately think of the Euromaidan, of political upheaval and social earthquakes.

However, the song by Svjata Vatra is less about external upheavals than about internal ones. These, in turn, can be the prerequisite for external changes. In other words, the external revolution is preceded by the internal revolution, one cannot be achieved without the other.

### **Why the Journey to Freedom First Leads Us to the Land of the Past**

In the song, this is expressed by the fact that the journey to the "land of freedom" first leads us into our own past. Only if we succeed in confronting our own roots and development will we be open to a future that does not take us back to the past unawares.

This applies to the inner, personal level as well as to the social level. On the former, possible childhood traumas and unreflected thought patterns must be overcome. On the latter, there must be a confrontation with undesirable developments, and anachronistic structures must be broken down.

However, such a journey through one's own past will hardly be undertaken by everyone at the same time, and it will not lead to a desire for radical change (*Revolutsioon!*) in everyone. The consequence is that the journey initially takes the wanderer back to the land of straight lines, closed circles, firmly established thought patterns and name tags (i.e. social roles) from which he had just

wanted to break out. And now, after the journey through the past, this country seems even more like a prison to him.

### A New Fundament for the Dream of Freedom

Thus the journey continues all the way to the land of utopia. There, the dream of absolute freedom can be realised – but it is and remains nothing but a dream.

What sounds like a failed escape from the existing social conditions turns out, on closer inspection, to be precisely the prerequisite for changing them. After all, the journey only seemingly ends back at its starting point. The self at the end of the journey is no longer the same as at the beginning. Rather, it is a self that – thanks to the awareness of its own past, its possibilities and limits – can dedicate itself much more consciously to the further development of its own person and of society.

### Estonian Sprechgesang

Musically, the song picks up the tradition of Estonian chanting. This may seem a bit monotonous at first. However, the trance-like singing reflects quite well the focus on the inner journey the song tells about.

In other songs, however, the band shows that they have a much larger musical repertoire, which varies depending on the song and the type of lyrics. Examples can be found on *Bandcamp*, where all Svjata Vatra's albums are freely available.

## About Svjata Vatra



Svjata Vatra (Ukrainian for "Holy Fire") is an Estonian-Ukrainian folk band that performs Estonian and Ukrainian folk songs in new arrangements, but also creates own folk songs. Since 2006, a total of seven albums have been released, all of

which are freely available on Bandcamp.

The band's frontman is Ruslan Trochynskyi (Trochinski, Estonian Trotšõnskõi), born in 1976 in Bilezke in the Donetsk district. He attended the music grammar school in Kiev and then studied at the local conservatory, the Tchaikovsky Academy of Music, where he also participated in the in-house symphony orchestra.

After graduating, Trochynskyi, whose main instrument is the trombone, first played with the folk-punk band *Haydamaky*. In 2005, he moved to Estonia and became the co-founder of the band *Svjata Vatra*, which he has led in changing line-ups ever since. The other band members are mostly from Estonia.

**Another Song by Svjata Vatra** in RB, *A Summer Full of Love*: [The Bad Wolf and the Horse Hungry for Freedom](#) (about the song *Hobusemäng* / The Horse Game)

The Bieszczady Mountains in south-eastern Poland are one of the last nature paradises in Europe. The song *Bieszczadzkie Anioły* (The Angels of the Bieszczady Mountains) is a poetic monument to it.

**Poland:**

**Poetic Declaration of Love to a Green Mountain Range**

***Adam Ziemanin / Stare Dobre Małżeństwo:***

***Bieszczadzkie Anioły***



### **The Angels of the Bieszczady Mountains**

All angels are silent. But particularly silent  
are the angels in the Bieszczady Mountains.  
If you meet one, he will seldom talk to you  
about his life in the Bieszczady Mountains.

Only a good-humoured angel might whisper  
a well-kept secret in your ear:  
that he always hides his wings in his backpack,  
even when the weather is fine.

All angels are green. But particularly green  
are the angels in the Bieszczady Mountains.  
If you meet one, you can hardly tell it apart  
from the spring leaves of the trees and the grass.

Green are their games, green are their cards,  
green are their words and ideas.  
And even the vodka they drink  
shimmers green in their glasses.

Bieszczady angels, Bieszczady angels,  
you bring happiness and sunshine!  
Bieszczady angels, Bieszczady angels,  
let me fly with you on your wings!

All angels are lonely. But particularly lonely  
are the angels in the Bieszczady Mountains.  
In winter they sleep in the chapels,  
even though they usually live in green clouds.

Sometimes the angels are so lonely  
that they even don't find their way home.  
Then, with their green laughter,  
the Bieszczady Mountains lead them home.

Bieszczady angels, Bieszczady angels ...

All angels are enticed by heaven. But particularly  
the sky above the Bieszczady Mountains entices them.  
Often we all daydream on their wings  
of a journey to another world.

With their angelic equanimity  
they take us up to their green skies,  
igniting deep within our souls  
the verdant glow of the Bieszczady Mountains.

Bieszczady angels, Bieszczady angels ...

Stare Dobre Małżeństwo: Bieszczadzkie Anioły  
from: *Bieszczadzkie Anioły* (2000)

[Lyrics](#) by Adam Ziemianin

[Live recording](#) with pictures of the Bieszczady Mountains





## **The Bieszczady Mountains – One of the Last Nature Paradises in Europe**

The Bieszczady Mountains are located in south-eastern Poland, with foothills in Ukraine and Slovakia. They are part of the eastern Beskids, which themselves belong to the Carpathians. The highest elevation is Mount Tarnica with 1346 meters.

A 29,000 hectare part of the Bieszczady Mountains has been a national park since 1992 as part of the Eastern Carpathians Biosphere Reserve. This has resulted in some rare plant and animal species surviving in the area. In addition to golden and lesser spotted eagle populations, there is also a population of about 50 brown bears here, as well as primeval beech forests.

Two things are decisive for the outer appearance of the Bieszczady Mountains. Firstly, there is frequent precipitation, which brings a lot of snow in winter and abundant rain in summer. In autumn, the humidity causes persistent fog. Secondly, the plateaus of the mountains are unwooded. This encourages long hikes, during which visitors can let their gaze wander over the lush green mountain world.

### **Dancing Mists and Mysterious Spirits**

Primeval forests have always been a starting point for legends and folk tales. In combination with the autumn fog, this creates an ideal breeding ground for ghost stories. Thus, one theory about the origin of the word "Bieszczady" traces it back to the word "Biesy" (demons).

However, at a time when untamed nature is no longer perceived as a threat in many places, but as a prerequisite for the unfolding of the self-healing powers of nature devastated by man, the magic of the Bieszczady Mountains appears in a completely different light. Where people once saw threatening spirits in the dancing mists, today the intact nature seems to them more like a world inhabited by celestial beings.

### Humorous Celebration of the Beauty of Nature

Adam Ziemianin's poem and the song by Stare Dobre Małżeństwo that arose from it are based on this very insight. In a playful way, the text combines the image of a nature paradise with the idea of "green" angels dwelling in it. The tongue-in-cheek description of the rather human characteristics of these angels, however, clearly shows: Not angels, but earthly beings enjoy the angelic silence and view here.

Thus, song and poem are not only an artistic monument to a unique mountain region, but also a poetic expression of the feeling of freedom it can convey to people. Precisely because this feeling of freedom is sung about without any pathos and instead with a good shot of humour and self-irony, its power to break down inner and outer boundaries can be empathised with.



## About the Band *Stare Dobre Małżeństwo* and Adam Ziemianin



In 1984, Krzysztof Myszkowski and Andrzej Sidorowicz took part in the Krakow Student Song Festival. Since the duo had been making music together since their school days, the presenter jokingly announced them as

“*Stare Dobre Małżeństwo*” (good old married couple).

The resulting band name (often abbreviated to "SDM") was retained even when Andrzej Sidorowicz turned his back on the project shortly afterwards. Since then, the core of the group has been Krzysztof Myszkowski, who leads the band with changing line-ups and also composes most of the songs.

Born in 1963, Myszkowski devoted himself entirely to music after completing his studies in pedagogics in 1987. Besides working with *Stare Dobre Małżeństwo*, he has also participated in other bands and released several solo albums. Furthermore, Myszkowski founded the *Bieszczadzkie Anioły Festival of Various Arts* in Cisna.

One focus of Myszkowski's projects is setting poetry to music. With SDM, for example, he has composed music to poems by Edward Stachura, Adam Ziemianin, Józef Baran, Bolesław Leśmian, Jan Rybowicz and Bogdan Loeb. The *Gruz Brothers Band*, co-founded by Myszkowski, is also mainly dedicated to setting poems to music – especially the works of Jan Rybowicz.

The song *Bieszczadzkie Anioły* is likewise a musical setting of a poem. It was written by **Adam Ziemianin**, born in 1948. He first published individual poems in journals before his first volume of poetry appeared in 1975. After abandoning his studies in pedagogy, he began to work as a journalist for Krakow newspapers. His poems have also been set to music by other artists.



Anyone who travels moves in an intermediate realm in which previous certainties begin to waver. This also applies to the midsummer nights.

**Finland:**  
**Magical Midsummer Nights**  
**Pariisin Kevät: Kesäyö**

**Summer Night**



Sitting in the twilight,  
I sank into a never ending moment  
The silence enveloped me  
like a living being  
and whispered:  
"Don't be afraid of the world ..."  
We sat together  
while the universe looked down on us.

And sparkling the summer night  
sprinkled my face with tears.

I wake up on a beach,  
the night is brighter than the day,  
the star ferries glide into the morning.  
Wrapped in a cloak of oblivion,  
I no longer know  
how I got here.

Only airships do I remember,  
floating towards the celestial coast.

And sparkling the summer night  
sprinkled my face with tears.

Sitting in the twilight,  
I'm still waiting for the moment  
that will never end,  
for the silence that will envelop me  
like a living being  
and whisper to me:  
"Nothing remains ... Everything disappears ..."  
Showers of light flash across the sky.  
Shivering, I feel them on my skin.

And sparkling the summer night  
sprinkled my face with tears.

Pariisin Kevät: Kesäyö  
from: *Kaikki on satua* (2012)

[Lyrics](#)

[Video clip](#)



## Of Everyday Paradises and the Venture of Travelling

Not everyone who sets off on a journey is looking for something completely different. The stress of modern working life, but also the quite normal burdens of everyday life, have the effect that after a certain time the need for relaxation simply prevails.

What is sought then is not an environment that creates confusion through its completely different structures, but the exact opposite: a well-structured environment in which all imponderables are excluded. An environment that corresponds to the structures of everyday life, but eliminates its dark sides. A kind of everyday paradise in which ice cream parlours, the pleasures of Sunday outings, games and fun are preserved, but the burdens and constraints of the usual everyday life are far away.

Many, however, generally fear the encounter with the completely different – with cultures that are based on totally different principles than the ones they are familiar with at home. For these people, a holiday does not consist in the opportunity of changing perspectives, in questioning what they are used to, but in comfortably forgetting all the questions and doubts that keep shaking the walls of everyday life like an autumn storm.

Others experience precisely the change of perspective that the immersion in a foreign culture can make possible as enriching. For them, bathing in the unknown world is as exciting as diving into the swimming pool of a holiday resort for beach tourists.



## The Intermediate Realm of Travelling

But is it even possible to immerse ourselves completely in a foreign culture? Won't it remain so alien to us – especially on a short holiday – that its different ways of thinking and feeling will elude our minds like water running off an oiled body?

And besides, is it really desirable for us to be entirely immersed in the foreign culture? Doesn't that mean that the foreign becomes the familiar – and then can no longer unfold the liberating power that we expect from it?

Ultimately, we are not looking for the completely different. What we hope to achieve by travelling to foreign worlds is rather the experience of an intermediate realm in which both the familiar and the unfamiliar truths lose their indisputable validity.

In such an intermediate realm, we briefly lose the solid ground under our feet that is otherwise provided by the seemingly unquestionable certainties of our everyday life. The result is a feeling of dizziness like that of a mild drug high. Not always pleasant, but still exhilarating in the positive sense of a euphoria that gives us momentum and strength to try out a new perspective on our lives.

## Becoming an Other for Ourselves

A journey does not completely transform our self. But it can help us to see ourselves differently. It can be like a mirror through which we can gain a different view of ourselves and our lives.

This distance from ourselves, the phenomenon of becoming an Other to ourselves, can be the result of a longer journey. But such an experience can also occur quite suddenly, in the middle of



everyday life, in those rare moments when for seconds the curtain of the familiar falls and we perceive things without the veil of the habitual patterns of interpretation.

This "kairos", in the sense a very special moment out of time, is in principle not bound to any particular preconditions. After all, it is precisely its characteristic that it occurs suddenly and unexpectedly.

However, there are certain constellations under which it is more likely that such an extra-temporal moment, in which we see our lives as if from outside, occurs. This certainly includes dusk and dawn, which, with their characteristic twilight, by their very nature belong to an intermediate realm that can be attributed neither to the day nor to the night.

### Dionysian Midsummer

The changing light conditions at dusk and dawn have inspired painters throughout the ages. And the spooky twilight is also a preferred ambience for ghost stories.

This experience is also crucial for the mystical magic of the midsummer nights. Here, twilight is not just a brief moment between day and night. Rather, it becomes a longer lasting state that shapes people's perception of the world over a longer period of time.



So the midsummer nights shake up far more than just the certainties of everyday life. In them, even what we perceive as the fundamental laws of life lose their absolute validity. Past and future flow into each other, death and life merge, dream and reality become blurred.

Midsummer nights are thus the Nordic version of the ancient Dionysia. Just as in these celebrations the usual life was ritually turned upside down, midsummer nights invite us to a Dionysian frenzy, through which the seemingly irrefutable logic of everyday life is confronted with the logic of the reversed.

### About Pariisin Kevät

The indie rock band *Pariisin Kevät* ("Springtime in Paris") started in 2007 as a solo project by Arto Tuunela, who had previously been active in the alternative rock band *Major Label*. It was only when the singer wanted to go on tour with his second album in 2010 that he formed a band, which has since recorded the albums with him.



*Pariisin Kevät* has released seven albums up to 2019. The band is very popular in Finland and their music projects have always charted high.

Born in 1979, Tuunela has also written and produced songs for others. In addition, he is active as a composer of film music.

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