

Marpod, Summer 2025

*Dear friends,*

for a full year, three hundred children from the ELIJAH music school had been preparing for the "Dance of the Ravens". This year marked the thirteenth time it took place and each year more visitors came. Our beautiful music school „Casa Sonja” could no longer accommodate all the children’s families and friends. Therefore, the mayor of Roșia invited everyone to the community festival area. He was proud that the grand music festival would take place under his patronage.

As the day of the festival drew nearer, the more the eager anticipation grew, but also the tension. The music teachers vied with each other as to whose groups could perform. It really was not easy to choose from all the melodies. Tears were shed. The programme had to be shortened to two hours before the dress rehearsal. At last, conductor Félix was satisfied. The many musicians still had to practise coming on and off stage many times. "Walk in single file! Do not speak! Do not blow into your instrument! "

The great day dawned. The orthodox priest started off with a prayer of blessing, praising Father Georg and me as Catholics for supporting his flock without "making them Catholic". A member of Parliament emphasized the work of ELIJAH. Never before had so many Roma children attended school. The children stood proudly on stage, in front of their parents and friends, in front of more than two thousand people. Fiery Roma rhythms alternated with Romanian folk music and dance. In the choir, Rares sang vigorously, in his wheelchair: he suffers from muscular dystrophy, to which two of his brothers have already succumbed. For the finale, everyone played and sang the ELIJAH anthem together, the old Roma song "Ederlezy", which we have adapted: "Hosman, Nou and Țichindeal have children without number. ELIJAH dances and sings with them, with all the young ravens."

The original song runs: „All are invited. All those who have nothing, will get of the lamb!“ Today, everyone got grilled meatballs and bread from our bakery. However, we had not reckoned with so many visitors and ran short, we had to halve the portions. In the long queue, Anca was waiting with her innumerable children, daughters-in-law, and grandchildren. They live in squalor and chaos, but today she had dressed elegantly and dyed her hair red. I was especially delighted to see Estera. She had come all the way from Ploiești for the occasion – five hours by car. More than thirty years ago, we rescued her and her twin sister as babies from a children’s home.

The mayor surveyed the multitude with satisfaction, deeply moved by the Roma children’s music. The he took me aside: „It is all wonderful, but from next year you should no longer call the festival ‘Dance of the Ravens’. Then everyone only thinks of the Gypsies. But there are also Romanians playing in the orchestra.“ He is our best partner for everything which we undertake for the Roma families in his villages. Together we gazed at all the many children – more dark than light faces. Today “the ravens” – that is what the Romanians call their “brown brothers and sisters” – had delighted many people. Although they still live on the margins and in poverty, everyone was happy. Why do the ravens still frighten the mayor?

Thanks to all the children who displayed their talents and gave them freely with joy!  
Thanks to you, dear friends – without your support there would be no music school, no Raven’s Dance in all its colours.

*Ruth Reinherz*