

## Sound Expertise – Episode 11

TRANSCRIPT prepared by Andrew Dell'Antonio

### SPEAKERS

Will Robin, Siv B Lie

**Siv B Lie** 00:00

Full disclosure, I came into this project with a very, kind of, rosy idea of what music can do politically. And as I did my field work and then reflected on it for years, I came to realize that the political side of music making, even if it did appear, especially publicly, to be all about promoting a particular agenda that was, like, anti-racist, pro-Manouche, that not everyone actually subscribed to that, and that some people were actually .... really did not agree with the idea that music should be political.

00:34

[Music]

**Will Robin** 00:55

Welcome back to Sound Expertise for the final episode of our first season. I'm your host Will Robin. Looking back on the past nine weeks, it seems to me that two underlying themes have emerged from my interviews with music scholars. One is identity, how when we hear music, it articulates something powerful about who made it, whether that be an individual or a larger group, what motets say about religion in 17th century Prague, what reciting poems accompanied by music says about being a woman in 19th century America, what making experimental music says about the creolization of culture today. The second big theme has been how music is used, not music in its idealized form as some universal language or transcendent art, but how it functions in everyday life, from the vast and unpredictable array of influences of Richard Wagner's operas, to the acoustic signifiers of timbre in 80s pop, to the function of classical music in universities, to the anthropological theorizing of music as a commodity. In this final conversation of season one, these two threads are closely intertwined. I'll be talking to my colleague and friend Siv B. Lie, a fellow Assistant Professor at the University of Maryland School of Music. Her research as an ethnomusicologist focuses on the genre of jazz manouche in France. Jazz manouche is deeply valued in French culture as a tradition that has evolved from one of the country's artistic superstars, the guitarist Django Reinhardt, but it is also music created by a group of people. Romanies, who are deeply undervalued by the French state, which has a history of prejudicial policies towards ethnic and racial minorities. Siv's extensive field work with Romani musicians in Alsace provides rich insight into a musical genre that is rife with complications and contradictions around how it is used, and how it articulates identity. I think you'll learn a lot from this conversation. I know that I did.

02:59

[music]

**Will Robin** 03:11

So you've been researching for a while now. And you're writing a book about this genre called jazz manouche. What is jazz manouche?

**Siv B Lie** 03:18

So jazz manouche is a genre that is also known in English sometimes as gypsy jazz. And so it's a genre that is founded primarily on the work of a guitarist named Django Reinhardt, who was one of the most famous jazz guitarists of all time, and certainly one of Europe's if not Europe's most famous jazz musician. And so he made music primarily from the early 1930s until the early 1950s, when he died suddenly of a brain hemorrhage, which is part of his kind of ... his legacy, his early death. And so this genre is founded almost entirely on his recorded work. He was primarily a guitarist, did a lot of pioneering work for jazz guitar solo technique, and the setup that he had for many of these ensembles was somewhat unique in that it was comprised primarily of string instruments. So, the basis of jazz manouche as a genre is that it is a very string centric genre, usually has at least two guitars, sometimes three, four, or even more in certain circumstances. They can be acoustic or electric. But the traditional jazz manouche sound is acoustic, and it's a very particular model of guitar called the Selmer style guitar, based on a model that Django played and was a spokesperson for, and then, in terms of other instrumentation it often includes a violin, an upright bass and then sometimes instruments like accordion and clarinet...

04:54

[music - example of jazz manouche]

**Siv B Lie** 05:16

The repertoire is based primarily on the music that Django played, or would have been playing in the 1930s and 40s. So it's a combination of his own compositions and then usually American jazz standards. But there are also a number of newer compositions that have been incorporated into the genre as standard repertoire, some that draw on other jazz subgenres, some that also drawn some traditional Romani music as well. And it follows a fairly standard format of small group jazz improvisation. And the reason that it is called jazz manouche is because it is very closely associated with the Manouche subgroup of Romanies in France, who are also known, somewhat pejoratively, as gypsies. So there's a whole history, which is kind of what my book is all about, of the involvement of Manouche individuals and communities with this music.

**Will Robin** 06:11

Yeah, so let's talk a little bit about who are the Manouche. What does that term represent in terms of this community of Romanies in France?

**Siv B Lie** 06:19

So the Manouche people are a subgroup of Romanies, as I've said. So the Romani people, writ large, are a very broadly dispersed ethnracial group whose origins lie in northwest India. By most accounts, they migrated out -- the people whose ancestors, the ancestors of today's Romani people -- migrated out from Northwest India about 1000 years ago and spread throughout the Middle East and primarily the European continent, and since have also spread throughout the world, and they are a group that is the subject of a lot of stereotyping and scapegoating, especially in Europe, and especially in Central

and Eastern Europe, especially over the last century or so. And much more than that, of course. So, they have traditionally practiced a number of different trades, music being one of them, and have faced quite a bit of kind of two-sided stereotyping, historically. They are the objects of discrimination kind of across the board because they are stereotyped as being thieving, lazy criminals, up to no good, there is the ... the history of migration has lent itself to stereotype of nomadism. The idea that all Romanies are wanderers, which today is very much not the case, the vast, vast majority of Romanies are settled in one way or another. And the main reason that they migrate is for economic reasons, as is the case with most migrants throughout the world today. But on the other hand, another kind of set of stereotypes they are subject to have to do with the idea that they are inherently expressive and passionate, and artistic and musical and all of these things, which, by some accounts is seen as a good thing. That's something that Romanies can be valued for. But there is also the side of it that essentializes uses them and kind of treats them as as worthy in only these capacities. And of course, the idea ...it's of course not true, as it is not true about any population, that everyone is musically talented or everyone engages in it.

**Will Robin** 08:36

... or that musical activity is the result of some kind of innate characteristic rather than, like, labor and work, and practice and stuff.

**Siv B Lie** 08:44

Yeah, exactly. And they are... Romanies across the board are very, very much subject to that. So Manouche people in particular, they are... they've been in France for centuries, it's a little bit hard to delineate exactly when the Manouche "subgroup" started, because there is, you know, a lot of kind of a spotty historical record on who they are, and how today's Manouche might identify with people who would be identified as Manouche, you know, a century or two or three ago, but they've been living in France, since at least the 18th century, if not longer, are by and large French citizens. They are part of... they generally tend to be Roman Catholic, or there are also many who are evangelical Christian, but by and large, there's a lot of kind of religious identification that goes along with them. And many do speak the Manouche dialect of the Romani language, which is often considered to be a really defining feature of their identity, but not everyone does. So the whole idea of who gets to count as properly Manouche or not, is kind of ... it's a big question for Manouche people.

**Will Robin** 10:00

I mean, there's a particular kind of context in France that your work deals with, which is the fact that France does not legally recognize the existence of ethnic and racial categories. Can you talk a little bit about that? And how that creates this idea of like, no races, but still racism? or?

**Siv B Lie** 10:21

Yeah, on the surface. It's a very kind of contradictory thing. How can there be racism if race is not acknowledged? But I mean, it's a very contentious debate that has unfolded in France for quite a long time. So basically, France prides itself generally on being a republican nation, meaning that all French citizens are supposed to be considered French, regardless of whatever cultural background they come from. So if you are French, and if you're going to call yourself properly French, that means that your ethnoracial roots, your religion, none of that should matter, you should ... your primary mode of

identification should be with the French nation. And part of that, officially, has been that, since around 1870, the French government has not actually collected any statistics on its ethnic, racial, or religious groups within the country, because that's considered legally to be a form of discrimination, that would subvert this idea of a French nation. That said, this idea of what constitutes a true French identity is basically grounded in whiteness, it normalizes whiteness, it's the assumption that if you are French, is that you're going to be Christian, ideally Catholic, and that you're going to be white as well. So what this does is, it means there's very little room for any kind of ethnoracial, or, for that matter, religious minority in France to actually consider their own cultural backgrounds as being part of the French nation. And that is also ... over time has become fodder for nationalists, and especially extreme right-wing nationalists to proclaim -- France for the French -- as they often call it, at the exclusion of various minorities that are necessarily excluded from a sense of what I'm calling in the book, cultural citizenship, the idea ... or the state of feeling like you belong, or belonging substantially to the nation beyond just being a legal citizen, but actually feeling like you are part of the nation.

**Will Robin** 12:39

You've been using this term... I want to come back to this idea of citizenship because it's the way that Jazz Manouche kind of acts as a vehicle for citizenship in some capacity. But, um, you've been using the term ethnorace, which is a term that I wasn't familiar with until I read your work. Can you explain what you mean by that? And why it's kind of a helpful phrase for what ... the kind of work that you're doing?

**Siv B Lie** 12:58

Yeah, absolutely. So. So ethnorace is a term that I've actually borrowed from a scholar named David Goldberg. And to my surprise, it actually hasn't been taken up quite that much in a lot of humanities and social science scholarship. So I'm really trying to make a case for it. But the term ethnorace for me reflects the fact that race... that the boundaries between what we call race and ethnicity, are actually quite blurry. And so there are many situations, not just in France, but elsewhere, where race and ethnicity can sometimes be used interchangeably, depending on what someone wants to say about a particular category of people.

**Will Robin** 13:38

I mean in the US, I don't even think people really understand the difference besides what they... it looks like on the census. And... yeah.

**Siv B Lie** 13:44

Right. And even on the census, I mean, the census itself is incredibly confusing. And not at all an accurate reflection of how people self-identify in the US, all told. But, so it's ... I find this term to be especially helpful in the French context, because race or ethnicity, rather, has become a kind of euphemism for race over time. Because race in France technically is supposed to not exist, because it is long been debunked that there is any kind of biological basis for race. This is something that is, you know, widely accepted in the social sciences and especially in you know, many societies including French society, this idea that race is an invention, what some call a social construction. In France, if you say anything that recognizes race as existing as a reality in the world, even a social reality, you risk becoming labeled a racist. So in other words, if you acknowledge that race exists, that makes you a

bad racist, so... that doesn't mean that racism does not exist in France at all. And it doesn't mean that people don't recognize race under other guises. So ethnicity becomes the kind of, you know, the better term for what people mean when they're really talking about race. So when I use ethnorace, I'm really just trying to draw attention to the fact that ethnicity as something that's seen as a good thing, and race that is seen as something kind of negative or sinister, or something like that -- those are also in themselves strategic ... what some linguistic anthropologists call strategically deployable shifters, that basically are used one way or another, depending on what you want to say. Right. So like, in practice, it's more useful because it describes basically how people are actually using these kind of constructs in some sense. Yeah.

**Will Robin** 15:49

I want to talk about the kind of relationship between ethnoracial identity and jazz manouche. But it would be helpful I think, first to ... can you give a little bit of a sense of how you got into this project to begin with, and what the scope of your fieldwork has been over many years to kind of become interested in this music and then develop relationships with your interlocutors?

**Siv B Lie** 16:08

Absolutely. So, I'm trained, actually, primarily classically as a violist and violinist. And when I was a teenager, I got interested in jazz. And if you are a violinist, or violist, and you get interested in jazz, oftentimes, the first jazz music that you get kind of directed towards is the music of Stephane Grappelli, the violinist who collaborated with Django Reinhardt extensively. And so that's how I kind of got into the music itself. And then later in college, I got more interested in the kind of broader side of Romani music and Romani politics. So much so that I ended up going to graduate school in order to study jazz manouche as a kind of a way to connect what the kind of music that I was interested in with this broader scene of Romani politics, especially Romani cultural politics, and ethnoracial politics. So I went to NYU for my PhD in ethnomusicology from 2010 to 2017, which meant that I did field work in limited capacity in France, the first like two or three years that I was in graduate school, and then went to do the kind of standard year long trip to my field site, between 2013 and 2014, with a number of follow up trips after that, that are kind of ongoing. So I lived, both in Paris and Strasbourg, Strasbourg being the capital of Alsace, which is the region of France, of Eastern France, that borders Germany and has a history of being kind of ... of flip flopping between German and French territory. And I yeah, so most of my fieldwork involves a combination of the standard ethnographic methodologies of participant observation, interviewing, documentation. And in my case, I also was performing as a violinist and a vocalist. In a limited capacity, I was doing more of the other methods than anything else. So I hung out a lot with -- in anthropology the term that gets used often is deep hanging out -- with a very wide array of people, primarily musicians, but also musicians' families, their friends, others who are involved in some way in the jazz manouche scene -- managers, producers, festival organizers, social workers, audience members, all kinds of different people. And so I was, you know, taking field notes, recording interviews with somewhere around 60 something people. And I wrote my dissertation based on all of that work, in addition to a lot of archival work, that has really formed the basis of all of this. So I like to say that my work is kind of a really thorough combination of historical work along with contemporary work. And that that is actually really the crux of my methodology is bringing the past into the present.

**Will Robin** 19:18

So let's talk a little bit about how kind of ethnoracial identity works in the music that you've been looking at. So, I mean, one of the questions that you're interested in is how practitioners of this music refer to performances or styles as like distinctively "manouche" -- like "this is manouche." Can you talk a little bit about what that means for jazz manouche performers that music does or doesn't sound manouche? What it means to kind of take on that signifier?

**Siv B Lie** 19:45

Sure. So this is... this question. It's a big kind of multifaceted question that I tackle primarily in chapters two and three of my book. So in chapter two, I address the question: What is jazz manouche. And this is a question that I asked of interlocutors constantly. Not because I didn't actually know what it was, I had a really good idea of what the genre was. But I did it more to elicit their own responses to what do they say, when someone asks them that? And it was also kind of a leading question because one of the kind of big pet peeves of a lot of jazz manouche musicians, especially Manouche-identifying jazz manouche musicians in France, is that they hate the term, they think it is entirely inappropriate for what the music is and what they want the music to be. So this idea that jazz manouche ... that there is something inherently Manouche or even more broadly Romani about it, to a lot of these musicians runs counter to their desires to be considered serious jazz musicians. And so they feel, they feel that adding this kind of ethnoracial marker to it somehow tethers them to some kind of imagined tradition, that they don't necessarily feel that they are fully a part of. They may have grown up in this tradition. And I should say that, within many Manouche communities, jazz manouche, is, has been for several decades, a real familial tradition that gets passed down from generation to generation. And it's something that these communities identify strongly with. And so for some musicians that... calling it jazz manouche is, to them a perfect reflection of the fact that they belong to this tradition. But most jazz manouche musicians I've talked to really do want to be seen as independent, creative, visionary artists. So sometimes they may call themselves jazz manouche musicians, because they know that that is an identifiable genre label. And that that will attract a certain kind of audience that they're looking for. Others might avoid the label as much as they can, because they, as I said, don't really want to be so strongly associated with that. They might also not even publicly identify themselves as Manouche because they know that the public will automatically assume that if, if there is a Manouche musician, that they will be performing jazz manouche necessarily. So there's all these kinds of debates that crop up. And it's a constant source of debate, I didn't even need to, you know, ask too much for people to just start, you know, talking about it and, and really trying to kind of suss it out. A number, I would say, not a majority, but definitely a fair number of musicians who would be considered to be performers in the jazz manouche genre, or who label themselves as such as well, also very deliberately tried to branch out and include influences from other genres in their music as well. And so that is a more performative way of demonstrating that they don't fit into this very clearly defined jazz manouche box. So there's that part of the of the, you know, what is Manouche about this music question. Another part, which is what I get into in chapter three, is -- beyond the genre itself, there is an idea that circulates, that there is something specifically Manouche about the very sound of this music. And in particular, the guitar sounds, the way that someone literally strokes the guitar. And so, what I tried to explore in that chapter is how it is that ethnoracial identity can be distilled into the sound of an instrument, a lot of work on race and sound, as of late, has focused a lot on the voice. And the idea that someone's -- the sound of someone's voice can be a kind of window into their racial identity, but can also be a way to kind of play with or challenge

assumptions about what someone of a particular racial background should sound like. What I'm looking at in this chapter is a little bit removed from that, because it's not the body that's making the sound itself, it's the instrument as played by the body. And the way that people talk about it is they don't necessarily always identify that it is a Manouche body that is producing that sound, but that the sound itself has something Manouche about it. And so that's -- identifying that and that chapter allows me to talk a bit about how certain assumptions are made about ... first of all, like, what is Manouche identity in and of itself. But then where does this Manouche identity come from? Is it a nature or nurture kind of thing? And so through talk about what is supposed to sound Manouche, people do end up kind of revealing what ... where they think Manouche identity comes from and what its parameters are, whether it's something inherited, or whether it's something enculturated or somewhere in between.

**Will Robin** 24:52

And you also kind of talked about the way in which they kind of it essentialize themselves by using ... invoking this term Manouche to say -- This performance is distinctively Manouche. And part of that is obviously seemingly, you know, feelings about what makes a performance good. And I guess in the tradition of Django in some way, but I guess it's also right this, like, the demand for Manouche musical labor in the marketplace means that defining yourself as Manouche also allows you to participate in one of the only things that's kind of valued about Romani culture in France. Is that kind of true as well?

**Siv B Lie** 25:28

Yeah, exactly. So a really big part of the book that I should be sure not to overlook as we're talking is the fact that Manouche identity is something that has been commodified and marketed and is something very appealing to a broad public. And Manouche people are quite aware of this, and so often use the fact that Manouche identity sells to their advantage. A number of non-Manouche people do this as well in kind of ways that are ethically quite questionable. But for Manouche people themselves, being able to lay claim to a distinctively Manouche sound that can only come from a Manouche person, that is a huge asset in the music market. So regardless of whether one truly believes that there is something inalienably Manouche about a sound, or that you need to be raised in a Manouche family in order to produce the sound, it is still something that gets used. And that is, in some ways kind of crucial to sustaining a music economy within Manouche communities. So there's a lot of kind of cynical stuff I could say about that. But, but overall, it's ... jazz manouche itself gets instrumentalized -- forgive the pun -- in a number of ways, both to create profits, but also as a tool of what I call cultural activism. And that it is also used as a way to raise awareness about Manouche communities. Basically, for better or for worse. It does involve a high degree of essentialization, which I can kind of work to the advantage of Manouche people in really powerful ways but can also sometimes backfire. So anyway, that's kind of a... [unintelligible]

**Will Robin** 27:16

Yeah - I mean, you point out, too, that, like, outsiders will celebrate Manouche music as this kind of form of cultural activism. And maybe some of that leaked into how you first approached this project. But you also came to realize that the Manouche musicians themselves saw these performances, not as some kind of form of political activism, but as gigs to get paid and kind of have a normal musical career, right?

**Siv B Lie 27:42**

Yeah, exactly. Like I actually I, you know, full disclosure, I came into this project, with a very kind of rosy idea of what music can do politically. And I was very convinced, based on what I knew already about jazz manouche and about Romanies in Europe, and France, in particular, that music would be a kind of a ... almost unequivocal force for good, in that if it could raise awareness about a group, despite all the stereotypes about Romanies, being, you know, inherently talented performers, that it was like ultimately a good thing if that's what it could do. And as I did my field work, and then reflected on it for years, I came to realize that the political side of music making, even if it did appear, especially publicly, to be all about promoting a particular agenda that was like anti-racist, pro-Manouche, that not everyone actually subscribed to that and that some people were actually... really did not agree with the idea that music should be political, especially when it is associated with an ethnoracial minority. So a number of musicians that I worked with, were actually quite skeptical, if not averse, to having their music be politicized. In the introduction to my book, I talk about one situation in which ... I had been doing research for a while, and he knew that I had a kind of political agenda with it as well, that I wanted to portray it in a certain way. And then he kind of corrected me and said, "You know, this is not how I see my music, I hope you understand." And other musicians did this as well. But there's a particular way in which he kind of did it. But then, when, after that, around that time, I also observed that he was taking gigs and basically promoting himself in a way that made it seem as though he thought his music was political. But really, it was, you know, he's a working musician, and he needed gigs. And if these gigs say like, Alright, you got to be pro-Romanies like, Alright, I'll put on the Romani flag, I'll do whatever you want me to. Just you know, this is how I make my living as a musician. So, this kind of, you know, the the contradiction between what one says one stands for and what one actually has to do in order to get by, is a very common phenomenon, I think.

**Will Robin 30:07**

Yeah, I mean, it's striking that if we saw that phenomenon play out with, I don't know, like a white classical musician in the United States, we might call them out on it. But in this ... in these cases, it's also we have to kind of account for the fact that these are members of a marginalized community who are ... this is their ticket to have ... being able to be a professional musician, in a way; with the like, they don't have a choice about whether they get to be Manouche or not, in that sense,

**Siv B Lie 30:33**

Yeah, and I talk about this in a way that ... I want to make it super clear, I'm not judging anyone for doing this, I think this is just a fact of being a musician who has, like you said, has no choice but to be Manouche. And if you are finding yourself in situations where like, you know, you might not be able to get jobs, because people make assumptions about your ethnoracial background, you got to do what you got to do to make sure that you can get jobs. And even then, I should also emphasize, the line that some musicians draw between being political or non-political is also a very blurry one. It's not that, you know, these musicians who say they don't want the music to be political are truly 100% apolitical, because if you're claiming that your music is not political, in and of itself it's a kind of political stance. So all of these stances are also quite malleable. And, you know, I really do try to account for the fact that people are multifaceted and what they say one day may not reflect what they actually do. But that's not necessarily a problem, because we're all human. So. So there's a lot of kind of seeming contradictions

that arise when people talk about what jazz manouche means to them, and should mean, but really, it's just part of the messiness of how we ... how everyone self-identifies.

**Will Robin** 31:50

Yeah, and, I mean, you're ultimately ... you talk about being interested in the way that music is used, right? So it's like, again, you're not interested in defining jazz manouche, but you're interested in seeing how the practitioners define it. You're not interested in describing the genre as political or apolitical but seeing how those kind of cultural negotiations are being made?

**Siv B Lie** 32:08

Yeah. Yeah, that's basically it. I'm much more interested in how and the why than the what of jazz manouche, which a lot of ... there are some people who are very devoted to the genre and just want to know more about it. But I'm trying to, especially as I kind of look towards an audience of jazz manouche devotees, and really trying to give a little bit more of the motivations and the backstory for why this even exists and is so popular in the first place.

**Will Robin** 32:34

Right? Yeah. What were the challenges of your fieldwork as an outsider to this community? How did you kind of get to know your interlocutors? How did you become accepted enough so that you could have hopefully honest conversations with them about this?

**Siv B Lie** 32:52

Yes, that's a great question.

**Will Robin** 32:53

Especially obviously, because this is a community that has rightfully mistrusted outsiders for a long time.

**Siv B Lie** 32:59

Yeah, yeah, I talk a bunch about that in the book and some other writing I've done, where -- and to speak quite generally -- Manouche populations in general tend to have something of a distrust for, not all non-Manouche people by any means, but especially white French people, and other white Europeans, in large part because of this whole history of persecution and discrimination. And there is a whole history also of Nazi persecution in which, for example, Eva Justin, who was an anthropology doctoral student working under the Nazi regime, befriended some Romani populations in Germany, primarily learned their language, earned their trust, and then sent them off to be exterminated. Yeah, so it's ... and there are a lot of different stories that are similar to that, of Romani people being researched by outsiders, and then kind of screwed over. Obviously, not always quite so drastic as that, but still, the cultural memory of this is still very strong. So there is oftentimes a resistance to people coming in and doing research, especially scholarly research. There is a certain openness to social workers, because they know that they will actually benefit from that outsider's presence, but for a researcher, it's kind of like, why should I care. And you can say that about a number of other communities as well. But so that, I knew from the start, was going to pose a sort of a roadblock to my research. So I approached it very delicately. And it took a lot of time to get into to the field to develop trust, and to really get people talking

to me in a way that I could also make it clear was not going to be exploitative, and that it would also be reciprocal in some ways. So I would say part of my approach was doing that kind of, like, slow and easy thing. But it also helped that I happened to meet a few key people early on who, you know, it had a kind of a, like a snowball effect of, you know, earning one person's trust, who then was able to put me in touch with another person, etc, etc. And the fact also a) that I am American was actually a real bonus...

**Will Robin** 35:23

... and not French.

**Siv B Lie** 35:24

And not French, yeah, because there is a certain kind of romanticization of the United States and especially New York. And I was considered since I came from NYU, I was considered to be like a New Yorker and...

**Will Robin** 35:34

Related to jazz, in that sense?

**Siv B Lie** 35:36

Yeah, a lot of that came from jazz musicians. But just in general, I found there was kind of this romanticization of New York. And the fact that I was not European meant that like, I did not have that same baggage as other European researchers did. So that helps. The fact that I am a musician also helps because it helps to demonstrate that I, like, had a real personal interest in getting to know musicians and learning more about the music itself. The fact that I am a woman was both a... it helped and hindered some of my research as well. It helped in that I was, in some ways seen as like, basically more welcome, especially among the ... and I should mention highly predominantly male community of jazz manouche musicians. Having a female presence around was sometimes you know, considered to be like a welcome thing and a relatively non-threatening thing, I guess. But it also meant that I didn't really always have access in ways that I wanted to, especially because within Manouche communities, its gender roles are very kind of strictly defined. And so -- and that's also another generalization, there's always exceptions to that. But so there were certain contexts that I like couldn't necessarily get into. And then as virtually all female-identifying ethnographers can attest to, and others as well, there is... there was also the kind of constant potential for sexual harassment, and all of that, and that definitely came up. So that was kind of a hindrance to my research. But overall, I had enough going for me both in terms of how people identified me and saw me, and then... and also how I deliberately approached building trusting relationships, and really taking my time to do that, that allowed me like a fairly good amount of access, I think.

**Will Robin** 37:30

Knowing the history of ... this kind of horrible history of the way that this community has been represented by outsiders, what are the kind of ethical issues that you're considering when you're doing this work, and that, especially now that you're finishing your book, that you're weighing as you publish on this community for an academic audience?

**Siv B Lie** 37:52

Yeah, it's a really good question. It's a very tough question. Because I struggle very frequently, I would say, with, with the ethics of representing a community that, you know, many members of whom don't want to be, you know, publicized or represented in the ways that I, you know, might hope. So it has been a really long process for me of negotiating with myself, like, what do I think, you know, I have the right to talk about and what don't I, and then also talking to other people, and making sure they're okay with me saying the things that I'm saying. So I basically, with all of my writing, I put myself in the shoes of the person I'm talking about, or the group I'm talking about, and just really try to make sure that it is something that they would be okay with. And then of course, I also ask the people, especially those whom I'm quoting directly, you know, for feedback, and really, yeah, just do my best to be as fair as possible in these representations. There are a few key interlocutors that I've had very kind of close exchanges with about what I'm writing. It's been a little bit difficult to do some of these exchanges because of the language barrier. I am conversationally fluent in French, but there's a certain register of French academic writing that it's very difficult to translate what I am saying in an English, you know, scholarly register to that French scholarly register, and then translate it also into more like layman's French. So I've been working over the years to really try to like, summarize what I'm writing to non-English speaking interlocutors, and I think so far it's been as successful as it's going to be. But I am also working to translate parts of the book so that others can read them and continue to offer feedback. The whole COVID situation has made this pretty difficult because I was actually supposed to be in France right now sharing a lot of this work in person with people. So now I'm just trying to get as much of that done remotely.

**Will Robin** 40:00

What do you ultimately kind of hope that this work... I don't know, is it \*does\* for the Manouche, or is it... I mean, is it serving them? Like how do you kind of approach that question of just like, what the value of ... is it of, it is for that community as well as for the academic community?

**Siv B Lie** 40:23

That's also a really good question. I think my stance on this has changed over time, I went into this thinking that I could be a real asset to Manouche people, and that that would you know, that I would hopefully be able to publish work in English and French that would, you know, help promote issues that are really important to Manouche people, and that I can have the kind of activist role in that sense. What I've found, both in practice, but also in, you know, my more kind of theoretical approach to what's actually going on, is that writing about and performing music does not necessarily have the kinds of concrete political effects that one might hope it would, at least, but especially in this context, I would say, and I have a number of parts of the book that explores that; how, you know, people's hopes for what music can do for them actually end up kind of leaving them a bit let down. And so that said, with the book itself, I am not expecting it to have any like real, tangible, direct impact on Manouche communities, except for the fact that I am intending to donate whatever proceeds I get from the book, which I know are ... the way academic publishing works, it's not exactly going to be lucrative, but I am going to donate them to a Manouche nonprofit, and do my best to... I think that the most important part will be translating parts of it into French so that the French public can read it. For you know, as a scholarly book, written in English, its audience in the US, or in the Anglophone world is primarily going to be other scholars and students. So you know, my hope is that it at least raises awareness about Romani issues in that respect, because the kinds of blatant horrifying discrimination that Romanies

face, especially in Europe is virtually unknown in the US. There's still a lot of stereotypes in the US about Romani people. So if it helps that, and if it helps also Romani populations in the US become a little bit better understood, even though they are different contexts -- there's a very large Romani population in the US -- then, you know, I will consider that a success in that respect. But I'm still figuring out what exactly I want this work to do, concretely. So that's kind of where I'm at.

**Will Robin** 42:48

Yeah. Well, great. Thank you so much. This was a really fascinating conversation.

**Siv B Lie** 42:52

Thank you. Well, I really appreciate you having me on.

42:53

[Music]

**Will Robin** 43:00

Many thanks to my colleague Siv B Lie for that rich and insightful conversation. You can visit our website [soundexpertise.org](http://soundexpertise.org) for links to her fascinating work. Wow, we did it. That's a wrap on Season One of Sound Expertise. I really hope you enjoyed listening to my interviews with fellow music scholars. And if you did, it's because a number of generous people helped make them possible. First up is my amazing producer D Edward Davis. Eddie and I have been friends for years and despite having never worked on a podcast before, he immediately jumped on the idea of serving as editor, producer and composer of our awesome theme music. You should definitely check out his other incredible music over at [warmsilence](https://www.warmsilence.com) on SoundCloud, as soon as you get a chance. I want to give a big shout out to my friend Julia Hurst for designing our awesome logo and to musicologist Andrew Dell'Antonio for generously volunteering to create transcriptions of our episodes to make them more accessible. I'm grateful to my colleagues at the University of Maryland for organizing our colloquium series, which helped bring a couple scholars to town that I interviewed for the show, and I'm super thankful to all 11 of our guests this season for generously giving their time and sharing their expertise. Thanks to Charlie Harding of Switched on Pop for providing me with some very helpful podcasting wisdom. And many, many, many thanks to all of you who listened to the podcast and shared it with others, and an extra special shout out to our supportive listener base over on musicology twitter. Speaking of musicology, if you're looking for another podcast that interviews music scholars about their work to tide you over until next season of Sound Expertise. I highly recommend New Books in Music, part of the New Books network hosted by my friend Kristin Turner. So my work for now is over, but yours is not. If you're new to the podcast, please check out our back catalogue of 11 episodes, write us a review on your platform of choice, and tell your friends to tune in. If you're a longtime listener, share what you enjoyed about the podcast on social media, or tweet at me [@seatedovation](https://twitter.com/seatedovation), for suggestions for topics or guests to cover in season two. Speaking of season two, I've already got a long list of potential guests and will start reaching out to them in the coming weeks. My hope is that our next season is bigger, tries out some new formats, definitely covers a lot of new topics. And hopefully, hopefully, we'll see launches in spring 2021. Speaking of 2021, a quick plug for myself, in February, my first book, *Industry: Bang on a Can and New Music in the Marketplace*, is coming out with Oxford University Press. You can visit my website, [williamrobin.com](http://williamrobin.com), for more information about that. And a final thanks to the two most important

people in my life, my wife, Emily and my son Ira. I'll tell you a little secret now about Season One of Sound Expertise. With the exception of one episode pretty much everything -- interviews, intros and outros was all recorded prior to the summer, as that's when Ira was due to be born, and I wasn't sure how easy it was going to be to record with a newborn in the house. Well, Ira's 10 weeks old now. He's the cutest baby in the world. And perhaps most importantly, he's a pretty good sleeper, which means that I actually can record interviews in my basement. So season two is a go-ahead. Anyway, thank you all so much for listening, and see you next year for Sound Expertise Season Two.

47:10

[music]