

“Well, it’s strange. I studied at the Choreographic (school). I got these *zurnas* as a present in the Choreographic. A dancer from the Pirin Ensemble, Blagoevgrad. They came up to him, no idea where he got them from, but he gave them as a present to me. And me then, they’re at my place then. Well, I wondered... And bought the *piskas* of a counter-bassoon from the music shop and cut them a bit and made there – I was driving them directly, there’s nowhere. And I was playing – I was catching it so-so.

I began with the *kaval* at first. I bough everything by myself. We’re playing the piano compulsory, but I didn’t learn anything. There’re *kavals*, bagpipes at my place, I cannot explain it... But it’s driving me, driving me.

(So, you learned to play by yourself?)

By myself, as much as I can. I played a *Boyna*, I made it and... I was playing, playing – nuts. Then I put on the stage a Macedonian performance in the State Ensemble and got down south. And then I got to know those (Roma *zurnacies* – n.a.). With my big *zurna*. It must have been in 1995. I went to Petrich and made acquaintance in the neighbourhood in Petrich with Peppy and Asen. There I have recorded by a camera the way they stay to play for me. The recording is still kept. And I told myself – I have to learn. But they play and play and say: “That’s easy”. And show it to me. I remember it and then reproduce it, but the way I know. Just gamble with the tones. I tell to myself – that’s not the way. I recorded it. I have it on videocassettes and listen to it. I’ve got on a cassette Selim playing for a long time recorded. But I cannot catch it.

The *zurna* is a simple instrument as a construction. Therefore it is complicated to play it. You should know the fingering quite appropriately. They take out the tone, but they’re familiar with the fingering. And once, in a winter. When was it? Four years ago. A band – Esref from Kavrakirovo with a couple of boys came here as builders. ‘Cause there’re no jobs there. Hungry. And how it happened – Itso – you know the guy, who used to be my *glashnik*. I taught him, he’s now in the States – he discovered them somewhere. He says: “I’ve found you *zurnacies*”. Wherever he’d go he comes across some *zurnacies*. I tell him, Nonsense. You’ve met some?! Come on bring them to a rehearsal. We’re rehearsing then in the building of IMRO. “I’ll bring them”, says he. They made an appointment. So, I went to fetch them by the car. I know Selim but Esref I don’t. Hi, I say. I know Esref the *tapanci*. “But me is a *zurnaci*” – he’s a bit cooped, reserved. And the others were such... There’s only a boy *glashnik* whom they’re teaching. The rest of them villagers from Kavrakirovo... I take them in the car. And when he made a *piska* for my *zurna* I said to myself Oh-o-o! This one’s a master! And he played and played in front of the camera. I tell him: Could you, please, make the scale for me: tone by tone. “I can” – he says. And slowly he made for me the whole scale. I recorded him by the camera and ever since it became clear to me. I simply caught the fingerboard. Having seen this job I immediately comprehended it and reproduced the tones. That’s the way I started to play.

And after that whenever I go to Kavrakirovo... they’d just show me some things there, but that’s the way I caught the skill. It’s very easy once you’ve learnt the fingerboard. Now I can play on the *zurna* everything I can sing. There used to be several half tones that I didn’t know how to catch. If this has not been shown to you, you could play it for a hundred years, but you won’t feel it.

(What about the breathing?)

Well, the breathing was explained to me by a *kavalci* from the Ensemble. You should understand it here (in the head – n.a.). It’s not complicated. You should simply get the way