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## **THE MUSIC OF SREBRENICA AFTER THE WAR. ATTITUDES AND PRACTICE AMONG SURVIVING BOSNIACS, MUSIC THERAPY, AND MUSIC WORKS IN THE NAME OF SREBRENICA**

An effort has been made with this research to gain an insight into the extent to which the music practice of Srebrenica has changed in the context of the 1992–1995 war and the genocide committed in July 1995, but also to uncover how much music has remained amongst the surviving Bosniacs of Srebrenica, how relevant it is in relation to the major human tragedy, and how much of an integral part of the culture and life of the survivors it is today. Examples of the range of religious music practice are presented in the paper, of the international humanitarian organisations' music therapy projects, along with examples of music works of diverse genres that have emerged in the name of Srebrenica.

Key words: music and war, Srebrenica genocide, religious music practice, *ilahija*, *sevdalinka*, humanitarian music therapy projects, music in the name of Srebrenica

The consequences that the 1992–1995 war stamped on all segments of life and human activity in Bosnia-Herzegovina are multiple and now, sixteen years after the war's end, they still profoundly influence the overall climate in this country.<sup>1</sup> Living in post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina also inevitably means encounter with all these consequences. Therefore, it is impossible to do research into the music practice of Srebrenica and its surrounding region – which is a synonym today of wartime tragedy and one of the greatest atrocities of the 20th century – without

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<sup>1</sup> This article is based on my M.A. thesis (Softić 2011) defended at the Music Academy in Sarajevo in April, 2011.

including the image of genocide.<sup>2</sup> In professional literature and among the broad public, and also in this article, the concept of survivors of Srebrenica refers to the surviving Bosniac inhabitants from the area of Central Podrinje in Eastern Bosnia. It encompasses the people who lived in the town of Srebrenica before 1992, but also those who were forcibly expelled from the adjacent places and had to move into Srebrenica at the beginning of the war where, together with the already existing population, they experienced the fall of Srebrenica, some surviving the genocide. For years after the genocide in Srebrenica in July 1995, music was very cautiously linked with the survivors of Srebrenica and only in small intimations. An approach to the Srebrenica tragedy seemed impossible from the music aspect and, in the context of the consequences of the war, perhaps even inappropriate. However, contact with people who had survived the genocide gave rise to a new approach to this issue. The revelation of the echo of music practice in their post-war lives and the first inklings on their diverse experience of music resulted in my interest in this theme, and then in its research. The impossibility of shifting away from the tragic context conditioned the need to expand the approach ingrained in Bosnian-Herzegovinian ethnomusicology, focusing on music as sound, according to the culturo-anthropological and ethnological aspects. That relates primarily to respect for the survivors and their music, social and cultural horizons, as well as to efforts that their attitudes and memories be included in music ethnography. I have endeavoured with this research to gain an insight into how much music practice was changed in the context of the Srebrenica genocide, but also to uncover how much music has remained in Srebrenica and amongst the displaced people of Srebrenica, how relevant it is in relation to the great human tragedy, and how much of an integral part of the culture it is amongst the survivors today. I am basing my information on the statements of my interlocutors who have returned to their pre-war homes in Srebrenica, the statements of interlocutors who were settled as displaced persons in the Sarajevo districts of Vogošća, Blagovac and Osjek after the war, as well as on the statements of interlocutors who are still living as internally displaced persons in the camp at Mihatovići near Tuzla, which was also one of the first destinations of people expelled from Srebrenica in 1995. I spoke with 23 interlocutors altogether. Among them, directly cited further in the article are parts of statements of six women born between 1937 and 1978 and three men born between 1967 and 1970, as well as one little girl. They shall be represented only by the initials of their forenames and surnames, in order to protect their privacy.

In contrast to the subjective attitudes on how much music can exist at all in post-war life in Srebrenica, research into their music practice in the framework of

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<sup>2</sup> Expansive literature on this already exists, particularly within the framework of the Sarajevo Institute for Investigating Crimes against Humanity and International Law (see Čekić 1998; Čekić et al. 2000; Šabić 2008). The genocide began with the start of aggression in 1992, to experience its culmination in July 1995.

three essential periods – pre-war, wartime and post-war,<sup>3</sup> denoted by completely different social and political frameworks – led to new, partly unexpected information on its presence. The initial image of post-war Srebrenica, one of the most advanced districts in Bosnia-Herzegovina at the end of the 1980s and at the very beginning of the 1990s, which has been shaped on the basis of data from sources (among which the most important part is made up of 200 music notations done by Cvjetko Rihman in Srebrenica and its surroundings in 1952 and 1954, stored in his manuscript legacy at the Music Academy in Sarajevo and in the Folklore Archive of the National Museum of Bosnia-Herzegovina) and from those received from interlocutors, offers a fairly idyllic representation of life in that region, in which music practice was very much alive. I have documented a broad range of music tunes that were performed during the youth of my interlocutors (from the 1950s to the 1980s), along with the occasions on which they were performed. The marked presence of music tunes in village and urban music practice and their mutual permeation speaks of fairly close links between the urban and rural communities and the dispersion of diverse genres between the individual social groups. The liveliness of music practice was reflected in the frequency of organised music events, shows given by local performers at well-frequented catering establishments, and at events organised by citizens – such as various bees, gatherings, and celebration of public holidays. Performance of lullabies, working songs, *sevdalinke* (love songs), wedding songs, songs sung during the *kolo*-dance, songs to the accompaniment of several types of instrument, songs mourning the dead and songs within the framework of religious practice testify to the presence of music in almost all segments of life – from birth, through maturity, and on to death.

Such a variform image of music forms that were nurtured in the Srebrenica region before the 1992–1995 war, does not coincide in any way with the image that emerged in the region at the beginning of the aggression against Bosnia-Herzegovina, and even less with that in today's post-war period. Although I also observed the pre-war music practice within the social context and/or the circumstances and occasion of performance, it was unavoidable to examine the music practice of the wartime and post-war period in its dependence on completely non-music factors. With the outbreak of war, it became impossible for music to avoid politics. There was a sudden break in the fostering of many pre-war music forms, while forms typical to the newly-emerged situation came into the foreground – patriotic songs in particular. With them, but also with the new approach to music in the framework of religious practice, the emphasis was transferred to a great extent from the musical to the national. Viewing music practice of the wartime period in that light leads to cognition on the use of music both as a weapon and as a remedy and also as an important symbol of Bosniac identity and community, which is seen

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<sup>3</sup> This article encompasses only part of the research that relates to music in the post-war life of Srebrenica's people. See Softić 2011 for the two remaining periods.

to the greatest extent in patriotic songs, on the one hand, and *ilahije* on the other.<sup>4</sup> The prominent representation of music in the framework of religious practice in the wartime period has been reassigned to the entire post-war period.

### **Is there music in Srebrenica today? On the attitude of the survivors towards music**

All the major changes that came about under the circumstances of war were also reflected in music practice. In music practice, the changes are not only observable in the representation or non-representation of individual music forms, but rather in the attitude towards music itself in general amongst the Srebrenica population. This is most evident precisely in today's post-war period. Although the basic objective of this research was to document music practice amongst Srebrenica's people today and/or to examine the extent to which, and in what manner, it was a constituent part of life and integral part of culture today under circumstances that are completely different than those immediately before the 1992–1995 war, with serious entry into this issue it became clear that the presence of music was conditioned primarily by the personal experiences of the individual. The word individual is used here intentionally rather than community (in the sense of the overall population or the majority of the population of Srebrenica in the wartime period) because the attitude towards music differs from individual to individual, profoundly dependent on their wartime destinies, particularly the loss of loved ones, but also on other non-music factors, such as age, community of origin (village or town), social background, degree of education and degree of assimilation into the new community. In other words, although they had all gone together through the experience of genocide, those experiences were not the same for all of them. In keeping with these non-music factors, there is an obviously different attitude towards spiritual versus secular music, as well as towards domestic versus Serbian popular music performers. A overall image of the newly-emerged situation is the widespread phenomenon of *non-performance* of music, that is, the non-existence of *live* music practice, which was confirmed by the fact that, after two years of ongoing research, only two female interlocutors agreed to sing a couple of music

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<sup>4</sup> An *ilahija* (sing.; *ilahije* pl.) is a religious song that is most frequently performed solo or by a choir, without instrumental accompaniment, while it is accompanied by instruments in the framework of Dervish rituals. It is oriented to imparting a lesson and to Islamic moral. The *kasida* (sing; *kaside* pl.) should also be mentioned – this is a longer song with secular content, largely dedicated to the Prophet Muhammed. However, the *kasida* is usually categorised in contemporary practice under the broader notion of *ilahija*. All religious content that is performed on diverse occasions, but which are not part of the Qur'an's text, were termed *ilahije* by my interlocutors. It is treated in that way in this paper, too.

examples. It was notable that these were interlocutors who had not lost members of their immediate families during the war.

As far as the attitude to spiritual music is concerned, particularly the *ilahije* within the framework of religious practice and the attitude towards secular music, there is a characteristic prominence of spiritual music, both in the forms of listening to it and in its performance, unlike secular music which is suppressed and is listened to but not performed. In listening to spiritual music, and to a lesser extent in its performance, there are no obvious differences – such as generational and social differences – between individuals, although it is necessary, naturally enough, to emphasise that the older generation nurture spiritual music practice the most. In contrast to that, the attitude towards secular music depends on the previously mentioned factors. However, as much as it is present among the Srebrenica population – and the research showed that it is even more present than was thought at first glance – it is the folk music of the Srebrenica region, performed in a popularised and somewhat altered manner by music groups such as the *Meraklije*, *Sateliti*, *Kalesijski zvuci*, *Zvuci Podrinja* groups and the like.<sup>5</sup> The music performed by the foregoing groups is a regular part of the programme on local Vogošća Television on Friday evenings, the station having taken its name from the district of the same name near Sarajevo, in which a large number of Srebrenica displaced persons and others originating from Eastern Bosnia were settled after the war. This programme is a favourite and has high viewing ratings among that

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<sup>5</sup> During the 1950s, Rithman documented Srebrenica region village polyphonic music forms of the so-called Category I (newer) and Category II (older) types, transitional type forms, one-part songs, songs accompanying the *kolo*-dance and children's games, and lullabies, as well as songs with instrumental accompaniment, the accompaniment usually being provided by the *ćemane* (violin) and the *šargija*, as well as the *gusle*. That group of forms is categorised in Bosnian-Herzegovinian ethnomusicological literature under *traditional folk music*, which is usually additionally characterised as authentic, peasant and local. However, amongst today's interlocutors, the idea of authenticity and peasant origin is linked with the music sphere that is called *folk music* in ethnomusicological literature, implying contemporary reworkings of traditional templates and their media circulation, such as is the case with the above mentioned music groups. Although these groups could justifiably be placed in the category of traditional music (first of all because of their marked reliance on templates from the living local tradition, although not necessarily the tradition canonised as authentic, as well as because of their acceptance among the Srebrenica population as being representative of the local tradition), in this paper I am nevertheless categorising them as folk music, following Bosnian-Herzegovinian ethnomusicological tradition. However, I am adding the attribute *local* (*local folk music* or *folk music of the region*), in order to differentiate them terminologically from *folk music*, which apart from (or even instead of) contemporary reworkings and media circulation also implies a broad diffusion (a non-local quality), such as is the case with the *sevdalinka*. On the other hand, by the the attribute *local* I am also differentiating it from *newly-composed folk music*, which is conceptualised both in scholarly literature and amongst the Srebrenica population as a popular music genre inspired by diverse traditions from the territory of former Yugoslavia, including Serbia and Bosnia.

population, as was confirmed by my interlocutors. Thus, A. B. (female, b. 1937) says:

I listen only to village [music] on TV Vogošća. It gives me a bit of entertainment. And I often go and lie down, and my daughter-in-law looks at me. My daughter-in-law listens. There is this and that, it's mixed [repertoire]. (noted in Blagovac, near Sarajevo, October 2009)

Just how popular the mentioned programme content of TV Vogošća is amongst the people of Srebrenica is also confirmed by the statement of M. T. (male, b. 1968), a teacher of music culture who, however, voices a critical attitude:

There are quite a few children from that area here in Vogošća. That music, you know, we are speaking of that music, is definitely listened to. The media are a bit to blame for that, a little through the media – radio, television – they play those songs, bad songs. It becomes a sort of tradition, despite the fact that I have something against that music. But, the people accept it themselves. (noted in Vogošća, November 2009)<sup>6</sup>

My interlocutor's identification of the popularity of music in the TV Vogošća programme with something that has already transferred to *tradition*, something generally accepted, speaks in support of the local folk music and its status among the population of Srebrenica and the surrounding area.

Besides local folk music, Srebrenica people also like to listen to folk music, that is, *sevdalinke* (pl; *sevdalinka* sing.) performed by well-known Bosnian-Herzegovinian artists like Safet Isović. Newly-composed folk music is also very widely diffused, especially among the younger generations. There is a different attitude in that sense towards the performers from the domestic and from the Serbian scene. Besides the presence of domestic performers, such as Halid Bešlić, Halid Muslimović, Kemal Malovčić, and Rizo Hamidović, the music listened to by individual interlocutors also includes the songs of individual performers from Serbia. So, for example, H. S. (male, b. 1970) says that he could listen to Šaban Šaulić, Sinan Sakić and Eser among the Serbian singers, but that he would never be able to listen to Svetlana Ceca Ražnjatović (noted in Osjek, May 2009). Such a negative attitude towards Ceca Ražnjatović is present among all the interlocutors, but the main reason for this, apart from the fact that she is a Serbian singer, is that she was also the wife of the Serbian war criminal Željko Ražnjatović Arkan, responsible for war crimes carried out in different parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina, including the Srebrenica region.

If music performed by Serbian singers is present, that is when it reminds interlocutors of their pre-war lives and their dear memories from that period. In

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<sup>6</sup> Evidence of the interlocutor's negative attitude towards this type of television programme can be seen in his mentioning implementation of an initiative (writing a petition) for discontinuing this programme content. He justifies his efforts with the claim that this programme does not serve to raise the level of culture of the Srebrenica population.

contrast to that, individual interlocutors have a firmly negative attitude towards performers from the Serbian scene. So H. E. (female, b. 1975) expresses an antagonistic attitude towards music from Serbia, and also towards the fact that that music was listened to pre-war, and adds:

I do not listen to them at all now. A song has no borders, but that has all been lost, it has no meaning for me whatsoever. I like to hear [music]. If we go somewhere to a wedding, what can I do, I have to listen. But it has all lost sense for me, there is no point to it. (noted in Vogošća, December 2009)

Practising exclusively spiritual music is very marked among the older generation, women for the most part, who lost their nearest and dearest in the war, most usually sons and husbands. The statement of N.H. (female, b. 1969) from Potočari near Srebrenica is illustrative in that sense. In response to the question on her attitude towards music she says that it is “of no kind at all” and adds that women in Srebrenica

largely listen to the news. When music starts, that’s it immediately, nothing. The only thing in that respect is that they really listen to *ilahije*. They see that [other music] as an expression of joy, and that doesn’t interest them. Especially those who have lost their sons. The TV is turned on, if there is some sort of music, they immediately say – turn it off. We avoid turning on that music because it does not suit them [the older women]. Perhaps we [younger women] would even like to listen, but we do not count now, we have lost our desire for that music so much. (noted in Potočari, April 2009)

There is a similar statement from S. E., too (male, b. 1967):

My attitude is that I do not like any type of music now. In my opinion, it upsets a man, somehow, disrupts his peace of mind, you know. There is music which, let’s say, perhaps seems pleasant, this or that, I won’t say now that it is all bad, but most of music is, how can I put it, the work of the *šejtan* [the devil]. That is my opinion, but I don’t have to be right. If I enjoy something, I don’t have to devote myself to it. Now I have said to whom I shall devote myself – to Him [to God]. (noted in Vogošća, December 2009)

Interpretation of music as “the devil’s handiwork” and/or interpreting it in the concatenation of Islamic worldview is present among many interlocutors. It would seem that that would be the basic cause of the new, rejecting attitude towards secular music and, in contrast to that, the popularisation of spiritual music. In conversations with interlocutors one gains the general impression that they would feel guilty in some way, primarily towards the victims, if music had still retained the status today that it had before the war. As far as the actual wartime period is concerned, the prevailing view is that nobody was interested in songs in wartime, which is quite understandable, since music is usually connected with merriment and joyful occasions. That attitude is reflected in the post-war period, when favouring spiritual music by the Srebrenica people is also part of their social

role as targets of the genocide. They also justify their attitudes by the fact that they are Muslims and/or that, as such, they should primarily practise forms of spiritual music, and that this is some type of duty (similarly to an example noted in Kosovo, see Sugarmann 2010). An illustration in that sense is given in the statement of F. I. (female, b. 1951), who thinks that “village” songs should not have been sung even before the war because that is a “sin”. Now, after the war, when she has become a devoted believer, she says that “it is not fitting for Muslims to lead, sing, and [do that] work”, thinking generally about practising music. She stresses that she could not sing today, because that would be “shameful”. The fact is that secular music has attained a certain hypertrophied dimension in the conception of the Srebrenica population, that is, in looking for the guilty party for the genocide they have identified music itself, as is best illustrated by the statement of the same interlocutor who emphasises: “If only we had never sung at all, none of this would have happened” (noted in Osjek, November 2009). In fact, the interlocutor’s statement has multiple connotations. It is understandable from the context that singing the same songs as the Orthodox population, and particularly songs that came across the Drina River and the border with Serbia, is regarded from today’s perspective as an expression of loss and suppression of one’s own identity which, in the understanding of many interlocutors, was what led to the tragedy. In the same vein, that type of music seduced them, led to their not seeing their own environment, neighbours with whom they had shared the bad and the good for generations, with whom they had not only friendly relations but also family ties through the large number of so-called mixed marriages.

### **Music as a part of religious practice**

The period immediately before the war and during it was marked in Srebrenica, among other, by the awakening of religious consciousness amongst the Bosniac people. Many of the inhabitants of Srebrenica and its surrounding began more actively to practise their faith. With the fulfilment of religious obligations, more frequently than before the war, they started to organise *mevludi* and *tevhidi* in the mosques and in private homes,<sup>7</sup> these practices having been maintained until today (Filipović 2000). Music also has a certain role within the religious framework,

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<sup>7</sup> The *mevlud* (sing; *mevludi* pl.) is a festivity by which, primarily, the birth of the Prophet Muhammed is celebrated. Since this is by its character a joyful event, the *mevlud* is also organised when celebrating some favourable occasion connected with the family, such as the birth of a child, the recovery from ill health of a member of the household, moving into a new house, etc. Along with the mandatory epic verse that relates to the birth and life of the Prophet, *ilahije* are also performed at *mevludi*. On the other hand, the *tevid* (sing; *tevidi* pl) is the gathering on the occasion of death, at which those present (women or men and women) approach God in prayer for the departure of the deceased to *Džennet* (Paradise).



which is manifested in the form of the *ilahija*. Despite the widely dispersed post-war rejection of secular music practice, the presence of *ilahije* within the religious ritual, along with their popularisation that began in the period prior to, during and after the 1992–1995 war, is justified by the fact that none of the interlocutors regard them as music forms. They are not “sung” but “learnt and recited”, in which the notion of “learning” in Islam relates primarily to “learning” the Qur’an and/or its reading or recitation in the sense of intoning prayers.

In addition to the *mevlud*, in which the music element is much more present than in the *tehvid* ceremony, organisation of *tehvidi* was also an essential element in posthumous customs among the Srebrenica population after the 1992–1995 war. *Tehvidi* are mandatorily recited after the uncovering of remains in mass graves, or burials. In the Sarajevo settlement of Vogošća, too, the custom is that a *tehvid* is held on the 11th of each month as a sign of remembrance for all the people of Srebrenica who perished after the fall of Srebrenica on July 11, 1995. At the first *tehvidi* (held on the Seventh Day and the Fortieth Day after death) the *ilahije* are not recited. They are recited at the *tehvidi* organised for the commemorations held on the half-year or year after death. On such occasions, it is usual to perform one *ilahija*, which is appropriate in content and music to the character of the event. Apart from their being linked to these two religious occasions, it is well known that the *ilahije* are performed at Ramadan, at the Eids, on *mubarek* (the sacred) nights, for the *hidžret* (Muslim) New Year, when a mosque is being opened, etc.

The secular occasions at which *ilahije* are being performed recently include various public occasions, concerts organised with a purpose, weddings, moving into a new house, etc. Such popularisation of the *ilahije* is due to the political and social situation in the last twenty years. Through major concerts, the *ilahija* has emerged from the intimate environment of religious manifestations and, as Maja Baralić points out, has become a form of “public entertainment” in such a way that its moral and instructive role has been placed in the background. In this way, it had ceased to be a form of learning through recitation and has in some way become equalised with a song (2003:105-106). That is in complete contrast to the notion of the *ilahija* among the majority of the Srebrenica population, since they do not regard it as a music form. An illustrative example of the recent transformation of the *ilahija* and the attitude towards it has been provided in a conversation with M. T. (male, b. 1968):

When a certain grandfather came to a concert of spiritual music at Zetra [Concert Hall], he listened to one and then to another song, and walked out after that, commenting: “Ah, what have they done to the Faith.” That speaks somehow of a different type of attitude towards the *ilahija*. (noted in Vogošća, November 2009)

In this light of popularisation of the *ilahija*, together with the raised religious awareness after the war, although not experienced as a song on the part of my interlocutors, it is in fact – bearing in mind its comprehension as “music” among the

broad public – the most widely diffused music form among the Srebrenica population. On the basis of the utterance noted down during research by M. Baralić in a conversation with a female displaced person from Srebrenica, it can be said that this was not at all the case in Srebrenica prior to the 1992–1995 war:

I did not encounter *ilahije* and *kaside* before in Srebrenica. We did not have them here, they were brought here before this war, when the SDA [the Democratic Action Party] [appeared]. We learnt the *mevludi*; *ilahije* and *kaside* did not exist in the *mevlud* programme. The whole *mevlud* was recited, the Ashura on Mirajj was recited, and then *mevlud* would finish, and Kul huvallahu, Subhaneke, Kul euzu, El-ham, “ellih lam min” would be recited, and then it would be closed with a dua – either the translation into our language, or in Arabic. (...) “When I went to the mosque”, “Avdija”, ... they were the only *ilahije*. Well, I did not understand that. We recited, extending melodically. (2003:104)

In contrast to that, the *ilahija* is today an integral part of the *mevlud* and the *tehvid* ceremonies held amongst the Srebrenica population. It is present in the everyday life of Srebrenica, this being manifested in regular listening to the *ilahija* or even in reciting it. This was testified to by a series of statements from interlocutors of various generations:

We listened to those *ilahije* before, too, I knew two or three, but now I turn them on and listen to all of them. Somehow I feel differently. I didn’t listen to them before, I knew a certain three or four that I have, but now I already like listening to them. I was just listening to *The Death of Hazreti Fatima*. I experience it differently now. (N. H. from Srebrenica (female, b. 1968), noted in Potočari, April 2009)

I did [listen to *ilahije* before the war] and I also go more to the religious facility than before the war and I listen more often [to *ilahije*] (...) Now I have turned slightly more [to faith], I know that there is some Superior Being (H. S. from Konjević-Polje, Srebrenica District (male, b. 1970), noted in Osjek, May 2009)

I listen only to *ilahije* and recite the Qur’an. I recite wherever I have an opportunity. (H. E. from Bratunac, married in Potočari (female, b. 1975), noted in Vogošća, December 2009)

I listen more [now] because then [before the war] I was a child. (...) I love every *ilahija*. There are those women, girls who sing the *ilahije*, and there are men. It makes no difference, I love all the *ilahije*. It’s like a heart to me, that, I don’t know how to describe it ... (...) Then I take myself, I bought myself that smaller *Mevlud*, then I take it myself, and recite *ilahija* by myself, I like that, too, I know then that I am a Muslim woman. And I feel that I am a Muslim woman, just then when I am reciting. (E. Dž. from the village of Drinjača near Zvornik (female, b. 1978), noted in the Mihatovićí refugee camp near Tuzla, December 2009)

Now I listen to *ilahije*, I listen and I recite mainly *ilahije*. I even listen, I have to confess, to music sometimes... I can’t hide that from God. (H. M. from Srebrenica (female, b. 1945), noted in Vogošća, May 2009)

This latter statement confirms the fact that the interlocutors do not regard the *ilahija* as a music form. Thus, for example, A. B. (female, b. 1937) from the village of Gođenje points out that the *ilahija* is not a song as far as she is concerned, but a recitation, despite the popularised manner of its performance today, although she did admit in the end that it was a song in some way: “Well, it is, but, it still reminds me when I hear it like this of the previous [times]” (noted in Blagovac, October 2009). Namely, a series of new elements untypical for the traditional manner of performing the *ilahija* have been introduced recently, such as pronounced nasal singing, multi-part singing, introduction of instruments unknown to Bosnian-Herzegovinian music practice, but also an entire orchestra and contemporary electric instruments, such as the electric and bass guitar, with synthesised sound (Baralić 2003:19). When asked whether the *ilahije* are listened to more today than in the period before the war, A. B. (female, b. 1937) gave an answer similar to the others: “But yes, of course. What can we do, we have to, we are Muslims” (noted in Blagovac, October 2009), from which it is unambiguously clear that there has been an identification of the *ilahija*, as a specific type of religious song, with Bosniac identity.

The practice of holding *tevhidi* is present in the Mihatovići refugee camp where refugees from the Srebrenica region still live. The organiser of the *tevhidi* is the imam of the local mosque, and both men and women attend the *tevhidi*. According to interlocutors, it is not the custom to recite *ilahije* at these *tevhidi*. However, *ilahije* are recited on other occasions, for example, at Ramadan. These *ilahije* are performed by children, who learn them at the *mekteb* (religious school). The repertoire is set by the imam and is made up largely of *ilahije* that relate to individual *mubarek* (sacred) nights and are performed in the Bosnian language. According to the utterance of Dž. M., one of the little girls who learns the *ilahije*,

one of the girls begins, and then there are three, like some kind of choir. There are some in which everyone sings together. We learn them all at school, too, from the *effendi*. (noted at the Mihatovići refugee camp, December 2009)

Among the *ilahije* that are performed more frequently, the interlocutors mentioned “Bajram dođe, mirišu avlije” (Eid has come, the courtyards are fragrant), otherwise a popular song in the religious spirit which, with its textual content, in which the name of Allah is not directly mentioned, corresponds more in form to a *kasida* than to an *ilahija*.<sup>8</sup>

It can be concluded from the foregoing that the *mevlud* and *tevhid* religious ceremonies have been widely disseminated among the population of the Srebrenica region in the post-war period. Thus, the *ilahije*, as an accompaniment but also as a

<sup>8</sup> The text of this *ilahija/kasida* goes as follows: “Eid has come, the courtyards are fragrant, / a blossom falls from the peach-tree branch. / Bird and man, each is joyful, / but I have no-one to celebrate Eid with. / Those worthy of Paradise are travelling on, looking forward to meeting their friends, / In Eid attire, in Paradisial joy. / In Eid attire, in Paradisial joy”.

form of spiritual music, are very much present in the everyday life of Srebrenica, and appear in all three forms of music practice – in the sense of comprehending, listening and practice, that is, performance. Its position as an explicitly religious form (recitation) and not a music form is a key element in understanding the *ilahija* among the Srebrenica region population, despite the fact of all the changes in the manner of *ilahija* performance that have occurred over the last twenty years. It would seem that that is where the most essential factor lies in understanding the popularisation of the *ilahija* today. For the people of Srebrenica, faith is primarily an expression of community and joint identity and, after the suffering during the war, they endeavour to emphasise it and to strengthen it. This tendency of turning back to their roots stems from as early as during the war period, when the strengthening of religious awareness also conditioned the strengthening of the national identity of the Bosniacs, which was partly fuelled by Bosniac political representatives. Conducting religious rituals, apart from the primary purpose, also contains elements of ethnic identity symbols – the signs of national recognition in these symbols have emerged as a response to the needs of the individual to identify him/herself with the community to which he/she belongs (Kujundžić 2000:37), which is particularly evident in the example of the population of Srebrenica and its region. It is necessary to point out that identifying religious and national identity, through music elements in this case, is not linked only with the case of Srebrenica. For example, a similar phenomenon was also noted in Armenian music after the conflict between the Armenians and the Turks at the beginning of the 20th century, when the performance of Armenian liturgy became an active expression of common identity, in which the music encompassed meanings connected with joint memory, history and identity (McCollum 2005). After all the tragic events, practising their faith is a comfort and sanctuary of sorts for the Bosniac inhabitants of Srebrenica. Thus, the *ilahija* is one more element that is considered significant and, in some way, mandatory in the practising of faith. Therefore, listening to and performing the *ilahija* is *normal* and/or represents *a duty*. This is best illustrated by the above mentioned statement of A. B.: “But yes, of course, what can we do, we have to, we are Muslims”. In that sense, the *ilahija* is, in some way, an accompanying part of the post-war process that to the greatest extent means raising awareness in relation to the life led before the war, but also consolation, strength and tranquillity in life after the war for the people of Srebrenica.

### **Music therapy projects under the auspices of international humanitarian organisations**

One of the very frequent ways of animating returnees in Srebrenica are events organised under the auspices of international humanitarian organisations. Similar

projects have been organised in at least some fifteen countries that have experienced conflicts, including Afghanistan, Cambodia, Congo, Chechnya, Georgia, Palestine, Romania, Kosovo, India, Tanzania and the like, where music therapy has been a component part of psycho-social assistance programmes. Each of these projects differs in methods and the working framework that it implements (Heidenreich 2005). An illustration of this is provided by the music projects organised in Rwanda during 2004, which were intended for children and young people. The purpose was to offer assistance in overcoming the trauma from the past and awakening hope in a better future, using music to reach the victims, the survivors and the aggressors (Krämer 2005). After the wars in the regions of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, several projects were conducted with wartime refugees from these countries, based on the application of music therapy. Thus, the “Azra” Project headed up by Svanibor Pettan (1995), was based on the utilisation of music as a means of transcending post-war stress and the problems in the lives of Bosnian refugees in Norway. A similar project, also in Norway, was organised by Kjell Skjellstad (1996), and related to refugees from Africa, Asia and South America who had come to the Scandinavian countries.

In the case of Srebrenica, the projects were largely those of governmental and non-governmental organisations from The Netherlands, which offer a wide scope of programmes in the post-war period – from donations for initiating private entrepreneurship that enable the livelihood of returnees, through workshops aimed at mental and physical recovery, to various culture and music events. A very interesting example seen during this research was the involvement of Musicians Without Borders from The Netherlands and Bosnia-Herzegovina in organising workshops for the women of Srebrenica who are still living in refugee camps in the Tuzla region, as well as workshops for children from the Srebrenica region. In 2003, Musicians Without Borders commenced the “Music Bus” Project, which represents a mobile music school providing music activities for children from all the ethnic groups in post-war Srebrenica. The Children’s Music Theatre was founded in Srebrenica as part of this project; children learn to sing, dance and act there. The basic purpose of the theatre is to enable multi-ethnic co-operation in the region, which is still divided by the ethnic conflict. As part of the “Music Bus” Project, Musicians Without Borders has also established links with the Srebrenica 99 and Power of Women societies, as well as with displaced persons camps for women on Tuzla Canton territory. The main contact was achieved with the Power of Women society, which organises weekly psycho-therapy sessions for Srebrenica women. Since Musicians Without Borders also has a music therapy segment as part of its activities, their basic intention in this project was to organise workshops using alternative methods for helping women who had suffered loss and trauma. What is significant in this regard is that the utilisation of the alternative methods was actually based on music therapy elements and/or on the cultural animation of

women within the music, singing and drama groups. Six women from The Netherlands, members of the *Lele Mam* group, and the *Corona* Ensemble from Sarajevo, along with Lejla Mulaosmanović, the conductor from Tuzla, were included in the “From Woman to Woman” [*Od žene do žene*] Project. Using elements of music therapy was based on joint performance of *sevdalinke* and old urban songs, which the organisers, in the words of the chairman of Musicians Without Borders for Bosnia-Herzegovina, Radoslav Čorlija, judged to be the most feasible *music* approach to these women. According to Čorlija, this choice was the consequence of the organisers’ comprehension that the *sevdalinka* can be deemed a form of lament, and can thus be suitable for expressing grief. So they are not performed as an accompaniment to merry relaxation, but rather as a channel through which the women of Srebrenica can express their sadness (noted in Sarajevo, October 2009). During the workshops, it was established that the organisers had not been mistaken – the Srebrenica women reacted with full emotion in performing the *sevdalinke*, which is also shown by the statement of one of the participants that, with the performance of the *sevdalinke*, “the pain in her breast immediately disappeared”.<sup>9</sup>

This example corresponds perfectly with the findings of Leichter, according to whom “the final intention of expressing, performing or comprehending music lies in psychic relaxation” (according to Degmečić et al. 2005:288), as with Lehtonen who “has shown that music is one of the best ways of activating psychic processes” – it “engulfs us and, at the same time, spontaneously brings to our minds meaningful memories, mental pictures and experiences from our past, without pain and anxiety” (ibid.:289). The same can be applied to the Srebrenica case, as confirmed by Branka Štrabuer, chairperson of the Power of Women association, who speaks of how the women of Srebrenica experienced this joint performance of the *sevdalinke* and the impression it left upon them:

We were in two refugee camps and we sang with our women who still live in refugee camps, that means in the Tuzla Canton – at Višće and Karaula. Those are our permanent groups – psycho-therapy groups – and we simply brought a small ensemble into the psycho-therapy group (there, I don’t know what to call them, a choir, an ensemble). Naturally enough, conversation began as it always does. We are women and had told them that we would be coming. And then we said: “Well, what do you think, should we sing a little?” They said: “No problem.” We sang and, of course, I sang with the women. But, unfortunately, the women were crying. I found it very difficult to sing, but we sang our old Bosnian *sevdalinka* – a song that is full of emotion. All of our *sevdalinke* are full of emotion, and are quite sad when you listen to the words. They cried. We sang without stopping. We did not leave any room for them to comment. They cried, stopped crying, and then another began

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<sup>9</sup> I am taking these comments on the effect of these and other workshops from the statements of the organisers. On the other hand, none of the individuals upon whose statements the above part of the text is based participated in such workshops.

to cry ... At the end, I asked them how they felt. They were satisfied, very much so, happy that they had again heard those old songs. (...) The women also experienced that as a form of re-traumatisation and return to the past, because all of them felt [it] – and all the songs mention a certain name, Huso, Ibro – and that reminded them of people from their past life and of events from the past. But, believe me, each of those songs penetrated to their hearts, which is very important, and prompted their emotions. That was in Višće. When we arrived in Jež, in Karaula, despite the fact that that was the same category of women with the same losses, from the same areas, those women sang with us, which was a great thing. One cried and sang (...) It was there that it happened that one woman from the Karaula settlement wanted to sing, and so she did sing. She cried while we were singing but, in the end, she still wanted to sing herself. She said: “Here, this is me singing for you”. That means she wanted to give something back, for her to give something, too. Listening to all this I recognised that perhaps by just our songs – with the *sevdalinka*, we can help them to get well. (noted in Sarajevo, October 2009)

The above statement shows the extent to which the Srebrenica women became involved in the joint singing and how much it helped them. It is very significant that some of the women expressed the wish to sing themselves although they were not encouraged to do so, which is in fact a rarity, bearing in mind that the surviving women of Srebrenica otherwise draw back from active music practice. A part of this project concluded with a concert called “Women for Women”, given by the *Lele Man* and *Corona* ensembles in the Church of St Joseph in Sarajevo. The members of these ensembles sang for the women of Srebrenica, who came to the concert in large numbers, which also speaks of how much this type of engagement by artists was accepted on their part. Due to the success of the workshops, Musicians Without Borders continued the project. So in March 2010, a workshop was held that also encompassed the leaders in this type of work with traumatised persons, with the intention that the project be expanded and continue to be active. Apart from the project mentioned, Musicians Without Borders has also founded the *Srebrenica Drum Orchestra* in Srebrenica, whose members are the children of Srebrenica.

### **Music in the name of Srebrenica**

The genocide in Srebrenica reflected upon the entire post-war situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Besides the fact that the survivors of Srebrenica themselves, that is, the women of Srebrenica, have founded associations like Power of Women, Women of Srebrenica, Mothers of the Srebrenica and Žepa Enclaves, Srebrenica 99, and the like, through which they are fulfilling their social and, to an extent, their political engagement in the post-war period, funds have also been set up, as well as other forms of assistance, which are intended for this part of the population. Today, the Srebrenica tragedy is a universal social theme to which attention

is directed from many aspects. Mentioning Srebrenica and commemorating the tragic events has found its place in almost all aspects of Bosnian-Herzegovinian art, and is reflected in the post-war engagement of artists who take the Srebrenica tragedy as a theme in their works. In that way, it has found its place in cinema (Aida Begić's "Snijeg" [Snow] and Ahmed Imamović's "Belvedere"), in painting (Berber's "Srebrenica" cycle), poetry (Latić's "Srebrenički inferno" [Srebrenica Inferno]), in prose and also in music. Such music works or projects are presented only briefly, while the greatest attention has been paid to the epic poem with music, "Srebrenica", since it originated from Srebrenica people themselves.

The best-known music work written in the name of Srebrenica is the oratorio "Srebrenica Inferno" written by Đelo Jusić, composed to the verses of Džemaludin Latić. This work is known to the broad public of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In the music sense, it has in some way become a music image of Srebrenica, or an ode of sorts dedicated to it. As such, it has been accepted by the Srebrenica population itself, which is confirmed by its performance at the annual memorial gatherings every 11th July, organised at Potočari. In addition to "Srebrenica Inferno" in the domain of classical music, there is also an operetta entitled "Srebreničanke" [Women of Srebrenica], written by Ivan Čavlović.

Under the patronage of Musicians Without Borders, a CD entitled *Songs for Srebrenica – od žene do žene, od srca do srca* [from woman to woman, from heart to heart] came out in 2001.<sup>10</sup> The disc contains songs performed by the female vocal ensemble *Vrouwvolk* from The Netherlands, and it is dedicated to the women of Srebrenica. What is symbolic, and connected with this CD, is the selection of *sevdalinke* largely and of old Bosnian urban songs, which, as is mentioned in the previous part, are used in the music therapy of the women of Srebrenica. It can be concluded on that basis that this was a conscious selection stemming from the knowledge that the Srebrenica women best accepted just such genres. Fred Abbing's song "Kolo bola" [*Kolo*-dance of Pain] is one of the tracks on the CD; it is composed to the poem, in English translation, by the famous Bosnian-Herzegovinian poet, Mak Dizdar, and is directly applicable to the Srebrenica tragedy from the female perspective:

*How long the kolo from hollow to hollow  
How long the sorrow from kolo to kolo  
How long the dread from stead to stead  
How long the tombs from coomb to coomb  
How long the blood we are judged to pay  
How long the deaths till the Judgement Day  
How long the kolo from hollow to hollow*

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<sup>10</sup> My thanks go to R. Čorlija, the chairperson of Musicians Without Borders of Bosnia-Herzegovina, who drew my attention to the CD and made it available to me for the requirements of this research.



*How long the sorrow from kolo to kolo*

*Kolo to kolo from sorrow to sorrow*

Apart from the works mentioned, a series of songs in diverse genres that have the Srebrenica tragedy as their theme has also been written in the post-war period. This theme has also thus found a place in Bosnian-Herzegovinian hip-hop music (*GenocideRap.com*: “Srebrenica/Never Again”, Edo Maajka: “Obećana riječ” [Promised Word] and “Babo moj” [My Father]), in newly-composed folk music (Hanka Paldum: “Srebrenice, nježna ljubavi” [Srebrenica, Gentle Love]), songs written in the spirit of *ilahije* (*Merdžani*: “Srebrenica”), as well as the local folk music, a favourite among the Srebrenica inhabitants (*Sateliti*: “Genocide”; *Zvuci Podrinja*: “Poletio soko sa planine” [A Falcon Took Flight from the Mountain] and “Srebrenica da se pamti” [Let Srebrenica Be Remembered]; *Veseli sastavci*: “Tragedija Srebrenice” [The Tragedy of Srebrenica]). The tragedy of Srebrenica was also sung by the artist Alma Ferović in a song entitled “Srebrenica”.

However, the most interesting work written in the name of Srebrenica is “Srebrenica” written by an amateur, Vehbija Ibrahimović Kigen, who is himself from the town. It is an epic poem set to music that describes in great detail the course and consequences of the Srebrenica tragedy from the perspective of an inhabitant of Srebrenica. It was performed by amateurs from Srebrenica: Jasmin Oštraković, Alija Tabaković, Vehbija Ibrahimović Kigen, Zehra Isić, Vahidin Ibrahimović, Mehrem Džafić and Belma Ibrahimović, and came out as a promotional CD in 2005 under the patronage of the Town of Srebrenica and the Organisational Board for Marking 11 July 1995 on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the genocide, and the burial of identified victims from July 1995.

The piece is divided into alternating sung and recited parts in which, almost chronologically, the tragedy in Srebrenica is described as seen through the eyes of one of the members of the local community. It is written in decasyllabic lines, and is based on bare narration and listing of the facts, without any aspiration towards artistic augmentation. Just because of its particular form, it is evident that this is an attempt to shape historical facts into verse, which is somewhat reminiscent of the epic poems inspired by atrocities during World War II, such as “Stojanka majka Knežopoljka” [Stojanka, Mother from Knežopolje] by Skender Kulenović and “Jama” [The Pit] by Ivan Goran Kovačić. What is most interesting in the music sense is the choice of style in which the poem is cast. The style is very similar to that in which the *ilahije* are performed at major concerts of spiritual music today, that is, in a synthesised sound that creates a music accompaniment that is completely subordinate to the text. The sound of the *tarabuka* goblet drum is also used as one of the instruments characteristic to *ilahija* performance. What is most interesting is the mode of performance that is based on nasal performance, again characteristic to *ilahija* performance today, which is the way of performance through almost the entire piece, and with a host of melismata and pronounced nasal tones that associ-

ate most to the ritual recitation in Islam. This is again interesting if one takes into account that today's "music" practice among the Srebrenica population is largely reduced to its role within the framework of religious practice. In keeping with that, as well as with the fact that spiritual expression is perhaps most appropriate to the music interpretation of such a text, the choice of spiritual music style and the manner of performance characteristic to it seems logical and fully consistent with the attitude of the people of Srebrenica towards music in general. However, that is at the same time an indicator that music, in any form whatsoever, is still present among the inhabitants of the Srebrenica region and it seems very significant that it has been the survivors of Srebrenica themselves who have engendered this *music* work. As another characteristic that supports the situation shown above and the conclusions drawn to date, I would like to underscore the use of the *saz* in the part of the piece that relates to love for Bosnia and for Podrinje. Its use in that part in fact demonstrates the overall conception of that instrument as national, Bosnian and Bosniac, so it is no surprise that it has been chosen as the music symbol of Bosnia. Only the finale of the epic bears the basic message that Srebrenica is never forgotten, and that is also the part in which, again in the *ilahije* performance style, a soloist is introduced to the accompaniment of a mixed choir:

<i>Potočari, mjesto vječne kuće,</i>	<i>Potočari, now forever home,</i>
<i>I ko nije, već za tebe čut će,</i>	<i>Who hasn't heard of you, soon will, (soloist)</i>
<i>I ko nije, već za tebe čut će,</i>	<i>Who hasn't heard of you, soon will, (choir)</i>
<i>Jedna želja u mislima samo,</i>	<i>Only one wish in our thoughts now,</i>
<i>Da sve mrtve ukopamo tamo.</i>	<i>To bury all our dead at Potočari.</i>

<i>Još će teći suze niz obraze,</i>	<i>Still the tears course down our cheeks,</i>
<i>Klanjat će se još mnoge dženez,</i>	<i>So many funeral ceremonies yet to be bowed, (soloist)</i>
<i>Klanjat će se još mnoge dženez,</i>	<i>So many funeral ceremonies yet to be bowed, (choir)</i>
<i>Neka Allah džennet im podari,</i>	<i>May Allah reward them with Paradise,</i>
<i>Opomena svima – Potočari.</i>	<i>A warning to us all – Potočari.</i>

All the mentioned examples of music in the name of Srebrenica testify to the topicality of the Srebrenica tragedy, which is best illustrated by the fact that this is a very broad range of music expression in which Srebrenica is present – from songs in the *ilahija* spirit, works written on the basis of classical music, through newly-composed and local folk music, and on to hip-hop and pop music. All this speaks of the presence of Srebrenica not only among its immediate population, but also throughout the entire national community.

## Conclusion

The research has shown that turning towards religion, and to music within religion, has been caused by a new awareness among the Srebrenica population

which, as a consequence of the tragic circumstances that made impossible the normal continuance of life, self-identified by religious factors, but also distanced by them from many aspects that made up their pre-war lives, and also in that way from individual secular music forms. The need for religious and national identification, as well as for testimony to one of the greatest tragedies of the 20th century continues even today, and can also be monitored through personal choices of the type of music that is present in everyday life. So it is that today, sixteen years after the end of the war, the role of the *ilahiya* has not only been retained, but has become even more significant, while patriotic songs are still present and popular among the Srebrenica population. A special role in the “music life” of post-war Srebrenica is played by the *sevdalinka*, as a significant factor in the recovery of the traumatised population, in which one is thinking primarily of its broad and intentional use in music therapy. Wartime Srebrenica and the genocide in Srebrenica are the themes of many songs within the newly-composed, folk and local folk music genres performed by music groups such as the *Sateliti*, who were part of the pre-war, wartime and post-war periods. A major change in music practice during the war, but also after it, in addition to the non-music factors that were the basic cause, have considerably defined the attitude of the people of Srebrenica themselves towards music, primarily in the attitude of individuals towards music, in which that attitude has been conditioned by their diverse fates within the framework of their joint experience of genocide. In fact, it can be said that their attitude (whether positive or negative) is crucial and takes its roots from the wartime period in which individuals lived through various experiences of war that later influenced their post-war attitude towards music. However, it does vary from interlocutor to interlocutor, does not always correspond with what the Srebrenica people actually *do* in music, due to the fact that the research has shown that music *still lives* amongst them. However, the extent to which it is present and in what forms is open to discussion, which is most noticeable in the very absence of music examples in this article. In contrast to that, the most credible proof that music has not been suppressed, in addition to the popularity of newly-composed and local folk music, lies in the creation of the epic poem with music, “Srebrenica”, which derived from the people of Srebrenica themselves. That work demonstrates in the best possible way that music *exists* among the survivors of Srebrenica today and just how much it is still a worthy way of marking their tragedy, together with their need for constant remembrance of it.

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## GLAZBA SREBRENICE NAKON RATA. STAVOVI I PRAKSA PREŽIVJELIH BOŠNJAKA, GLAZBENA TERAPIJA I GLAZBENA DJELA U IME SREBRENICE

### SAŽETAK

Ovim se istraživanjem nastojalo pokazati koliko je glazbena praksa Srebrenice izmijenjena u kontekstu rata 1992.–1995. i genocida u lipnju 1995. godine, ali i odgonetnuti koliko je glazbe ostalo među preživjelim srebreničkim Bošnjacima, koliko je relevantna u odnosu na veliku ljudsku tragediju i koliko je integralni dio kulture i života preživjelih danas. U radu se donose primjeri raširenosti religijske glazbene prakse, primjeri glazbenoterapijskih projekata pod pokroviteljstvom međunarodnih humanitarnih organizacija te primjeri žanrovski različitih glazbenih djela nastalih u ime Srebrenice.

Ključne riječi: glazba poslije rata, Srebrenički genocid, religijska glazbena praksa, ilahija, sevdalinka, humanitarni glazbeni projekti, glazba u ime Srebrenice