



Introduction & Welcome

The 8th of April marks International Roma Day, a day for celebrating and promoting Roma culture, history, language and the contribution of Roma to societies across the world. It is also a day to raise awareness of discrimination and marginalisation faced by Roma communities and to promote inclusion. The date commemorates the first World Romani World Congress, that was held 1971 in London and brought together Roma activists from many different countries. The congress chose a Roma flag and an anthem (Djelem Djelem) as symbols of the Roma nation, and the 8th of April as Roma Nation Day, now known as International Roma Day.

This special edition of the Roma Support Group newsletter brings together a wide range of resources to help you celebrate International Roma Day. Below, you will find information on Roma history and culture, alongside recommendations for different ways of engaging with Roma culture, for example through food or documentaries. We highlight the powerful influence of Roma music, from traditional sounds to contemporary artists, and celebrate iconic Roma cultural figures whose legacies continue to inspire. We also share important news stories impacting Roma communities today, from improving access to higher education in the UK to ongoing challenges faced by Roma families in Ukraine, and provide updates on Roma Support Group's work, including new community projects, research initiatives, and opportunities to get involved, such as our upcoming Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month Art Competition.

Happy International Roma Day and Opre Roma!

Resources on Roma Culture & History:

Roma history and culture is extremely rich and diverse and cannot be contained within a single narrative, or explained in a single newsletter. Since the first westward movement of Roma from Northern India multiple histories and cultural traditions have developed through interaction with other cultures and people. One common feature,

however, has been the discrimination and persecution of Roma communities. This has included centuries of slavery in Romania, forced settlement programmes, and the Roma Holocaust, in which up to 1.5 million Roma were murdered by the Nazis and their allies. In spite of the best efforts of a thousand years of injustice and cruelty, Roma communities have survived and their many distinct traditions in art, singing, dancing, and much more, continue to have significant impacts on modern European societies.

Take a moment to read through a more comprehensive overview of Roma history [here](#) at the Rroma website. A deeper look into Roma persecution can be found [here](#), and an in depth look at Roma history in the UK can be found in [this article](#) by The Traveller Movement.

Roma music:

If music were a river, that of the musical traditions of Roma would be heaving and breaking into a thousand streams into a thousand lakes and seas so we cannot seek to describe even a sliver of its entirety. Instead, we can recommend some historical and contemporary highlights.

To celebrate International Roma Day, take a moment to enjoy some music from [Ando Glaso](#), a Glasgow-based collective of Roma musicians and creatives that brings together Roma talents from Romanian, Polish, Slovak, Czech, and Hungarian backgrounds.

If you're looking for soulful melodies of the everyday life, longings, and sufferings of everyday Romani life, look no further than [Romica Puceanu](#), a Romani lăutari singer born in 1926 in Romania. Listening to Romica's songs provides a perfect insight into the distinct Romanian Roma 'taraf', a group of musicians comprising violin, double bass, tambal, cobza, accordion, and vocals.

If traditional Roma music scratches an uncontrollable itch, then Hungarian csárda music is the way to go. Although the Hungarian nationalists would want you to think otherwise, this traditional Hungarian folk music has deep roots in Hungarian Roma culture. [Parno Graszt](#), one of the all-time greatest Hungarian Roma ensembles, will blow the mind of anyone who listens to them.

For those searching for more contemporary sounds, a relative of Romica Puceanu, [Printesa de Aur](#), releases modern Romanian pop music on YouTube, Spotify, and Apple Music. Her work offers an ideal platform for diving into the lively and energetic world of Balkans pop. Florin Salam, also produces hugely successful Romanian language Manele pop music. His song, '[Saint Tropez](#)', has almost 170 million views on YouTube alone. These two artists are amongst many Roma singers contributing to the thriving pop music scene in Romania and the Balkans.

Roma musical heroes:

In honour of International Roma Day, we're highlighting three inspirational Roma

musical heroes.

Papusza - Bronisław Wajs

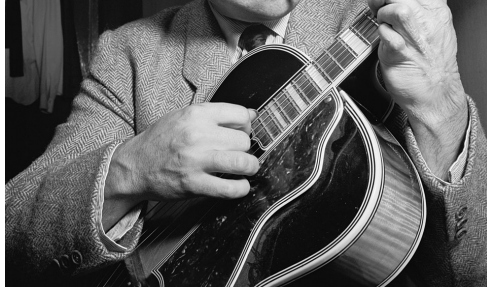


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Bronisław Wajs, better known by her Roma name, Papusza, was a highly celebrated Roma singer and poet whose work captured the struggles and beauty of Roma life in the 20th century. Born in 1908 in Poland, Papusza learned to read and write despite having no formal education, eventually turning to songwriting and poetry as an outlet of her frustrations towards poverty and an unhappy marriage. Her poetry gained wider recognition in 1951 after being published by Polish writer Jerzy Ficowski, earning attention for her long ballads lamenting poverty, lost love, and yearning for lost freedom. Papusza's work came at a critical juncture of Polish Roma history as government-imposed settlement policies led to a decline in traditional Roma crafts and nomadic lifestyle, with Papusza's poetry symbolising the resilience of Roma cultural identity against assimilation. 'Bury Me Standing', Isabel Fonseca's highly-praised book on Eastern European Roma, focuses on Papusza's life and poetry within its first chapter, and a summary of her life and poetry can be found [here](#). 'Tears of Blood', a poetic testimony of the Roma Holocaust by Papusza, can be found [here](#).

Django Reinhardt





From [William P. Gottlieb](#) / Adam Cuerden

Django Reinhardt, born in 1910 to a Manouche Romani family in Belgium, became one of the most celebrated Roma musicians and jazz musicians in history through his blending of Romani musical traditions with American swing. Reinhardt gained incredible musical talent from a young age playing multiple instruments with his family, eventually turning towards American jazz music during his rehabilitation from a fire in 1928 that left his left hand partially paralysed. Overcoming his injury, Reinhardt cofounded the all strings jazz band Quintette de Hot Club de France in 1934 with Stéphane Grapelli. The group became hugely popular across Europe and the USA, with Reinhardt's prowess as a jazz guitarist even offering him protection as he lived in Nazi-occupied Paris during WWII, with a jazz-loving German officer releasing Reinhardt after his capture during an attempted escape from occupied France. Reinhardt and his band pioneered the style of 'Gypsy jazz', combining Romani musical styles with the jazz of the day, standing to the creativity and global impact of Roma culture. An in depth look at Reinhardt's legacy on jazz and some examples of 'Gypsy jazz' can be found [here](#).

Carmen Amaya



From [Rictus](#)

One of the greatest Flamenco dancers that has ever been, Carmen Amaya was born to a Romani family in Barcelona in 1918. Her father, a guitarist, performed in bars to provide income for his family, with Carmen accompanying him to sing and dance to the sound of her father's guitar. Noticing Carmen's immense talent, gained from her early introduction to flamenco, promoters and flamenco ensembles quickly began to hire her and her family for performances. Earning the stage name, 'La Capitana', meaning 'The Captain', Carmen became famous across Spain, moving from performances in small clubs in her native Barcelona to dancing for theatres in Madrid and being cast in numerous films. After escaping the Spanish Civil War in 1936, Carmen gained international success in both Latin America and the United States, filming several Hollywood movies and dancing for Franklin Roosevelt at the White House. Carmen achieved a level of fame that no other flamenco artist has ever reached, bringing immense cultural legacy to Roma dancing traditions. Her unique style of dancing can easily be seen in this [YouTube video](#) and a longer profile of her can be found at [Romarchive](#).

Documentaries:

Don't know what to watch as you eat your Weetabix in the morning? RSG recommends '[Cobra Gypsies](#)' and '[Transylvania's Gábor - between tradition and modernity](#)'. The first follows life amongst the Kalbelia, a nomadic community in Northern India known as snake charmers. Whilst the Kalbelia and Roma are not the same group today, some believe that Roma originated from nomadic tribes, like the Kalbelia, in India. The latter documentary provides an intimate look inside the values and rituals of the Gábor Roma in Romania, sharing an insight into a traditional community.

Food:

If you'd like to celebrate International Roma Day through food, then have a go at cooking some Roma recipes as seen on "The Gypsy Kitchen" Youtube Channel, which can be viewed [here](#).

RSG News

Briefing paper on Ethnicity Harmonised Standard:

RSG, in collaboration with Advice Now, Dan Allen (Liverpool Hope University) and Dr Joanna Kostka (Lancaster University) has published [The Ethnicity Harmonised Standard: Why do we need Gypsy, Roma and Traveller data disaggregation in the UK?](#) The paper presents arguments to support the introduction of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller data disaggregation (separating Gypsies, Roma and Travellers as different categories in data) and its impact on policy development, service delivery, equalities monitoring and beyond.

The issue is summarised in a blog post that can be read [here](#).

Roma Engagement Project in Slough:

We are excited to announce that RSG has begun work on a three year project working with Slough council to improve engagement with Roma residents and strengthen community cohesion. The first year of the project involves undertaking a community needs assessment which will inform a report with recommendations, and will shape the second and third year of the project.





GRTHM Art Competition Launched:

We are thrilled to announce the Roma Support Group's Gypsy, Roma, Traveller History Month (GRTHM) Art Competition 2026, celebrating Roma culture and the creativity of young people aged 5 to 18!

We invite schools, youth groups, and individuals to take part by submitting artwork that showcases the rich heritage, culture, and identity of Roma communities.

A resource pack is available [here](#).

Accepted art forms include:

-  Drawings, paintings, photography, and digital art
-  Poems and creative writing
-  Audio recordings of music or storytelling
-  Short videos featuring dance, music, or performances

Submission deadline: **May 22nd, 2026**

Submit entries via email: mihai@romasupportgroup.org.uk

Winners will be announced by June 15th, 2026.

Other News:

More Roma at Universities than ever:

The Travellers Times has reported an exponential rise of Roma students at UK universities According to the Office for Students and the Higher Education Statistics Agency, the number of Roma entertaining higher education almost doubled from 865 in 2022-2023 to 1610 in 2023-2024. Although the proportion of Roma youth entering university remains far lower than the wider population, this represents a massive rise in education aspirations and attainment for a community that continues to face

widespread barriers to accessing education. The full article at Travellers Times can be accessed [here](#).

Roma fighting for Ukraine struggle to receive compensation:

The families of dead Roma soldiers who fought for Ukraine are struggling to access compensation from the government. Relatives of deceased soldiers are owed 15m Ukrainian hryvnia (about £250,000) but face difficulties in receiving compensation due to language barriers and frequent mistakes in documents caused by Ukrainian officials. Many Roma have also experienced forced conscription, with family members left in the dark and unable to look for them. The full article by Emilia Sulek in the Guardian can be accessed [here](#).

Ukraine Donation Pages

Human rights fund for Ukrainian Roma

European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) are [collecting donations](#) to support their efforts to prevent the discrimination and rejection of Roma refugees in Ukraine, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Moldova.

For more information about Roma Support Group, go to our website and look at the ["projects" pages](#).

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Views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily suggest that they are in accordance with the trustees of Roma Support Group.

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