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Dance: Gypsy Orchestra

Rajko Hungarians Entertain Superbly at Carnegie, in Quick Survey of the Art

By ANNA KISSELGOFF

Gypsies have always been among the great entertainers of the world, and it came as no surprise that the Rajko Hungarian Gypsy Orchestra and Dancers performed as superbly as they did Saturday night at Carnegie Hall.

Even a nonspecialist can sense the professionalism and virtuosity of this group of young musicians. The word "rajko" is translated by the management as "gypsy youth," and all members are said to be descended from gypsy musicians.

While this assertion may hold true for the orchestra, which includes 12 violins as well as the cimbalom, other string instruments and clarinet, there is a nagging suspicion that the 10-member dance group that performs in 8 of the 18 numbers does not come from the same tradition.

Most striking is the polish of the musicians, whose artistry is combined with a hip, knowing glamour perfectly tuned to the 20th century. The sole woman violinist, dressed in a folk costume of miniskirt length, opens the program by leading her long-haired companions. A shrewd appeal to sentimentality, which also makes the essential point that the gypsy vio-

linist's art is handed down from generation to generation, comes with the surprise solo by 10-year-old Laciika Farkas.

On another level there is the remarkable range and virtuosity of Bela Berki, as the first violin, who performs the traditional "lark" with its expertly toned bird-like twitters as well as pieces from the repertoire of more classically oriented Hungarian composers. Terez Kariko uses her rich operatic voice to give an art-song setting to the folk material.

In the dance numbers, the five couples present a quick survey of Hungarian dance, beginning with one version of the Czardas. But these are mere fragments that would need to be fleshed out to stand up to the best of folk-based choreography. At the company's worst, its cabaret style produces the chorus-line kitsch of the unconvincing gypsy dances. At its best, there are the intricately patterned shepherd's stick dances in "Pastoral Dance" and the thigh-slapping, heel-stamping fervor of men's challenge dancing in "Free and Easy."

