

»NAVIGATING THROUGH THE PAST«:  
ISSUES FACING AN HISTORIAN OF MUSIC IN BOSNIA\*

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*Abstract — Résumé*

Any attempt at writing a history of music of an area, nation or state, needs to recognize the intrinsic issues and to identify the specific historical agents determining the developments being studied. Earlier historical accounts of music in Bosnia tended to apply a rather straightforward positivist method by establishing factual information, recording the existence of particular personalities and the presence of musical institutions. Here it is argued that once we recognize the full context in which such facts existed, it is possible to identify hitherto overlooked tensions which left a lasting impact on music in Bosnia. Arguably the most important

tension is the one between an older manner of experiencing music as a communal, identity-forming activity, and a recent, late-nineteenth-century manner, which recognizes that the creation and the reception of music can also be based on an individual search for expression. The two tendencies have often sat uneasily side by side in Bosnia, while the most recent attitudes to art music in Bosnia seem to indicate that the tensions continue to exist.

**Key words:** Bosnia; History (regional and national); Folk music; Art music; Military bands; Choral societies; Music and politics; Group identity

»Navigating« suggests an open space, an expanse of water, and the need to steer one's ship with the aid of maps, applying to the process an established method of reading the meaning of the symbols on the map and translating them into ac-

\* This paper is based on the text prepared for a public lecture delivered in Sarajevo in September 2002 at the invitation of the International Forum Bosnia. It has now been slightly extended and revised in order to adapt to the medium of the printed page the version which was originally intended for oral presentation. Throughout this paper the form »Bosnia« is used as an abbreviation for the full form of »Bosnia and Herzegovina«.

tion. All this implies that the traveller is going through charted waters and that he knows where he wants to go. But if he does not know what lies ahead, then the art of navigating becomes that much more challenging. The emotions arising in the mind of the navigator must inevitably include a sense of exhilaration at the prospect of finding new lands as well as the foreboding and the sense of responsibility for the crew. All this may pass through our minds when faced with the word »navigating«, but in fact, the concept has been borrowed from the title of an essay by Stefano Vitali which reads it in full: »Navigare nel passato: la ricerca archivistica in Internet«. <sup>1</sup> This promptly returns us to contemporary reality, for what Vitali really means does not involve the sailing of a real ship. He has used an image characteristic of the late-twentieth-century experience of sailing, or literally, surfing on the seas of the electronic media: we are dealing with a metaphorical use of the term, situating the journey into cyber-space replete with information which, one way or another, can be of help to an historian. This is an entirely appropriate way of mixing the past and the present since in the study of history the past and the present are not rigidly divided.

By claiming that an historian of music wishing to account for the fortunes of music in Bosnia faces a special case, the case arising out of the specific situation of Bosnia's cultural past, we would, in fact, be stating the obvious. Indeed, each historical case is specific and therefore, if all cases are specific, then all have the very characteristic of specificity in common. There is a nice little paradox here, and the only reasonable conclusion to be drawn is that wherever an historian treads, s/he will have to exercise caution. This is a sceptical view, which has been slowly but relentlessly asserting itself in historical studies in the wake of the great optimism of the early part of the nineteenth century where historical models were either the progress of the World Spirit (*Weltgeist*) imagined by Hegel, or Ranke's positivistically charged »wie es eigentlich gewesen«. We (and when I say »we«, I mean primarily my generation, growing up and being educated in post-Second World War Yugoslavia) were, in spite of all the scepticism that the early twentieth century injected in historical study, still the recipients of these two views. The Hegelian one came to us in the guise of Marxism and its historical programme of seeing history as a protracted struggle of social classes, while the Rankean one postulated that by an ever-increasing refinement of our knowledge of facts we should arrive at a truthful image of a past era.

In music history there existed for a long time a deeply entrenched belief that because music (by which I mean European, primarily written, music) is a universal language, there is less danger there of falling into the trap of ideologized or narrowly localized views, since there was an implication that the language of mu-

<sup>1</sup> Published in the review *Contemporanea*, No. 2, 2000. Quoted after: Giovanni DE LUNA. *La passione e la ragione. Fonti e metodi dello storico contemporaneo*, Milano 2001, 72.

sic transcends linguistic and political barriers. But cosmopolitan and trans-national as it might have been, music has always been a part of its world and those writing about it brought into their historical accounts all the beliefs and prejudices of their time or nation. Instructive in this case is the obsession with the labels for stylistic periods evident in musicology about a century ago. Students of music history were, for example, introduced to the belief that the Classical period did not follow directly after the Baroque; there was, it was asserted, an interim phase labelled »Pre-Classicism«. Indeed, a little leap of faith was needed since these alleged precursors of the Viennese Classicists (e.g. the members of the Stamitz and Benda families) were on the whole their contemporaries and did not neatly precede them. From a vantage point of the second half of the twentieth century it gradually became clear what was hidden behind all this. The doyen of Viennese musicology Guido Adler was responsible for charting the whole domain of historical musicology and giving it a solid methodological foundation, and a lot of his thinking evolved around Viennese music.<sup>2</sup> But Adler's late-nineteenth-century Austria was in the German-speaking world only one political and cultural entity, moreover, an entity standing outside the process of German unification then newly achieved under Prussian leadership. Adler's German counterpart, Hugo Riemann, may have felt that Austrian composers were stealing all the limelight and therefore needed a German counterpart, a stylistic school active on German soil, and this is how the pre-Classics came about, no matter that quite a lot of them were of Slavonic (Bohemian) descent. Thus any view of history, the very consciousness that is being inspired and disseminated by the historians, is subject to, or the victim of, political situations.

Following on from Riemann's pre-Classics, where we have a belated appearance of an interpretation of music history on the political scene, we may offer a working hypothesis that when music in its various guises enters civic life, becoming the very fabric of one's surroundings, it does so with a delay in respect to other forms of cultural life. Take for instance street names. I shall start not in Bosnia or in Sarajevo, but in Florence, a city with a considerably richer cultural tradition than that of Sarajevo, and my comparison is justified if by nothing else then by the heraldic symbol shared by Tuscany and Bosnia.<sup>3</sup> The oldest street names in Flor-

<sup>2</sup> Guido ADLER, Umfang, Methode und Ziel der Musikwissenschaft, *Vierteljahrsschrift für Musikwissenschaft*, I, 1885, 5-20.

<sup>3</sup> The fleur-de-lis was incorporated into the coat of arms of the medieval Bosnian kings as a direct borrowing from the Anjou heraldry, having arrived to Bosnia via Hungary. A revised version of the medieval coat of arms was adopted by the newly independent state of Bosnia in 1992, but soon became an object of inter-ethnic disagreement. The Serbian and the Croatian factions in Bosnia held on to the Serbian and the Croatian coats of arms respectively, proclaiming the otherwise eminently suitable Bosnian medieval coat of arms as being a »Muslim« one, since the Bosniaks were the only ones ready to embrace an essentially neutral symbol. The late-twentieth century ignorance of the meaning of heraldic symbols thus led to the paradox that both the Orthodox Serbs and the Catholic Croats in Bosnia came to regard a coat of arms incorporating the fleur-de-lis, the representation of the Annunciation and of the Virgin Mary, as an Islamic symbol.

ence are those of trades: Via Pellicceria, Corso dei Tintori, and this strikes a familiar note in Sarajevo, where the trades gave their names to the streets in the old market quarter. Florence has a rich tradition of painting and music but one has to move outside the former city walls to find Via Giotto, Via Fra' Giovanni Angelico or Via dei Della Robbia. Visitors to Florence are even less familiar with Via Boccherini, Via Donizetti, Piazza Puccini or Via Francesco Landini tucked away as they are in a suburb north-west of the station of Santa Maria Novella. Given even the intense Florentine civic pride, the awareness of the importance of the musicians seems to have come in quite late, essentially during and after the Risorgimento.

If this is the state of affairs in Florence, it is not surprising that in terms of civic recognition musicians have not fared better in Sarajevo either. In my youth I was aware of only three streets in Sarajevo named after musicians: the Stevan Mokranjac, Stevan Hristić and Zlatko Baloković Streets, and, again invoking a parallel with Florence, these were small streets away from the city centre. Bosnian independence brought a wave of new or changed street-names. Among the musicians the losers are Mokranjac, Hristić and Baloković, and the stress is now on the names which had something to do with Sarajevo in particular or Bosnia in general. If prominence in the Bosnian, or the specifically Sarajevo context was the criterion for street-naming, then neither Hristić nor Baloković had any such significance. Mokranjac, beloved of choral societies in the first part of the twentieth century, was in addition, through no fault of his own, perhaps too closely associated with the first wave of Greater-Serbian sentiment after the First World War to survive the tragic early 1990s. There is a neat logic in the Mokranjac Street being re-named the Ludvig Kuba Street, for this Czech ethnomusicologist was a pioneer of folk-music study in Bosnia. The new arrivals on the list seem at first an unusual and diverse group: Franz Lehár, Avdo Smailović, Himzo Polovina and Zaim Imamović.<sup>4</sup> It may be at best plainly wrong or at worst presumptuous on my part to try and read some deep significance in this choice of names, but starting from the premiss that in this case we are not dealing with the results of a mere chance, then some causality has to be presupposed. I would like to argue that in order to understand this choice in its proper context, we need to indulge in some considerable »navigating through the past«.

Whatever the specific characteristics of a nation's or a region's history, the general components relating to the object of study are those which, in that paradoxical way referred to earlier, apply in all situations as fundamental categories. I shall call them »agents of history«, again borrowing the term from an Italian historian, Giovanni De Luna.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Avdo Smailović belonged to the first generation of Bosnian composers whose education was entirely accomplished within the boundaries of Bosnia after the Second World War. Himzo Polovina and Zaim Imamović were popular performers of Bosnian folk music, essentially working within the oral tradition but significantly dependant on the radio as a means of disseminating their performing styles. For the inclusion of Franz Lehár in this group see below in this paper.

<sup>5</sup> Giovanni DE LUNA, *La passione e la ragione*, 85 ff.

Whatever the differences between the relative strength of different historical forces, we are likely to find that organizations such as the church or a feudal court; social strata, such as an urban class; activities such as commerce or agriculture, become unavoidable in any account of a historical process. However, our consciousness of these forces (and here I mean consciousness in a much wider spectrum than exclusively among professional historians) is subject to the manner in which the passage of time shapes the survival of the awareness of historical processes. History thus is not just about »wie es eigentlich gewesen«, as Ranke believed, but the very historical processes have a life of their own. A simplistic statement that »facts disappear unless recorded« appears true only at first glance. The facts themselves are always selectively recorded, so it is difficult to argue that records would always produce a clear picture of the past even in cases when there is an abundance of written documents. On the other hand, facts do not disappear without trace, for even if not recorded they nevertheless enter a different world: the world of memory and oral dissemination. They thus become agents of history in their afterlife as it were, and their very existence is disguised or becomes eventually shaped into national consciousness or group psychology.

Accounts of medieval music in Bosnia are vague and documents scarce, and so far the best efforts of scholars have resulted in a small amount of fragmentary evidence emerging from the Dubrovnik archives. Players and singers in the employ of Bosnian feudal potentates were, according to this evidence, found performing in Dubrovnik not just as itinerant musicians in their own right, but named as belonging to a particular Bosnian ruler.<sup>6</sup> The language of the documents in which these details are to be found is Latin and therefore the terminology which sounds so cosmopolitan: *piffarii*, *lautarii*, *tubetae*, may in fact refer to instrumentalists of a low social status, not trained musicians, but those whom we would now call folk performers. This is by no means something that is peculiar to Bosnia: apart and away from the highly sophisticated feudal courts across Europe, in the fourteenth and the early fifteenth centuries music was still to a large extent disseminated by a class of the musical proletariat, depending on an oral, and indeed aural, rather than a written culture. A glimpse into an elevated type of musical activity in Bosnia is provided by an inventory of belongings of the Hranić family, also from a Dubrovnik document, and referring to a portable organ. In Italian this instrument would have been called an *organetto* and the inventory gives it a Slavonic form: *organic*.<sup>7</sup> We could only guess that it was manufactured in Italy and brought to Bosnia much in the same way in which pianos of Viennese provenance appeared in Bosnia in the nineteenth century. In the case of the instrumentalists recorded in

<sup>6</sup> Zija KUČUKALIĆ, *The Development of Musical Culture in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Sarajevo 1967, 17.

<sup>7</sup> Emilian LILEK, *Die Schatzkammer der Familie Hranici*, *Wissenschaftliche Mittheilungen aus Bosnien und der Herzegowina*, ii, 1894, 125-151, esp. 150.

Dubrovnik and of the Hranić family *organić*, we may be led to two very general assumptions: (a) the existence of musical objects and of an attendant musical activity presupposes the existence of a social class able to support such an activity, and (b) the existence in close proximity of an unwritten, communal, type of music-making and of sophisticated music-making requiring a degree of musical literacy are likely to be found side by side in all European feudal societies. The subsequent centuries brought a gradually increasing distinction between these two types of music-making, until various strands of musical nationalism in the nineteenth century did not present composers as well as ideologues with a programme of appropriation and elevation of the popular tradition to a supposedly more sophisticated level of art music. But by this time the differences were obvious — not differences in value as such, but differences between different modes of experiencing music. In one case, that of »art« music, we deal with a very ramified concept of individual creativity and originality which underlies the aesthetic principles of all urbanized societies; in the other case we witness a continuing shaping of artistic activity by the criteria of communal acceptance. As will be seen later, difficulties arise when aesthetic assumptions formulated in the »individualist« approach begin to be applied to the sphere of the »communal« approach, as sometimes happened in the cultural movements for national emancipation in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Questions of identity and belonging are inevitably raised in such discussions and are then projected backwards in time to encompass past events.

Bosnia enters European music history through an interesting case of »belonging«. Commercial printing of music followed the spread of book printing by several decades, but when it did take off in the early years of the sixteenth century, the technological advance was largely due to the Venetian printing house of Petrucci. Ottaviano Petrucci's prints were not just useful, they were beautifully produced and he had a good commercial instinct for what might become good merchandise. He thus engaged an editor to transcribe frottoles — popular polyphonic songs of the time, which Petrucci had already issued in their original ensemble form — and to arrange them so that one single person could sing and accompany himself or indeed herself. The editor was one Francis the Bosnian, who used only a Latinized form of his name: Franciscus Bossinensis. Alas, we know nothing about this man, where he came from or where he learned his craft. By the location of his activity and by the role he performed as Petrucci's editor he definitely belongs to the history of North-Italian Renaissance music. European musicologists usually pay little or no attention to his geographical origin, concentrating instead on the essence of his editorial role. In the history of music in the South-Slav lands he is often mentioned as an ethnic Croat who has added to the glory of the Italian Renaissance and deemed to belong to the history of music in Croatia, as in Josip Andreis's *Music in Croatia*: »Bossinensis' ricercari are also important as the first known ex-

amples of published instrumental music composed by a Croat artist.«<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, Zija Kučukalić takes him as a Bosnian: »The most interesting person in this period of the history of Bosnian music was Franjo Bosanac (Franciscus Bossinensis).«<sup>9</sup> More recently, Ennio Stipčević in his *Hrvatska glazba*, although considering him within a history of Croatian music, takes a more circumspect view: »That Bossinensis was of Bosnian origin is beyond doubt. The conjecture that Francis the Bosnian — as his name appears in our reference literature — was a Bosnian Croat is very likely.«<sup>10</sup> In the entry »Bosnia-Herzegovina« for the second edition of the *New Grove Dictionary of Music*, I wrote cautiously: »It is not known whether the composer of lute ricercars and Petrucci's editor Franciscus Bossinensis (Francis of Bosnia) came to Italy as an already educated musician, but it is safe to assume that he belonged to the wave of Bosnian refugees who settled in Dalmatia and Italy during the late 15<sup>th</sup> century.«<sup>11</sup> Indeed, his ethnic belonging is hardly something that can be clearly defined in terms appropriate to his time when such labels were rather unclear by modern standards, and if conjecture is all we can come up with, then it is wiser to leave him where he belongs: in early sixteenth-century Venice or the Veneto.

The seriousness with which Bossinensis's origin is approached is not followed by either Andreis or Kučukalić by any discussion of the likely nature of the context in which his art might have flourished had he really belonged to the cultural history of his native land. To have been able to function as an editor and a composer of the lute ricercars, which were in any case a novelty at the time, he would have had to come to Venice with an already accumulated experience, an experience presupposing the existence of an environment in which his art would have been cultivated and appreciated. As there is no documentary evidence for the construction of that background, it is safer to think of Bossinensis as someone who had learned his craft only after his arrival in Italy. We are therefore left only with a label for his ethnic or regional origin, and if this is taken to be an important component, then we might as well introduce another case in which a nebulously defined »Bosnian soul« enters the history of European music. What follows is not a plea for the recognition of such a »soul«, but rather a footnote in the biography of two important representatives of twentieth-century modernism.

Arnold Schoenberg had only one teacher in his life: his near-contemporary and friend, himself a distinguished composer, Alexander von Zemlinsky, whose sister Mathilde became Schoenberg's first wife. The father of Alexander and Mathilde, Adolf von Zemlinszky (sic), embraced Judaism in order to marry one

<sup>8</sup> Josip ANDREIS, *Music in Croatia*, Zagreb 1974, 31.

<sup>9</sup> Zija KUČUKALIĆ, *The Development*, 27.

<sup>10</sup> Ennio STIPČEVIĆ, *Hrvatska glazba*, Zagreb 1997, 53.

<sup>11</sup> B. BUJIĆ, Bosnia and Herzegovina: Art Music, in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd edition, ed. S. Sadie, 29 volumes, London and New York, 2001, vol. 3.

Clara Semo. Now Clara Semo was born in Sarajevo from an equally interesting marriage between Shem Tov Semo, originally possibly from Constantinople, and a Sarajevo woman who had been born a Muslim but herself either embraced Judaism or allowed her children to be raised as Jews. The Semo family moved to Vienna in the 1860s where Shem Tov edited the first Viennese Ladino newspaper *El correo de Viena*.<sup>12</sup> So, one could argue, though in my case rather impishly, that some sediment of a »Bosnian soul« may be found in Zemlinsky's music, music which in turn strongly influenced both Schoenberg and Alban Berg. Moreover, Clara Semo-von Zemlinsky died in Berlin in 1912 while staying there with her daughter and son-in-law who was then working on one of the seminal works of European modernism, the chamber-music song-cycle *Pierrot lunaire*. Thus Clara Semo turned out to be an important witness of the early stages of twentieth-century avant-gardism, though any claim that she might have in some way contributed to it would clearly be preposterous.

The Semos moved from Sarajevo to Vienna before Bosnia passed from Turkish hands into the jurisdiction of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Soon afterwards, in the last decades of the nineteenth century, the flow turned the other way and various Austrian civil servants, military personnel and by extension, military bandmasters, started arriving in Bosnia. The Austro-Hungarian army was very keen on its music, and the career of a military bandmaster was an attractive proposition for a lot of able young composers and conductors, and several of those found themselves posted to Bosnia. Besides, in the Austrian imagination Bosnia was anything but the »tamni vilajet« (dark province) as it was later dubbed by some of her critics. In Austria that characterization was reserved for the province of Galizia, the south-eastern corner of the present-day of Poland, extending well into Ukraine. In Joseph Roth's novel *Das falsche Gewicht*, Anselm Eibenschütz, the inspector of weights and measures, fondly remembers Bosnia from the frozen waste of Galizia:

Under such unfavourable circumstances Anselm Eibenschütz took up his new post at the Zlotogrod District. He arrived in spring, on one of the last days of March. In the Bosnian barracks of artilleryman Eibenschütz the tips of oak branches had already begun to glow softly, and so had the laburnum; the blackbirds were already fluting on the lawn, the larks already trilling in the air. When Eibenschütz arrived in northern Zlotogrod the thick white snow still lay in the streets and sharp, pitiless icicles hung from the eaves.<sup>13</sup>

Whatever may be one's opinions about the Austro-Hungarian social policies in Bosnia, it is beyond any doubt that the newly developing urban centres in Bosnia

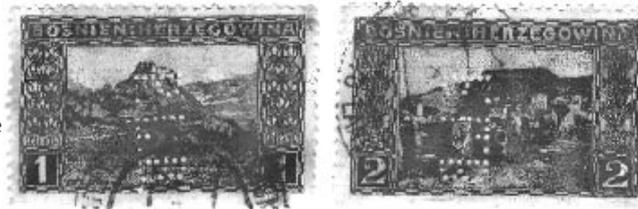
<sup>12</sup> More on Zemlinsky's Bosnian ancestry in: Antony BEAUMONT, *Zemlinsky*, London 2000, 5-10.

<sup>13</sup> Joseph ROTH, *Das falsche Gewicht. Die Geschichte eines Eichmeisters*, Amsterdam 1937, 12. Quoted here from the English translation (amended): *Weights and Measures*, London 1983, 12-13.

were an attractive area for constructors to try their ideas. Hence not only some of the interesting solutions for railway bridges and the Sarajevo electric tramway, but also the appearance of the then avant-garde design of the Viennese Secession on postage stamps used in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The design was entrusted to one of the leading members of the Secession, Kolo Moser, who flanked Bosnian landscapes with intricate plant-derived geometric designs, characteristic of the Secessionists' belief of new art invading the stale world of images in the public sphere of life (Fig. 1). Bosnia thus got its own share of this avant-garde art, and starting from this seemingly minor detail, I would like to argue that here, in the conjunction of stamp-design and the presence of military bands we have one of the roots of the »problem« of Bosnian music, if I may be permitted to declare it now as something problematic.

**Figure 1.**

Postage stamps for the Austro-Hungarian province of Bosnia-Herzegovina, designe by Kolo Moser.



In 1878, at the point of Austria's entry into Bosnia, Johannes Brahms was in his late forties, Wagner was beginning *Parsifal*, Verdi was soon to embark on *Otello*, Tchaikovsky completed *Evgeny Onegin*, and Debussy was still a student at the Paris Conservatoire. European music was in the phase of late Romanticism and the composers increasingly sought to use their music as a vehicle for intense emotions, framing them within highly individualized personal musical languages. But this was not the music the inhabitants of Bosnia heard when the military bands arrived. What they heard was music competently, often even ingeniously, composed but nevertheless music which in its social and aesthetic sense did not rest on the premisses of individual expression but rather in its own way sought to induce a sense of communality. In respect of its well-tempered system, melodic turn of phrase and prolonged structure it was far from either the village or the urbanized varieties of folk music which Bosnians hitherto experienced as their main musical vernacular. There was thus a coming together (I hesitate to use the more dramatic word »clash«) of two types of musical thinking: the old one close to the wide popular musical imagination, strongly reliant on the use of the human voice, and the other, newly imported, characterized by different instrumental combinations and not relying on the human voice. (I don't think that we know enough about the use of music in the Ottoman army but it has to be borne in mind that reforms and modernizing tendencies in the Ottoman state tended, on the whole, to have a weak effect in Bosnia.)

A general historian is likely to consider music as something ephemeral in the complex of historical agents, but in fact this seemingly innocent pastime is in itself

a catalyst, bearer of beliefs and convictions and a tool in the propaganda war. In the late-nineteenth-century Bosnian context, below the surface of musical »harmony« — to employ this technical term in its wider symbolic sense — there were unities as well as divisions and tensions, as various types of musical experience sat uneasily side by side. There was an underlying closeness between the aspects of communality of the military band repertory and the folk idiom, only to be opposed by the differences in the musical languages used in these two repertories. We may then ask whether the »kuferas«, the »Švabo« brought his own style of music?<sup>14</sup> The answer is both yes and no. Yes, if we consider the difference just outlined, but not if judged by the underlying striving towards inducement of communality. Yes, in the sense that military marches were a component of the broad musical experience in the Dual Monarchy, but not if we bear in mind that this type of music represented only one, essentially pattern-ridden, type of a compositional style based on routine, towards which the individualist late Romantics were aesthetically and ideologically opposed. Bosnia thus almost at a stroke inherited yet another collection of opposites giving rise to the possibility that opposing forces would be pulling in disparate directions. Perhaps clashes in artistic spheres are not a bad thing, one may say: they create the energy and the tensions which propel artistic creativity and they do not cause human victims, such clashes are the essence of life, not of death. This would be true only if art, music included, were to be taken as loftily detached from the context in which it arises. It is no longer an exclusive province of the Marxists to consider arts within the economic and political world which gives it support. Structuralists, neo-historicists and post-modernists of various hues subscribe in their different ways to methods of investigation which rest on some form of contextualisation. The cultural situation of music in Bosnia must be accordingly evaluated with all the attendant tensions in mind.

In order to avoid empty theorizing, we'd better turn to an example. Kolo Moser's design of Bosnian stamps, as we have seen, embodies in itself the freshness of an innovative artistic movement. The decorative border in this light becomes more than a pretty ornamental addition: it signifies something very important in the »spirit of the age« where consumers of the Viennese Secessionist art and the, admittedly, small number of literate citizens of Bosnia shared a common experience, however subliminally. In music it was, however, only one segment of Austrian and Viennese musical production that reached Bosnia, the segment that was closest to what Theodor W. Adorno later described as art displaying »commodity-character« (*Wahrencharakter*): music which lived by the approval of the market in the case of dance music, or of the drill-sergeant in the case of military music.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> »Kuferas« — a person who arrived in Bosnia allegedly only with his suitcase, »kufer« (deriving from the German *Koffer*), i.e. a newly posted public official. »Švabo« (literally: 'a Swabian') — a term generally denoting a German speaker, and in Bosnia at that time carrying no derogatory meaning.

<sup>15</sup> For Adorno's discussion of this phenomenon see: *Musikalische Warenanalysen*, in *Quasi una fantasia. Musikalische Schriften II*, Frankfurt 1963, 58.

Non-folk music at the turn of the nineteenth century in Bosnia receives an indelible characterization of something which is there only for some ulterior purpose, a purpose which leads beyond music, not in the sense that it enables individual enlightenment or acts as a vehicle for personal expression, but instead something that submerges individuality in a sea of predictable, marketable values.

The military band-masters deserve a special mention since a significant number of them influenced the cultural life of the places in which they served, often going beyond the call of duty. It may be that some of them, being Slavs from other parts of the Monarchy, felt a sense of pan-Slavonic solidarity and acted as musical educators and promoters of music beyond the military bands in their charge. One of those was, for instance, Josip Chládek (Hladek) who remained in Bosnia after the dissolution of the Monarchy. He has not got a street named after him — that privilege was by a curious mistake accorded to Franz Lehár. It is true that the young Franz Lehár spent some time in Sarajevo, though this was only in order to secure a temporary abode between resigning an appointment in Hungary in 1891 and obtaining another one in Pula in 1893. Since his father, also named Franz, was then stationed in Sarajevo as a military bandmaster, the later successful author of operettas came to live with his parents — but as a private citizen, without contributing anything to the musical life of Bosnia. His claim is therefore non-existent, unlike the claim that Julius Fučík may have since his march *Bosanska zora* (*The Bosnian Dawn*), and possibly one of his fine concert waltzes, date from his Sarajevo days. Another claimant may even be the now little-known Eduard Wagnes, to whose march *Die Bosniaken kommen* generations of Bosnian recruits marched in the Austro-Hungarian army.

At the same time, at the turn of the century, Bosnia began experiencing another form of musical life widespread elsewhere in the Monarchy and in other Balkan countries: the formation and subsequent flourishing activity of choral societies. These were ideally suited in a community where the emerging bourgeoisie could participate in music-making without the need to pass through any formal musical education. Choral societies themselves provided the basis for such an education, even if an elementary one, and their role as a bridge between the earlier folk tradition and the new sophisticated art music cannot be overestimated. But, like everything else in Bosnia at that time, this phenomenon had its other side. The societies were, with the exception of the workers' society »Proleter«, founded on national principles. Their role was to promote music, of course, but to promote such music and in such a way that would stress the sense of communality, not only within the national group in a particular town, but also by fostering links, real as well as mythical, with larger national groups elsewhere, primarily in Croatia and Serbia.<sup>16</sup> Writing my entry on Bosnia for the *New Grove*, I tried to offer an

<sup>16</sup> I admit, I don't know enough about the repertoires of Muslim and Jewish societies where the relation *vis-à-vis* a dominant non-Bosnian culture was less clear.

explanation of why, during the best part of the twentieth century, Bosnia produced good performers but no distinguished composers. I attempted to explain this by saying that choral societies acted as proxies for their dominant cultures in neighbouring countries and thus accepted an already existing choral repertory. This tended to provide local composers with ready-made stylistic formulas and they embarked on producing occasional works and settings of folk music, aping the style of their models in Serbia and Croatia. In that way they got accustomed to working within a narrow band of creative possibilities, in much the same way in which the composers of military music trod well-beaten paths. Thus, though perhaps acting with admirable motives, they, like the bandmasters, suppressed their own creative imagination remaining on the level of »commodity« music. After I had written my *New Grove* entry on Bosnia I was given an opportunity of verifying statistically the assertion about the national orientation of repertories on the example of the Sarajevo Croatian choral society »Trebević«. Of 227 items in their repertory between the society's founding in 1894 and its dissolution in 1945, 182 works were by Croatian composers, 19 by composers from Slovenia and Serbia, and 26 by foreign (mainly German and Russian) composers.<sup>17</sup> The nature of the repertories of the choral societies has not been researched properly and it would not be surprising if the data relating to them reveal a statistical model very similar to that of the »Trebević«.

Another type of musical activity, waiting to be properly explored, is music in private houses. Immigrants from elsewhere in the Monarchy brought with them this type of music-making, but by its very nature it is not an activity that gets recorded in archival documents. I wonder, however, how many families in Bosnia had their own private collections of music, however small, and what it was that may be found in such collections? I shall, somewhat self-promotionally, use an example from my own family. Dr Vladimir Vranjican, a cousin of my grandfather, was stationed in Sarajevo during the First World War as a military doctor and from that time date two compositions which he wrote in the family musical album: a polka dedicated to my grandparents (Fig. 2) and a waltz dedicated to my mother and aunt, who were then very young girls. Even these pieces nestle between various categories of musical experience which I outlined earlier: written for personal, even solitary, enjoyment, they are by intention very much in the »individualist« tradition, while the style of the music has much in common with the popular, pattern-dominated Central-European type of dance music. A diligent search among family documents throughout Bosnia, if they can still be found, would reveal the existence of a fascinating category of musical experience.

<sup>17</sup> The data are taken from: Zdravko MILOŠEVIĆ, *Slavuj povrh Trebevića*, Sarajevo 1995, 179-186.

Figure 2.

A page from a family music album, Sarajevo, c. 1916.

*Na Bjelavar*  
*Polka*

The image displays a handwritten musical score for a piece titled "Na Bjelavar" (Polka). The score is arranged in five systems. The first system features a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 2/4 time signature. The word "Wood" is written above the first staff, and "Polka" is written above the second staff. The second system continues the melody in the treble clef. The third system shows the piano accompaniment, with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The fourth system continues the piano accompaniment. The fifth system shows the final part of the piano accompaniment. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like "f" and "p".

The only cross-national musical institution in Sarajevo, and I suspect in the whole of Bosnia, was the Sarajevo Philharmonic Society (*Sarajevska filharmonija*), founded in 1923. Though it supported an orchestra, this was not its exclusive aim and it was really a concert society on the model of Central-European concert societies which began to emerge in the early nineteenth century, appearing in Bosnia with a delay of about a century. It was a bourgeois society through and through and did not depend on or foster communality in the manner of choral societies. It concentrated on the music of European Classicists and Romantics, and in the process it often relied on the very same persons who elsewhere pursued the communal type of activity: the bandmaster Chládek and the cellist and composer Beluš Jungić, to mention just these two. The Sarajevo Philharmonic Society, in keeping with its modest financial resources, relied heavily on local performers, only occasionally bringing soloists from elsewhere. The local artists formed ad hoc chamber music groups (an activity sadly lacking after 1945) and this fulfilled a much-needed educational role of offering music which in its introspective nature was very different from the standard repertoires of choral societies. Sadly, the Philharmonic remained a minority institution and, from the available records, it cannot be seen whether it ever embarked on joint concerts with any of the choral societies in order to mount performances of oratorios, something that would have been a natural process elsewhere in Europe. This only contributed to the feeling of the existence not only of separate paths of activity but also helped to stress the distinction between two types of musical experience: widespread »commodity« music and the isolated introspective »individualist« repertory, something that has remained an indelible characteristic of Bosnian musical life, with the latter repertory often attracting to itself prejudices shown through the label of elitism.

Following the Soviet model of art for everyone, after 1945 the state provided generous support to professional musical institutions, something that did not exist in Bosnia hitherto. This period has been well documented and I have very little to add. However, in keeping with my theme of navigating through the past, I feel that some of the submerged rocks should be pinpointed.

The burgeoning of musical life in Sarajevo after the Second World War could not have been possible without an influx of highly-trained and experienced composers and conductors, coming mainly from Zagreb, and to a lesser degree from Belgrade. Most of those coming from Zagreb belonged to a group of political undesirables who had pursued their activities in war-time Zagreb and afterwards were summarily and with very little justification classed as collaborators and »enemies of the people«. These individuals (Boris Papandopulo, Mladen Pozajić, Ivan Štajcer, Mladen Stahuljak, to name but a few) were in reality, in addition to their interpretative skills, tireless organizers, educators and administrators. The activity of the Sarajevo Opera and the Sarajevo Philharmonic Orchestra were to a large degree sustained by them and they have thereby certainly earned the right to be remembered not only in the history of music in Bosnia, but also in the wider sphere of civic recognition.

The most actively present musical organization in Sarajevo's civic life after 1945 was undoubtedly the Sarajevo Opera. Operating in cramped premises and at first having a limited base among local performers, the Opera developed a repertory policy more enlightened than that of some better-known companies in the former Yugoslavia. It gave Sarajevo not only the standard diet of Verdi, Donizetti, Rossini and Puccini, but also an impressive, even astonishing, array of twentieth-century classics: Prokofyev, Menotti, Bartók, Britten, Janáček, Milhaud, Shostakovich, Stravinsky, Egk. True, a number of the composers just mentioned were represented by their ballet music so that even here we witness another manifestation of the pattern already discussed: ballet is an art-form which to a large extent depends on visual opulence, and from the perspective of an average theatre-goer the music in it can easily become only an accessory. Ballet thus could easily by-pass the »individualist« mode of reception, even when modern music of significant originality was concerned, and work on its audience through the heightened attraction of the stage presentation.

It may be objected that I am too fond of my cultural model, wanting to see its relevance in a number of situations, and yet, courting danger, I propose to extend it a little further.

I shall leave to one side the pre-Second-World-War amateur choral societies which after 1945 were re-named and re-shaped, and from the formerly denominational cultural societies emerged as organizations with trade-union affiliations. Their luck in any case considerably diminished by the early 1960s with the increase in the popularity of new mass media such as film and television. Interestingly, after the proclamation of independence in 1992, some of the old societies were reconstituted and similar new ones formed. The post-1945 professional institutions — the Opera, the symphony orchestras and the Music Academy — continued to flourish much longer and their activity was eventually restricted only by the parlous state of the Yugoslav economy in the 1980s. They achieved a lot but rather than singing praises to the institutions — and praise they do deserve — I would like to look at some of the less happy aspects of the times in which they existed.

Music schools opened up opportunities for learning musical instruments on a scale much larger than hitherto. On the other hand, the role of music in general education remained modest, thus producing a sharp division between a large majority of those who gained an elementary, if any, introduction to music, and a minority who practised their activity in a kind of cultural ghetto outside of which folk music and the increasingly vibrant Bosnian pop culture reigned supreme. If we add to this the fact that in music schools the stress was on fostering technical excellence on an instrument rather than on music-making, especially small ensemble music-making, then the alienation of less dedicated youngsters was a further danger. There is, I fear, a link here between the type of schooling and the continuing lack of creative activity in which routine, even if it be a creative routine, has the upper hand. One example of ghettoization were the once-regular radio broadcasts

of the type »Works of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian Composers«, as if these composers needed some special treatment instead of being integrated into the regular concert-giving activity.

All this helped to stress a widespread belief that »classical« music was a strictly limited activity, and also strengthened a view of it as a craft rather than an art and limited its acceptance as common cultural property. Here we come to another intriguing parallel between earlier modes of musical experience, those dating from the first half of the century (i.e. pre-1945) and those characteristic of the later period. As was already mentioned, choral societies, hitherto promoting music based on the folk idiom, faced in the late 1950s a marked decline in their activity. (Although it should be pointed out that the longest surviving among the choral societies, the University choral society »Slobodan Princip Seljo«, based its success to a large extent on an international repertory, including oratorios, rather than on the more traditional fare of Mokranjac, etc.) The vacuum which the decline of choral societies left in the provision of communally experienced music was increasingly being filled by performers of songs in what the respected Bosnian ethnomusicologist Cvjetko Rihtman called the »small-town tradition« (»malovaroška tradicija«).<sup>18</sup> These performers had, after all, a solid root in the local tradition and their songs offered artefacts instantly acceptable, particularly by the new urban class, the very carriers of the »small-town tradition«, who flocked to larger Bosnian cities — Sarajevo, Mostar, Banja Luka, Tuzla — with the changing patterns of post-1945 industrialization. This neatly coincided with the newly available mass media, the radio and the recording industry. Moreover, the most successful performers in this tradition, and here we come to some of the remaining names among those who have streets named after them, showed a flair for self-promotion which their counterparts in the »classical« or the individualist tradition on the whole lacked. The latter ones translated their individual search for technical perfection into introspection and passivity, the former ones created »commodity music« *par excellence*, offering endless variations on a small number of hackneyed harmonic patterns and aiming to produce in their listeners an automatic and uncritical emotional response. An objection may be raised to my presentation of the two segregated types of musical experience by claiming that, even if my premiss were true, we have to allow for a possibility of an interaction between them. This objection can easily be refuted by arguing that historically and culturally the times were not suited to such an interaction. The period of belief in a close interaction between classical music on the one hand, and folk and popular music on the other, has been in Europe previously associated with the period of c.1910-c.1935. Admittedly, there were belated politically inspired flickerings of this belief after 1945, particularly in

<sup>18</sup> Bosnian musicologists now prefer a less restrictive, though at the same time less precise, term »urban tradition«.

the countries of the Soviet bloc, but even there (think of Lutosławski in Poland) modernist avant-garde tendencies soon prevailed. In ideological terms the summing-up of this process was provided by Theodor W. Adorno with characteristic vehemence: »Chopin's work [F-minor Fantasy, op. 49] dating from his late period, may well be the last in which a nationalism attacks oppressors without celebrating an oppression of its own. All subsequent national music is poisoned, both socially and esthetically.«<sup>19</sup> Of course, Adorno was by no means alone in his criticism of nationalist orientations: in 1937, well before he formulated his thoughts on the subject, Béla Bartók, a personality associated with a »nationalist« orientation, yet far more tolerant than Adorno, pointed out that there were no exclusive rights to the supposedly mythical properties of a nation's musical language and that allegedly unique elements are often shared by various nations.<sup>20</sup> The butt of Bartók's criticism were those believers in the power of national music who put group identity before individual creativity, and this brings Bartók's observation closer to our argument.

The revitalized activity of choral societies in independent Bosnia after 1992 may be a sign of an emerging democratic pluralism, following the *dirigiste* episode in post-second-World-War Yugoslavia, but it is at the same time a form of retrenchment and a return to an understanding of music as a means of fostering group identity. The limiting factors brought about by the division between the »communal« and the »individual« musical experience seem to be given a new lease of life. We may thus safely conclude that in the past the preoccupation with narrowly national concerns limited creative freedom and turned music into a manipulable commodity, and that the danger of this aspect of Bosnian music history repeating itself is all too obvious. Adding to this the attendant dictates of commercialism, the ultimate victim is the music itself or indeed the community which wishes to count on music as its cultural heritage.

<sup>19</sup> Theodor W. ADORNO, *Einleitung in die Musiksoziologie*, Frankfurt 1962, 174; here quoted from the English translation: *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, New York 1976, 164.

<sup>20</sup> Béla BARTÓK, Folk Song Research and Nationalism, in: *Essays*, ed. B. Suchoff, London 1976, 25. For an extended account of the historical problem of nationalism in twentieth-century music see: B. BUJIĆ, Le tradizioni nazionali, in: Jean-Jacques Nattiez (ed.), *Enciclopedia della musica*, vol. 1: *Il Novecento*, Torino, 2001, 84-102. French version as: Nationalismes et traditions nationales, in: *Musiques. Une encyclopédie pour le XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, vol. 1: *Musiques du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Arles and Paris 2003, 175-194.

*Sažetak*»PLOVLJENJE PO PROŠLOSTI«: PROBLEMI S KOJIMA SE SUSREĆE HISTORIČAR  
GLAZBE U BOSNI

Početak naslova posuđen je iz studije Stefana Vitalija posvećene upotrebi interneta u suvremenoj arhivistici. Onako, naime, kako se jedna suvremena istraživačka tehnika može primijeniti na znanstveni proces ranije uobličen tradicionalnim sredstvima, tako je moguće napraviti i pokušaj da se nanovo formulira pristup problemima historije glazbe u Bosni i Hercegovini, te da se ranije ustanovljene činjenice osvjetle iz pozicija suvremene kritičke teorije. Blago dvosmisleni ostatak naslova je namjerno upućen i historičaru u Bosni — onome koji vidi probleme iz centra zbivanja — kao i historičaru koji toj temi prilazi iz distance, bila ona prostorna ili emocionalna. Distanca je ovdje osobito dobrodošla, jer omogućava da se činjenice, ranije često pozitivistički utemeljene i shvaćene same sebi dostatnima, protumače u kontekstu koji sadrži duboko ukorijenjene napetosti i suprotnosti. Pozitivistički pristup opisu institucija, te repertoara koje su one njegovale, zakriva istinu da se unutar institucija kriju težnje ka upotrebi glazbe kao političkog sredstva ili sredstva za učvršćenje nacionalnog identiteta. U Bosni je ova podjela bila popraćena dodatnim tenzijama u procesu prihvatanja glazbe kao društvene aktivnosti. Zbog kasnog pojavljivanja glazbenih institucija, ostao je osobito jak nazor da glazba predstavlja aktivnost putem koje se učvršćuje grupni identitet, no suvremeniji pristup bilo kreativnosti, bilo recepciji, dopušta da ona bude sredstvo intenzivne vlastite kreativnosti te uobličenja vlastitog iskustva u procesu prihvatanja glazbenog djela. Način na koji je novija europska muzika stigla u Bosnu s Austro-Ugarskom monarhijom samo je potencirao neke od mogućih tenzija. Repertoar marševa, karakterističan za vojne limene glazbe, iako izvirući iz konteksta dalekoga od dotadašnje bosanske folklorne prakse, imao je u sebi nešto od tendencije da potencira glazbeno iskustvo kao akt zajedništva. Ujedno, zborska muzika, koja je stigla u to isto vrijeme, bila je shvaćena kao proširenje na Bosnu dominantnih susjedskih nacionalnih kultura. Sve to negativno se je odrazilo na karakter individualne kreativnosti, te je slabu nazočnost inventivnih kompozitora u Bosni u prošleme stoljeću, u usporedbi sa postojanjem brojnih dobrih interpretata, moguće objasniti postojanjem dubokih tenzija u načinima na koje su glazba i glazbeni procesi bivali shvaćeni. Neki od najnovijih znakova daju naslutiti da se u nezavisnoj Bosni ove tenzije nastavljaju.