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ORIENTALISM AND NEW MUSICOLOGY

The aim of this paper is to outline the history of the concept of *Orientalism* in the field of New musicology and to point out that musicological discussions of Orientalism significantly changed disciplinary profile of musicology in the direction of *interdisciplinary* or *contextual* musicology. The area of Postcolonial studies has been recognized by New musicology as a possible starting point for theorizing the new issues related to the questions of music, race, ethnic and national otherness, and European colonialism. In 1991, with the publication of Ralph P. Locke's text "Constructing the Oriental 'Other': Saint-Saëns's *Samson et Dalila*" in *Cambridge Opera Journal*, the musicological research of the European professional music tradition from the aspects of postcolonial theories has been institutionalized and the concept of Orientalism has been introduced into the field of research objects of musicology. What is present as the common aspects of all musicological studies that address the issue of musical representations of the Orient are interdisciplinarity and contextuality. Contrary to the reduction of the complex Western European music practices to the idea of an autonomous work of music devoted to an aesthetic enjoyment, postcolonial musicology proposed poststructuralist analytical models of text and discourse and affirm the interest in the context of work of music. In that manner, musicology has been updated as a discipline that autocritically approaches Western European professional music practice by seeing it/self as only one of the possible historical formations of culture/knowledge in which there are visible clusters, conflicts, and aspirations to present (Western) European capitalist patriarchal politics as a universal economic, political and cultural power.

1. Introduction

Texts of various genres were the initial phenomena in relation to which the theoretical corpus of Postcolonial studies has been formed around the 1980s. Geographical notes, travel books, anthropological works, memoirs, and novels

were seen as cultural representations of the European colonization process, imperialism and the creation of the Orient as the ‘second’ of the West. Different forms of written and visual discourses of colonialism were treated in postcolonial theorizations as means of establishing and realization of imperialist politics through knowledge and culture. During the 1990s, issues related to politics, art and social hegemony were particularly developed around the field of film. In the same period works from the historical heritage of the canonical, Western European, ‘high’ professional music practice began to be explored as texts in which it is possible to recognize the musical representation of the Orient from the Occident position. Parallel to the research of Orientalism through the examples of literature, fine arts, and film, issues of alterity, Orient and Orientalism were incorporated into the research interest scope of the New musicology.

However, the redefinition of the scientific object of musicology – from a *work of music* that is devoted to an uninteresting aesthetic enjoyment to the *musical text* through which social identities are built – has started a bit earlier. The beginnings of musicological interest in the context of music can be located back in the 1970s when the tendencies towards the Critical theory have been introduced and elaborated as the relevant theoretical platform in the field of music iconography. This disciplinary transformation of musicology became acuter at the end of the 1980s when feminist theories led to the musicological study focus on the role of music in the construction of gender and sexuality. With the development of feminist musicology, a further stream of the New musicology was determined: any form of practice of music is the equally relevant object of scientific research about music when it is directed to the question of the context, of how a certain social identity is built through a certain form of music practice. In that sense, then, representatives of New musicology recognized the area of Postcolonial studies as a possible starting point for theorizing the new issues related to the questions of music, race, ethnic and national otherness, and European colonialism. The intensified reflections of these problems were certainly encouraged by the analysis of Verdi’s *Aida* in Edward Said’s second key book, *Culture and Imperialism* from 1993 (Said 1993: 134–157). Observing the opera from the postcolonial interpretative point of view, Said claimed that the *Aida* is a representation of orientalized Egypt: “as a highly specialized form of aesthetic memory, *Aida* embodies, as it was intended to do, the authority of Europe’s version of Egypt at a moment in its nineteenth-century history, a history for which Cairo in the

years 1869 – 1871 was an extraordinarily suitable site” (Said 1993: 151). My aim in this text is to outline the history of the concept of *Orientalism* in the field of New musicology and to point out that musicological questionings of Orientalism significantly changed the disciplinary profile of musicology in the direction of *contextual* or *interdisciplinary* musicology.

2. Discussion

The initial period of musicological interest in the issue of Orientalism and music was located in the early 1990s. In 1992, at the conference titled *Italy: 'Italy' in Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas* (Syracuse University, America), Paul Robinson assessed that “among the more remarkable events of recent intellectual history is that Edward Said, famous avant-garde literary critic, passionate advocate for the Palestinian cause, has begun to write about music” (Robinson 1993: 133). Robinson’s conference presentation has been published in the musicological journal *Cambridge Opera Journal* next year (Robinson 1993). Two years earlier, in 1991, with the publication of Ralph P. Locke’s text “Constructing the Oriental ‘Other’: Saint-Saëns’s *Samson et Dalila*” in the same journal (Locke 1991), the musicological research of the European professional music tradition from the aspects of postcolonial theories has been institutionalized, and the concept of Orientalism has been introduced into the field of research objects of musicology.

Several common interpretative points are observed when we critically look at the contemporary musicological texts connected with the issues of Orientalism. For instance, the relocation of the temporal aspect of the opera in ancient times is regularly recognized, on the one hand, as a means of avoiding the explicit delivery of comments of imperial politics and reality, and on the other, as a sign that the colonized culture has long been stopped in the process of development. Stereotypes in opera characters are also noticed: the oriental man is always a tyrant, and the oriental woman is usually a dancer or an exotic seductress (Saint-Saëns’s *Samson et Dalila*; Strauss’s *Salome*).¹ Also, the consideration of Orientalism in the domain of opera always implies indications of the mutual relations

¹ Certain studies in this regard treat the similarity of stereotypical characters in operas and orientalist painting, for example, in Ingre’s and Gérôme’s paintings. See Locke 1993–94: 48–64.

between the gender and the race – a man from the West as a representative of the Occident is most often in love with an oriental woman who has a devastating impact on him (*Carmen*, *Madama Butterfly*).²

What is present as the common aspects of all musicological studies that address the issue of musical representations of the Orient are interdisciplinarity and contextuality. A discussion of the representations of the Other in music and through music does not only imply a ‘pure’ analysis of work of music, but also insisting on the interpretation of that analysis by employing the theories of identity, gender, race, hegemony, nationalism, and ethnicity. Although Said’s concept of ‘Orientalism’ exists as the basic concept from which today the musicological methodologies for the examination of different types of racial, national, and ethnic others in the musical text are performed, the current question continues to be: *what musicology means under the terms Orient and Orientalism?* Certainly, all authors agree that Orientalism implies the political dimension of culture, and, at the same time, the theoretical analysis of the representations of the Orient in the various texts of the West. Knowledge about Orient always appears in the service of self-esteeming the value of Europe, in the form of Orientalism as the construction of self-deprivation representations through culture, as the ‘design’ of a negative diversity of the Other in the representations by Dominant.

Several referential problems of the theoretical framework within which the phenomenon of Orientalism in music could be considered have been pointed out by Ralph P. Locke: “1) to what extent do the works reflect, or even claim to reflect, the lived reality of the Middle East?; 2) to what extent do the works construct a fantasy Middle East upon which Westerns can project their own desires and anxieties?; 3) how are these various ‘reflections’ and ‘fantasy constructions’ carried out: primarily through extramusical devices (tiles, programs, costumes, sets) or specifically musical ones?; 4) if ‘Oriental’ musical devices are there, how do they relate to other musical exoticisms (e.g. Native American or ‘Gypsy’ tropes)?; 5) in what ways do these musical devices derive from stylistic features of one or another (actual) Middle East musical tradition?” (Locke 1998: 105). In the book from 2009, titled *Musical Exoticism: Images and Reflections*, Locke outlines major trends in exotic depiction from the Baroque era onward (Locke 2009),

² It is considered, for example, how the questions of gender and race were used to establish Occident and Orient as superior and subordinate to one another. See Parakilas 1993–94.

while his book from 2015, *Music and the Exotic from the Renaissance to Mozart* is expressed as a reinterpretation of the history of music from the Renaissance to Classicism in line with the thesis that “during the years 1500 – 1800, European performing arts revealed in a kaleidoscope of Otherness: Middle-Eastern harem women, fortune-telling Spanish ‘Gypsies’, Incan priests, Barbary pirates, moresca dancers, and more” (Locke 2015: publisher’s summary). Case studies that Locke analyzed as relevant subjects of the research of orientalized music representations are primarily those from the domain of ‘high’ music, especially from the field of opera.

But, in her book *Orientalism and Representations of Music in the Nineteenth-Century British Popular Arts* from 2008, Clair Mabilat (Mabilat 2008) realizes that in relation to the existing studies of Orientalism, the question still remains as what is the Orient in general, and which geographical and time areas are covered by this term? Mabilat noticed that for two decades – from Said’s initial concept of Orient in his book *Orientalism* from 1978 (Said 1978) to 1999 when Ziauddin Sardar published his book under the same title as Said’s (Sardar 1999) – Orient appeared in Oriental studies as a distinctly localized geographical area. While Said’s Orient is reduced to the Middle East, twenty-one years later, Sardar talks about the Orient as a never-defined object, as an exemplary theoretical model depicted by Said’s book, which could actualize any geographical area outside the West that at the moment best suits the West (Mabilat 2008: 4). Mabilat also notes that Said’s orientalization was seen as a result of imperialist greed and influence, while, again twenty-one years later, Richard King proposes the idea of Orientalism that goes beyond the ideologies of imperialist Europe, since orientalization was also influential in non-imperialist European nations, and towards countries that were never part of the European empire (King, 1999: 85, according to Mabilat 2008: 4). In line with this, Mabilat uses a wider definition of the Orient in her book, one that includes Asia, Islamic North Africa, the ‘Middle East’, Turkey and South American as the Others of the 19th century Britain (Mabilat 2008: 4). Except for geographically dispersed Orient, this author does not rely solely on examples of ‘high’ western European music practice in the analysis of the representation of the Orient, as was characteristic for the initial introduction of the concept of Orientalism into the field of musicology. Apart from the representations of the Orient by music, visual representations of music were also analyzed, as well as various popular forms of the 19th century Britain, such as popular songs, travel books,

children's fiction, diaries, photographs, films, illustrations in books, periodicals, newspapers, and magazines. Therefore, the scope of possible objects for the analysis of representations of others by music is extended and implies not only compositions of high music practice, but popular music, as well as representations of music performances in various high art and popular media. Analyzing numerous examples, Mabilat pointed to different ways of representation, depending on the media used, but also on those elements of representations that eventually reflected as constants, and rooted as widespread prejudices about the gender and sexual identity of the Other through representations of outside of Europeana music and musicians. The key question about the representation of Occident and Orient in music is in relation to what the presence of the Other is identified in a certain discourse of music? In this regard, it has been noticed that the term *Orientalism* in musicological literature has experienced various repercussions that are pointed out as several models of expressing Orientalism through music.

First of all, if we are dealing with the issue of Orientalism in music in a certain musicological text, then the potential objects of the research have proved to be different dialects of musical exoticism in Western music that evoke the East or Orient. Under the Orient, geographically, it means either the Islamic Middle East (West Africa, Turkey, Arabia, Persia) or East and South Asia (Far East – India, Indochina, China, Japan) or all of these countries together. Then oriental or exotic can actually be spoken of as synonyms. In accordance with this, musicological studies have identified the unique musical codes of the representations of Orient or the East, of which the *alla Turca* is certainly the most famous determinant. The composition *Le désert* of French composer Félicien David was identified as the main 'source' of musical representations of the other, from which elements were drawn by the next generation of composers – Bizet (*Les pêcheurs de perles*), Verdi (*Aida*), Massneet (*Thaïs*), Richard Strauss (*Salome*) (See Locke 2001, digital edition).

Another object that we can identify as relevant for the formation of the field of postcolonial musicology relates exclusively to a special music-scenic genre – opera. The opera is recognized as the kind of text in which the concept of Orientalism in Said's sense is realized in the domain of musical and performing arts. Mozart's opera *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* from 1782 is most often referred to as a symbol of the implementation of the colonialization process in

the field of music. Thereby, opera is, as a text, viewed in two ways: as the text that presented the other to the West and as a text that implemented the cultural hegemony over the Other, in those cases where the operas were deliberately created to be performed in colonized territories. Orientalism was able to appear in the opera at the level of both music and libretto, and from this point of view, opera is easily recognized as a special type of text that the West could use to impose hegemony and build speech on behalf of the Orient. In relation to that, in 2003 David Gramit rightly noticed that among the musicology fields that are particularly vital in the past few years especially distinguishes the one that relates to the researches of European musical representations of culturally 'other', more especially the ones concerned to the late 19th century European operas (Gramit 2003: 97).

On the other side, since the beginnings of the musicological study of Orientalism in music in the 1990s, when considering examples of Orientalism in music, some important authors have taken into account not only the music of the West but also other imperial powers, above all Russia. Thus, interest in the Middle East is recognized in the music of Russian composers (Borodin *Prince Igor*; Rimsky-Korsakov *Scheherazade*). Richard Taruskin points out that this kind of Orientalism can be understood only in the context of the appropriate times and Russian imperialist undertakings. Composers such as Mussorgsky or Borodin were invited to contribute to the celebration of the anniversary of Emperor Alexander II's in 1880 and to celebrate the music of the emperor expansionist policy towards the East. Accordingly, Taruskin believes that the periodization of Russian musical Orientalism can be performed in correspondence with the stages of the Russian imperialist endeavor (Taruskin 1992: 253–280). On the other hand, if we say that for the Russia Orient was East, for the West Orientalism was Russian music, as Russia was the East of the West. This observation may be best illustrated by the reactions that Russian ballet performances have produced in Paris in the early 20th century.

And finally, using the term *Orientalism* in musicology today, it is possible to refer not only to European but also to non-European representations of other cultures that no longer come exclusively from the territory of North Africa or Asia. Thus, for example, Lawrence Kramer considered Ravel's relation to the ancient Greek culture in the composition *Dafnis and Kloe* (Kramer 1995: 201–202).

These four different views of Orientalism in musicology indicate the relativity of the object of the study of orientalist-oriented musicology. It turns out that Orient in the geographical sense is a fictitious concept created by Europe, and that there is not really only one, homogeneous collective Orient. The relation between the West and the Orient is actually reflected in different geographical and cultural points and presupposes any form of existence or performance of the central and its marginal cultural formation. In the current period of globalization of economic and cultural policy, the relations between the Occident and the Orient could be projected from the West's historically completed imperialist conquest of the East to all possible current pretensions that a singular socio-cultural identity in the process of globalization realizes its potential universality.

With that in mind, in the text titled "Musicology on Safari: Orientalism and the Specter of Postcolonial Theory" from 2003, Matthew Head presented a critical attitude towards the object of postcolonial musicological research (Head 2003: 223). Head speaks of the so-called "safari mentality" of many musicologists who name and classify the Other as truly transparent and clearly present in music, while not paying attention to the evident fact that in these works there are many disagreements regarding what is meant by the "oriental figure" in music and what it really is about (Head 2003: 224). This author identifies this kind of research as a modern echo of colonization. It aims to create an image that will confirm that Europe once had power over other countries, and to actualize the cultural hegemony of Europe in the past. In other words, the construction of the concept of Orientalism in the scientific thought of the West today acts as an instrument by which the Occident or the Western world protects itself from re-examining its own concepts and beliefs.

The problem of loading ideological aspects into certain musical discourses by musicologists today is indeed something to be considered since in some compositions the musical references of non-Western were used only in terms of extending the volume of sound material or enriching the rhythmical fund, and not in the aim to build a certain ideological connotation. In fact, the problem of what Orientalism in music and musicology really is has to be resolved through the making of a distinction between the term exoticism and Orientalism. Regarding

the use of these two terms, it can be observed that, as opposed to the term *Orientalism*, *exoticism* was used to mark the presence of musical elements of other cultures in Western music that do not carry ideological connotations. For example, the performance of Debussy is rated as a representative example of exoticism in music. “Debussy adds unusual colour to his work with these influences, but he does not do this as a critique of the culture from which the ideas were taken. This is the essential difference between exoticism and orientalism: whilst exoticism enables artists (in whatever art-form) to broaden their artistic palate and to explore new artistic mediums, images and styles, orientalism depicts another culture in such a way as to create comment, or to highlight (often negative) difference. The former appreciates and embraces cultural diversity, whereas the latter (generally) disparages or criticizes it” (Mabilat 2008: 7).

Today, musicology certainly overcame the issues of the representation of the Orient by extending the circle of interest of its representatives to the consideration of different representations of the *otherness*. A paradigmatic example of these aspirations is a collection of *Western Music and Its Others. Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music*, from 2000, where we find topics and theorizes regarding the current perception of representations of otherness in music. The title *Western Music and Its Others* combines texts dealing with problems of: 1) musical exoticism and Orientalism; 2) the relation of Western music and non-Western music; 3) the relation between musicology and otherness; 4) the *world music* phenomenon. Western music is understood as a West-European ‘high’, autonomous culture practice. The authors of the texts in this book belong not only to the field of musicology but also to popular music studies, film music, and ethnomusicology, and it can be noted that the main tendency of the organizers of this collection was to place the mentioned problems as equally legitimate objects of research and to emphasize the highly interdisciplinary outlines of these disciplines. This primarily refers to the introduction of compositions of popular music as legitimate objects of scientific research. Thus, in the texts of this collection, the question of the other is discussed on the example of the French opera from the beginning of the 20th century (Jann Pasler: *Race, Orientalism, and Distinction in the Wake of the “Yellow Peril”*, /Pasler 2000: 86–118/), but also on cases of popular dance groups (David Hesmondhalgh, *International Times: Fusions, Exoticism, and Antiracism in Electronic Dance Music* /Hes-

mondhalgh 2000: 280–304/). By theorizing compositions of popular music, this study actually opens the possibility of future focusing of Postcolonial studies on popular culture *per se* as a field of objects relevant to exploring the concepts of otherness. In this sense, New musicology and Postcolonial studies have a mutual effect on the formation of new perspectives of their research and the platform of the scientific field, making them more prominent in forming in accordance with the starting points of cultural studies.

3. Conclusion

The introduction of the concept of Orientalism into the field of musicology changed its disciplinary profile in the same direction in which musicology was led by the development of feminist views, in the direction of *contextual* or *inter-disciplinary* musicology. That direction means the auto critic of patriarchal, Eurocentric, canonical platform of musicology as a history of music that confirmed the traditional model of humanities as a field of objective knowledge of a West-European, white man as a universal subject, about the cultural activities of that universal subject, and for the other universal subjects. Contrary to the reduction of the complex Western European music practices to the idea of an autonomous work of music devoted to an aesthetic enjoyment, both feminist musicology and postcolonial musicology proposed poststructuralist analytical models of text and discourse and affirm the interest in the context of work of music. In that manner, musicology has been updated as a discipline that auto critically approaches Western European professional music practice by seeing it/self as only one of the possible historical formations of culture/knowledge in which there are visible clusters, conflicts and aspirations to present (Western) European capitalist patriarchal politics as universal economic, political and cultural power.

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Orijentalizam i nova muzikologija

Sažetak

Cilj je ovog teksta skicirati povijest koncepta orijentalizma u polju nove muzikologije i ukazati na to da su muzikološke problematizacije orijentalizma u glazbi znatno izmijenile disciplinarni profil muzikologije u smjeru *interdisciplinarne* ili *kontekstualne* muzikologije. Predstavnici nove muzikologije prepoznali su područje postkolonijalnih studija kao moguću polazišnu točku novih pitanja i problema koji su se ticali odnosa između glazbene, rasne, etničke i nacionalne drugosti te europskog kolonijalizma. Objavljuvanjem teksta Ralpa P. Lockea “Constructing the Oriental ‘Other’: Saint-Saëns’s *Samson et Dalila*” u časopisu *Cambridge Opera Journal* 1991. godine, institucionalizirano je polje muzikološkog istraživanja elitne, kanonizirane europske glazbene tradicije sa stajališta postkolonijalnih studija, a koncept orijentalizma uveden je u krug objekata istraživanja aktualne muzikologije. Ono što se iskazuje kao zajednički aspekt svih muzikoloških istraživanja koja dotiču pitanje glazbenih reprezentacija Orijenta jest interdisciplinarnost i kontekstualnost. Nasuprot teorijskom svodjenju

složenih zapadnoeuropskih društvenih glazbenih praksi na idealnost autonomnoga glazbenog djela namijenjenog bezinteresnom estetskom uživanju, i feministička muzikologija i postkolonijalna muzikologija predložile su poststrukturalističke analitičke modele teksta i diskursa te afirmirale zanimanje za kontekst glazbenog djela. Time je aktualizirana muzikologija kao disciplina koja autokritički pristupa zapadnoeuropskoj profesionalnoj skladateljskoj praksi time što je/sebe vidi kao tek jednu od mogućih povijesnih formacija kulture/znanja u kojima su vidljivi rascjepi, sukobi i težnje za predočavanjem (zapadno)europske kapitalističke, patrijarhalne politike kao univerzalne ekonomske, političke i kulturalne moći.

Keywords: Orientalism, New musicology, postcolonial musicology, interdisciplinarity, contextuality of musicology

Ključne riječi: orijentalizam, nova muzikologija, postkolonijalna muzikologija, interdisciplinarnost, kontekstualnost muzikologije

