

# BEYOND THE EAST–WEST DIVIDE

## Balkan Music and its Poles of Attraction

Edited by Ivana Medić and Katarina Tomašević



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Belgrade, 2015

Cover image: An extract from *A New Map of Turkey in Europe, Divided into its Provinces, from the Best Authorities* by John Cary (1754–1835). Prepared in 1801.

Source: John Cary, *Cary's New Universal Atlas, containing distinct maps of all the principal states and kingdoms throughout the World. From the latest and best authorities extant.* London: Printed for J. Cary, Engraver and Map-seller, No. 181, near Norfolk Street, Strand, 1808.

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## PREFACE

This book emerged as a result of a necessity to explore different methodological and historical perspectives that could replace the traditional ones, rooted in the ubiquitous, almost canonic historiographical dichotomy East–West. Riding the tide of a gradual change of course with respect to the perception of identities of Oriental and Balkan cultures (Said 1978; Todorova 1997; Samson 2013), we have sought fresh theoretical and methodological approaches and a comprehensive critical understanding of the transfer of influences which left a deep imprint on the physiognomy of musical tradition in the Balkans, seen both from synchronic and diachronic perspectives. An approach to the music of the Balkan Peninsula as an important part of the Mediterranean culture, as well as an emphasis on the close ties that some of the Balkan peoples had established with Russia and the Soviet Union, have allowed us to articulate another historical axis: North–South. Being aware of the fact that a mere substitution or supplementation of one dichotomy with another cannot provide fertile ground for a critical positioning of the Balkans in the dynamic vortex of identities that gave birth to the European cultural identity (Morin 1987), the selection of articles was guided by our aim to showcase various insights into the key subject areas and concepts that the present-day investigations of these phenomena and musical practices are based on. These include traditional, vernacular, religious, popular and art music of the Balkans in a broad time span – from the medieval times to the present.

The fact that the authors of twenty chapters gathered together in this book come from ten different countries serves as an indicator of the diffusion of contemporary writing on Balkan music. The broad spectrum of topics and approaches covered by this book, which may appear scattered, actually gravitate towards some key concerns. These include: questions related to migrations and diasporas, the phenomena of ‘Europeanisation’ and ‘Westernisation’ in relation to the ‘cosmopolitan’, ‘national’ and/or ‘Balkan’ identities, followed by discussions of art music, traditional and *world music*, as well as ethnochoreological issues. The axis East-West does prove its vitality in the discourses presented here; at the same time, one may also observe the authors’ efforts to overcome stereotypical and anachronous strategies and to replace them with more elastic model(s) of interpretation of dynamic and permeable (cultural) borders and liminal zones. Moreover, due to the fact that all articles present the results of the most recent research, we expect that they will facilitate the completion of the otherwise fragmentary picture of this geographic space in Western musicology and ethnomusicology, and that they will contribute to a fundamental understanding of both kinship and differences in the diachronic durations and transformations of musical phenomena of the neighbouring Balkan peoples and countries.

A particularly important and inspirational guideline for a methodological revision of the stereotypical dichotomy East–West is offered by Timothy Rice in the introductory chapter ‘Musical practice and the experiential power of place.’ Bearing in mind that two phenomenological ideas – ‘place’ and ‘lived experience’ – can be productively used to ‘examine what it means to grow up and live with music in the Balkans’, Rice develops a three-dimensional analytical model that could be applied to various comparative studies aimed at rethinking the poles of East and West. Situated within the network of phenomena of ‘place’, ‘time’ and ‘metaphorical claims about the nature of music’, the implementation of the proposed model is vividly illustrated by three case studies from the author’s own fieldwork in Bulgaria.

Danica Petrović paints a synthetic picture of the complex distribution and defining features of liturgical music of the Eastern Orthodox Church in Southeastern Europe throughout the centuries. Petrović asserts that this intricate picture should by no means be oversimplified and tailored to fit certain political agendas. On the other hand, Jasmina Huber studies the physiognomy of melodies that belong to the Jewish liturgical and paraliturgical heritage in the western regions of the Ottoman Empire and shows how the centuries of constant migrations affected the liturgical musical practices of the Jews. The aspects of mutual influences of the cultural zones of the Mediterranean and the Balkans have inspired Ivan Moody to turn his gaze southward. By examining a creative kinship between three representative modernist composers from Yugoslavia, Italy and Portugal, Moody lays the groundwork for a definition and interpretation of a Southern European identity.

Two chapters address the impact of the Ottoman legacy onto the processes of formation of ‘national musical styles’ in the early twentieth century. Following Maria Todorova’s concept of ‘inner Otherness’, Melita Milin recounts the images of Eastern Other in Serbian art music and observes the simultaneous distancing from the Ottoman heritage on the one hand and an adoption of some of its features as elements of one’s own national identity on the other. Manolis Seiragakis and Ioannis Tselikas discuss the simultaneous ‘orientalism’ and ‘cosmopolitanism’ of the operetta *Chalima* as a turning point in the history of this genre in Greece, with an emphasis on the later-day reception of this successful ‘synthesis’ of popular and art music.

Katy Romanou’s essay on the important role of the Greek community of Odessa in the process of ‘Westernisation’ of Greek music during the time of establishing a new, modern national identity, opens a series of chapters devoted to the issues of migrations and diasporas along the axis North–South. The present knowledge on the impact of Russian immigration onto the musical life of Belgrade between two world wars is expanded by new information and fresh approaches. Ivana Vesić has researched the role of the popular/commercial musical practices in the process of differentiation of urban culture, while Olga Otašević deals with the musical life of the interwar Belgrade as recorded on the pages of the Russian-language journal *Novoe vremia*.

Similar issues are also addressed in three chapters dedicated to dance and choreography. Starting from a theoretical model of interculturality, Sonja Zdravkova-Djeparoska emphasises Russian influence on the establishment of national ballet in the Balkans in the early twentieth century. Gergana Panova-Tekath and Vesna Bajić-Stojiljković acknowledge, but also challenge, the impact of the Soviet model on the development of folk dance choreographies in Bulgaria and Serbia (then a part of Yugoslavia) after World War II.

Valentina Sandu-Dediu also engages with the omnipresent Soviet influence, by discussing the status of Romanian post-World War II music historiography. Her introspective and often self-deprecatory account on the past and present states of Romanian musicology concludes with a statement that histories of music must be rewritten from new perspectives; however, a compromise between two opposing extremes – the unscrupulous political engagement on the one hand, and an avoidance of any ideological involvement on the other hand – must be reached.

The presumption that the influences went only in one direction – i.e. from Russia/USSR southward – is challenged by Ana Petrov, who analyses the status of Yugoslav popular music artists, in particular Đorđe Marjanović, in the USSR after World War II. Petrov shows that music served as a form of cultural diplomacy, but also that a single artist could be attributed different roles in different contexts; hence Marjanović simultaneously played the roles of ‘a representative of Western culture’, ‘a true Slav’ and ‘a Yugoslav legend’.

The fact that the opposition East–West still has the flexibility and adaptability to various analytical models is emphasised by two authors who engage with art music in Serbia after the dissolution of Yugoslavia. In her discussion of the operatic output of a contemporary Serbian composer Isidora Žebeljan, Ivana Medić marks the crossing points between the elements of Balkan (and, more broadly, Eastern) musical heritage and European/cosmopolitan ideals. Medić identifies the composer’s desire to achieve a specifically Balkan(esque) sound and timbre inspired by the interwar urban popular culture, rather than the older, rural models. Ivana Miladinović-Prlica writes about Milimir Drašković who was inspired by the (imaginary) Byzantine heritage and Serbian *Octoechos* in the final stage of his career; he merged these influences with his already established avant-garde procedures and the elements of popular music genres such as jazz.

In the remaining four chapters, the pendulum again shifts between a faraway past and the present day, thus marking an interpretative arch from tradition to (post)modernity. Dafni Tragaki analyses the characteristic phases of affirmation of ‘*rebetiko* cosmopolitanism’, Cüneyt-Ersin Mihci follows the trajectories of the famous Gallipoli song, while Iva Nenić situates the transformation of the musical genre of *sevdalinka* within a broader discussion of the particularities of the *world music* scenes in the former Yugoslav republics.

The final chapter is written by Jelena Jovanović and Sanja Ranković, who both enjoy varied careers as ethnomusicologists, teachers and performers of traditional vocal music. Drawing on the concept of *familiarity* (Sombart, 2013), they describe

the diverse reception of their performances of Serbian traditional rural songs in the European ‘West’, Russian ‘East’ and the neighbouring Balkan countries.

As to the transliteration of Cyrillic script throughout this book, Russian and other non-phonetic Slavic languages have been transliterated using the simplified Library of Congress transliteration system, with some exceptions, which have been duly explained in the footnotes.

We would like to thank all contributors to this volume for their patience and cooperativeness during the painstaking editorial process. We must express our sincere gratitude to Katerina Levidou, one of the conveners of the BASEES Study Group for Russian and Eastern European Music (REEM), and Srđan Atanasovski from the Institute of Musicology SASA; together, they originated the idea of rethinking the cultural and artistic ‘poles of attraction’ in the Balkans. Without their insightfulness and immense intellectual energy this volume would not have been possible. We would also like to thank our colleagues and friends who have assisted us in various stages of preparing this book: Philip Bullock, Marija Ćirić, Bogdan Đaković, Jelena Janković-Beguš, Jelena Jovanović, Danka Lajić-Mihajlović, Mary McRoberts, Melita Milin, Vesna Peno, Selena Rakočević and Mirjana Zakić.

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Ivana Medić and Katarina Tomašević