

## THE INFLUENCE OF FOLKLORISTICS ON ETHNOMUSICOLOGY IN CROATIA

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In comparison with the broadening of the subject and methodology of ethnomusicology worldwide, the article shows the theoretical starting points and scope of Croatian ethnomusicology over the last fifty years. In the central part of the article, the theoretical framework of Croatian ethnomusicology, which was laid down in the mid-Seventies under the influence of folkloristics, is considered, and the results of its application to research is evaluated. The article also reviews the most recent undertakings of ethnomusicologists in Croatia.

The *Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research* in Zagreb is the only institution in Croatia which systematically carries out ethnomusicological research. Thus, the development of Croatian ethnomusicology is linked mainly to the activities of this establishment. The Institute was founded in 1948 under the name *Institute for Folk Arts*. Although its inception was the result of the Musicological Department of the Ethnographic Museum becoming an independent institution, as early as the first years of its existence, headed by the ethnomusicologist Vinko Žganec, the Institute expanded its activities. Along with folk music, research of oral literature and folk dance was included, later to be joined by folk drama, and customs i.e. the culture of which folk arts are a part. In co-operation of an interdisciplinary nature with other professionals at the Institute, ethnomusicologists were given a stimulus for their own work and for the theoretical examination of their own discipline. The new theoretical framework of ethnomusicology was outlined as part of that co-operation during the mid-Seventies, and this brought significant changes in the approach to and definition of the subject of research. Folkloristics had a strong influence on this definition, even more than the significant advances in ethnomusicological theory worldwide being made at the same time.

In this paper, I shall be presenting the theoretical premises of folkloristically conceived ethnomusicology which has already been, for twenty or so years, the prevailing course for the majority of Croatian ethnomusicologists. In order to be able to differentiate the methodology applied in earlier research, I shall firstly refer to the orientation and scope

of ethnomusicological research in Croatia up until the Seventies, and draw attention to the essential changes which occurred in the field of ethnomusicology and folkloristics throughout the world during the Sixties and Seventies.

### **The premises and scope of Croatian ethnomusicology until the Seventies**

During the first half of the 20th century, Croatian ethnomusicology was characterised by systematic research of traditional music in individual regions. This research was directed towards the collection of the largest possible number of examples of folk music and identification of their typical features, on which basis it was intended to determine the individual "Croatian musical folklore areas" (Širola 1940:16). In further phases of treatment of the material, comparison of the musical characteristics of individual areas was foreseen, and, finally, the deduction of a summary of the "characteristics of Croatian folk music", the latter having been set by the first Croatian ethnomusicologist Franjo Ks. Kuhač, as early as the mid-19th century, as one of the most important tasks of ethnomusicology. The ultimate objective of research conceived in this way meant the identification of the sources and causes of all the characteristics of Croatian traditional music so as to determine what was "autochthonic, what traditional, what was brought into it by foreign influences, which then permeated with the older tradition, what remained without such permeation" (Širola 1940:25).

Ethnomusicological research at that time found its *raison d'être* in searching for autochthonic traditional music with the objective of foundation and affirmation of national cultural values. The autochthony, which was still to be established, was, at the same time, set as a measure of evaluation of folk music, which significantly influenced the definition of the subject and methodology of research. This was, in essence, an ethnocentric approach in the sense that changes were interpreted as the consequences of outside, foreign influences, and simply on that basis regarded as something "bad", "inferior", and even "dangerous". In destroying the purity of that which was regarded as being possibly autochthonic, changes were regarded as threatening to the basic values on which national cultural identity was to be built. This type of approach to research led ethnomusicology more towards "archaistic" rather than "realistic" science (see Seeger 1977:51–52).

Only examples of older, mainly village, vocal musical tradition were sought for and noted down in the field, as is confirmed by the majority of collections, almost always titled as *Croatian Folk Songs...*, while notations

of instrumental music were a rarity. The reason for the neglect of instrumental music lay primarily in the repertoire of musicians made up mainly of newer musical examples which, because of the orientation towards older layers of tradition, was avoided during research.

Limiting the subject of research from the beginning only to older, mainly village musical tradition, the undeveloped notation technique and the general orientation of researchers to the music itself and its sonic structure - also set the way in which fieldwork was done. Music was written down outside of the context of its real life, most frequently in performances prompted and chosen by the researchers themselves. In so doing, they only rarely noted the fact of the occasion on which the specific songs were performed, with no intention to interpret the music on the basis of the relationship between songs and performance context.

With no interest in the role of music in people's lives, ethnomusicology restricted itself to musical material, its notation and analysis, and did not, therefore, proceed beyond a factographically based, descriptive level of presentation and evaluation of music. With some minor broadening of the subject of research, ethnomusicological research in Croatia adhered to this orientation and scope right up until the Seventies.

### **Broadening of the subject of ethnomusicology throughout the world**

Throughout the 20th century, many disciplines have increasingly made efforts to find the humanistic perspectives of research, for study of subjects in their context, and for functionalistic interpretation of phenomena. Such efforts appeared in ethnomusicology during the Sixties and were first most clearly evident in the works of American ethnomusicologists such as Alan P. Merriam (1964), Bruno Nettl (1964) and Mantle Hood (1969). Influenced by cultural anthropology and its reactions to the evolutionary and diffusionary theories, the focus of ethnomusicological interest shifted from the structural components of music as values in themselves, and the questions of origins and diffusion, to observations of the relations between music and people i.e. to uncovering the roles and functions of music in the life of the human communities, and efforts to interpret music linked with the extra-musical world which surrounds it. Consequently, the fundamental model of study, according to A. P. Merriam, encompassed three analytical levels: "conceptualization about music, behaviour in relation to music and music sound itself" (Merriam 1964:32).

The idea of studying music within the context of the culture and society to which such music belongs placed ethnomusicological research in reality and, along with existing methods, developed particularly the field

method of observation and participation by the researcher in the concrete situations of performance of the music. It affirmed the contextual study of music and the *emic* approach to research, according to which the researcher tries to abandon the position of an external observer and to become acquainted with musical culture "from within", through the subjective attitudes of the people who create music, perform it and listen to it.

Study of music conceived in this way brought ethnomusicology closer to other disciplines, particularly anthropology and sociology. The new methodology also broadened the limits of the subject of research. The conviction that this approach and method should be applied not only in the study of folk and non-European music, but in the study of music as a whole, led to the broadening of the subject of ethnomusicology to "all varieties of music found in one local or region" and to the definition of ethnomusicology as "an approach to the study of *any* music, not only in terms of itself but also in relation to its cultural context" (Hood 1969:298).

Such ethnomusicology is no longer "based upon the named kind of music being studied" but on "the way it is to be studied" (Merriam 1977:195, 197). Thus, the new subject was determined by the methodology and approach, and not the contrary. In this way ethnomusicology in fact lost its "natural" subject ("ethnic" or "folk" music) which had at one time determined the very name of the discipline.

In relation to the other musicological disciplines, ethnomusicology had more strongly developed the awareness of the need to study music in its cultural context. That is why this approach to the study of music, particularly in (Anglo)American literature, is even today called "ethnomusicological" and stands in opposition to the classical "musicological" approach to music as a "thing in itself" (Seeger 1982:vi). Due to the fact that the "ethnomusicological" approach is justified not only in study of specific types of music (e.g. "folk", "ethnic", "exotic"), but of music as a whole, many ethnomusicologists no longer found it necessary to separate musicology from ethnomusicology (Ibid.; Blacking 1976:30–31). With further development of such a concept, ethnomusicology was in a certain manner equated with musicology i.e. it took precedence over the narrower subject of what was, primarily, the historically oriented musicology of European art music. Following this concept, the latter became only a part of ethnomusicology (see Hood 1987:3–7; Rice 1987:482; Supičić 1987:38).

This was followed by countless discussions and polemics about the relation between these two disciplines and their names, accompanied by endeavours on the part of ethnomusicologists that the term *musicology* be accepted for the study of music as a whole, but also by rejection on the

part of classic musicologists that the discipline which studied music outside of European art tradition also be called musicology. Although the time has long passed for a new resystematisation of the science of music which would rest on interdisciplinary nature and a re-integration of musicology, ethnomusicology and other similar disciplines into the all-encompassing *human science of the tonal art* which John Blacking (1991) advocated at the end of his life, ethnomusicology continues to bear its old name which does not really suit the very broad subject of its study.

### Basic assumptions of "contextual" folkloristics

Just as in ethnomusicology, during the Sixties there was "rejection of the older static typology of folklore texts", based on the study of texts outside of their context (Dorson 1972:45). This was particularly the case among American folklorists such as e.g. Roger Abrahams, Dan Ben-Amos, Richard M. Dorson, Alan Dundes and Kenneth S. Goldstein. This orientation, later called *the contextual approach to folklore*, is characterised by "a leaning toward the social sciences, particularly anthropology, linguistics, and the cultural aspects of psychology and sociology; a strong preoccupation with the environment in which the folklore text is embedded; and an emphasis on theory" (Ibid.).

Two, in essence, similar definitions of folklore had the most powerful influence on folkloristics in Croatia, Dan Ben-Amos's from 1971, and K. Čistov's from 1972, according to which folklore is a special type of communication. According to Dan Ben-Amos's "definition of folklore in context", folklore is "artistic communication in small groups" (Ben-Amos 1971:13). Folklore is "an organic phenomenon in the sense that it is an integral part of culture", and in "its cultural context, (...) is not an aggregate of things, but a process - a communicative process, to be exact" (Ibid.:4, 9). Folklore is "a social interaction via the art media" and differs from other modes of communication, as it "is based upon sets of cultural conventions, recognized and adhered to by all members of the group, which separate folklore from nonart communication" (Ibid.:10).

What is important for folklore communication is that it is established in a small group of people among whom relations are authentic, thus, who know each other and verbally communicate. As a communicative process, folklore is socially limited, reduced to the *small group*, to situations in which people, confronted face to face, directly communicate. It is precisely that element which is the particular context of folklore (Bošković-Stulli 1983:32). Consequently, what is in question is a natural "contact" communication, as Kiril V. Čistov (1975) calls it, in which the sender and receiver directly act upon each other and can change their roles so that the

listener in some new situation may become the performer, and vice versa (Ibid.:40; Lozica 1979:46). In this way, as Čistov stresses, a "communication chain" of performances is created, by which folklore themes and styles disseminate spatially and temporally outside the frame of an individual small group, and thus create tradition (Bošković-Stulli 1981:38; 1983:35–36, 40).

Inasmuch as the folklore process occurs exclusively within a specific social and cultural context, it also requires this type of study. At the time when Alan P. Merriam upheld the idea of the study of music in its cultural context, Alan Dundes initiated the question of context in folklore. All folklore phenomena should be looked into at three levels - at the level of "texture, text and context" (Dundes 1964). "In the field of verbal folklore we may take texture as linguistic characteristics, and it can be a subject of linguistic analysis. (...) Text is the individual performance (telling the story, singing the song etc.), which has always been of interest to folklorists, while the context is the social situation in which the text appears. (...) The most important factors of context are usually the performers and their audience; context has its effect on change of text and texture." (Lozica 1979:45).

The concept of folklore as communication transferred the focus of interest from the literary text to study of the entire "event in time in which a tradition is performed or communicated", for "the text is only part of each unique event" (Dorson 1972:45–46). The observation of folklore "as human verbal symbolic interaction of a performing kind" stands at the centre of the matter (Ben-Amos - Goldstein 1975:3).

Although this folklore definition arose primarily within the framework of the theory of oral literature, it is also applicable to phenomena which are often called *performing folk arts* (such as music, dance and drama). Due to the fact that earlier research at our Institute also encompassed various types of folk arts, the new theoretical premises from the field of verbal folklore were applied to the broad scope of the Institute's research work. It is the very nature of communication established by direct contact between performer and public which is the factor linking part of the field of literature, music, dance and other forms of artistic expression into an integral whole - *folklore*. Because of the heterogeneous nature of the subject, *folkloristics* utilises the methods of other disciplines (ethnology, sociology, musicology, literary scholarship, choreology, teatrology, etc.), and is therefore firstly a "conglomerate of

various disciplines united by the subject of study i.e. the field of study", rather than an autonomous discipline (Lozica 1979:44).<sup>1</sup>

Folkloristics research in Croatia spread to cover a series of phenomena which were formerly outside of the field of its interest. Primarily, this related to *performance*, which has also become one of the criteria for classification of material, and to *functions* which are realised during the performance. Changes in texture conditioned by performance in various contexts started to be observed. Apart from folklore performances, various forms of presentation and applications of folklore outside of authentic contexts were also studied. There was further discussion concerning theoretical questions and new issues deriving from the definition of folklore as oral communication e.g. on the aesthetic function of folklore, on marginal phenomena which were not covered by that definition, on the problem of tradition in folklore i.e. of folklore and the historical process. Along with numerous articles published in various journals, the Institute dedicated a number of special publications to these issues (e.g. Bošković-Stulli and Rihtman-Auguštin, eds. 1981; Rihtman-Auguštin, ed. 1984; Rihtman-Auguštin and Povržanović, eds. 1989).

### **The subject of folkloristically conceived ethnomusicology in Croatia**

In the interdisciplinary atmosphere of the Institute in the mid-Seventies, the subject of ethnomusicology too was redefined. With the application of the concept of folklore as communication, the subject of ethnomusicological study was no longer music defined by social criteria and the age of the tradition (older layers of village music), but musical phenomena defined primarily according to their specific way of life i.e. performance, dissemination and acceptance. As emphasised by Jerko Bezić, who emerged at that time as the moving force in Croatian ethnomusicology, "spontaneous, free manner of performance and improvisation" are the characteristic and constant traits of such phenomena, while the "means of musical expression" and/or "elements of content and form" are changeable, and thus, subsidiary traits (Bezić 1974:151; 1977:23, 36; 1985:442). In this way, the subject of ethnomusicological study became "all musical phenomena which live - or

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<sup>1</sup> Redefinition of the field of research was also reflected in the change of the name of the Institute. From 1977, it was no longer the *Institute for Folk Arts* but the *Institute for Folklore Research*. In 1991, the Institute again changed its name to the current denotation, the *Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research*, showing that independent ethnological i.e. culturo-anthropological research has developed alongside research into folklore.

did so recently - in direct contacts, in direct communication of relatively small groups of performers and listeners" (Bezić 1981:27).

The "new" subject of research was reflected in its new name. It became more frequent to see the term *folklorna glazba* in Croatian ethnomusicological literature, which would translate into English as *folklore music*, instead of the earlier term *narodna glazba* or *folk music*; the change was used to emphasise that the subject of ethnomusicology encompasses *all music which exists as folklore from its communication aspect*. Defining its subject in this way, ethnomusicology did not abandon the earlier subject of its research. It only broadened it to cover music performed by various groups of people, not only in the villages, but also in the towns and suburbs, to music which a group of people had freely chosen, both from traditional and contemporary repertoire, and even from the musical creativity of "composers", to music from their own community, and from regions which were distant or close by. In any case, *folk music*, or *narodna glazba* - the previous subject of earlier ethnomusicological study, which was taken to mean orally (i.e. by ear) transmitted music of older tradition, mainly from village environments - according to the way in which it lived among people, was in fact folklore.

The attitude was that research should try to encompass *folklore music* as a whole so as to draw nearer to "a more faithful and integral picture of the general musical culture of a particular area and/or particular social community" (Bezić 1980:560). In addition to traditional folk music, it was necessary to do research on the developmental dynamism of contemporary folklore musical phenomena (see Bezić 1985:443), and to study the entire musical world of the bearers of folk music, linking active repertoire which was being performed with passive repertoire which was only listened to (see Bezić 1980:555). This meant that attention should also be paid to that "kind of musical activity which often is not folklore, but is a composite part of musical life..., and indirectly also influences local folklore music" (Bezić 1981:71).

Ethnomusicology conceived in this way is narrower than ethnomusicology throughout the world which, setting its subject from the viewpoint of approach and research methods, has grown into a science which would be more appropriately called *musicology*. Although folkloristically conceived ethnomusicology, too, places its study in a broader social and cultural context, and thus also in the context of overall musical culture, the focus of its interest is directed only to specific - *folklore* music phenomena which, by manner of performance, and, in that connection, also by the complexity of their structures, nonetheless are separate from the body of musical arts and differ from other kinds of music, particularly those which possess the identity of a fixed musical



work. By defining the subject in this way, ethnomusicology retained coherence as a separate discipline within musicology. The key to solution of the question of its subject and borders with other musicological disciplines was provided by folkloristics. Admittedly, in this case also, as with ethnomusicology worldwide, the name itself of the discipline - *ethnomusicology* - is not fully appropriate to the subject of research, because it is no longer defined so much by *ethnos* and *music* as by the communicational aspects of performance i.e. the folklore quality of the music. A more appropriate term for this discipline in Croatia would perhaps be the *folkloristics of music*.

### **Ethnomusicological practice in Croatia since the mid-Seventies**

Let us look now at how the new orientation of ethnomusicology has been reflected in research practice over the last twenty years. Two periods can be differentiated during this time. The first (up until approximately the mid-Eighties) was marked by affirmation of the broader subject, while during the second (from the mid-Eighties onwards) more major changes have occurred in research methodology.

Initially, it was necessary in some way to fight for the broader subject and justify it in the public eye. People had to be convinced that the idea they had had about "original folk music" as an "ancient, unchanging village tradition" was not only too narrow, but also erroneous. It had to be shown that tradition is not a set of unchangeable values, but a process by which every generation once again defines its cultural heritage, retaining in so doing only part of the musical world of the previous generation, which it also changes and expands with new material. With awareness that tradition is a process, and not an unchanging heritage, came the realisation that it was futile to search for original forms. Therefore, interest was directed towards continuity and changes in tradition, processes of assimilation, acculturation and transformation of folk music phenomena, stimulated by the permeation of various cultural influences and the interaction between traditional and contemporary cultures (e.g. Bezić 1974; Galin 1977). From that time onwards, it was this type of material which was most frequently presented in the works of Croatian ethnomusicologists, which pointed to the multi-layered nature and diversity of folk music in individual regions (Bezić 1973). Apart from music from village environments, some articles also presented urban folk music (Bezić 1977). With endeavours to perceive folk music within its historical dynamics, more attention began to be paid to historical sources (Bezić 1981a).

All this showed that the interest of ethnomusicologists was widening, that the subject of ethnomusicology also included some other music phenomena which had not been researched until that time. However, the methodology itself of research did not change essentially in relation to that applied in earlier periods. Admittedly, somewhat more attention was paid to context and data on the situations in which the music was performed, and these were always noted down. Although music also started to be recorded during authentic folklore performances, the material collection method by means of the interview continued to prevail i.e. recording of music performed at the behest of the researcher. To be sure, field research was now being carried out in smaller, historically and spatially concentrated regions which made possible better quality research of the past and the present of folklore phenomena. In addition, ethnomusicological research organised by the Institute was conducted as part of complex *folklore and folklife studies* of specific regions, which thus also included examination of the broad social and cultural context of folk music. However, this only partly met the need to study folk music in its social and cultural context, because the methodology continued to be closer to extensive regional research than to intensive contextual studies of music. Although there was perception on the importance of the context in which the music was performed, while the specific performance was declared to be even the most important attribute of *folklore music*, neither context nor the performance itself became, to a sufficient degree, the subject of ethnomusicological research. The manner of performance was taken into account more as a criterion for recognising the music being studied, and context mainly as one of the criteria for classification of the material collected. The emphasis was still on the analysis of musical content and its characteristics. The reason for retention of such methodology lay, on the one hand, in the fact that in some regions of Croatia no fundamental research had been carried out, so that collection of material in these regions was considered to be of top priority. On the other hand, Croatian ethnomusicologists at that time relied mainly on European ethnomusicological tradition, which was later to be penetrated by the anthropological approach to research.

The younger generation of Croatian ethnomusicologists which matured during the Eighties, under the mentorship of Professor Jerko Bezić,<sup>2</sup> gradually introduced new approaches and a broadening of

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<sup>2</sup> Besides working at the Institute, Jerko Bezić lectured in ethnomusicology at the Academy of Music in Zagreb (1966–1993) and trained a number of graduating classes of ethnomusicologists. In that way, he furthered the growth in the number of ethnomusicological professionals in Croatia, who still remain, nevertheless, few in

methodology in the research of folk music. Acquainted with the suppositions of anthropologically oriented ethnomusicology and more recent achievements of ethnomusicologists worldwide, but also with trends in the field of cultural anthropology and folkloristics, the present generation of ethnomusicologists combines anthropological and musicological methods in its research, synchronic and diachronic examination, a static (musico-analytical) and dynamic approach (observations of performances). Certain research projects have complied with the need that folk music be observed in the context of musical culture as a whole. Over years of monitoring musical life in a small region e.g. the Island of Murter, attention was paid to the passive musical world of its inhabitants, as well as to active and current musical repertoire which is made up, in considerable measure, of songs from the field of contemporary popular music (Milin-Ćurin 1991). Significant attention has been directed over recent years to the relation between music and the context in which it lives, so that, for example, research is done on customary and ritual songs within the context of weddings (Ceribašić 1991), or the influence of context on changes in singing style is observed (Marošević 1992). Individual research is concentrated on the problematics of performances of folk music and examination of the results of the application of the concept of folklore as communication in ethnomusicology (Marošević 1993). The focus of research in some cases is not so much the folk music of a specific area (or region), as the people who create it and perform it. Thus, for example, conceptions held on traditional music among the performers themselves are studied (Bonifačić 1991), and the relation between the normative and the individual in creation of folk music is observed (Ceribašić 1994).

Apart from studies oriented towards diverse aspects of *folklore music*, some recent research in Croatia crosses the borders of folkloristically oriented ethnomusicology. Such, for example, is the effort to observe the entire *musical culture* of a specific community from an ethnomusicological viewpoint (Buble 1988), or the study of the activities of travelling musicians as intermediaries in the creation of popular music culture in the past (Marošević 1993a). A number of ethnomusicologists has begun to pursue the matter of contemporary popular music, particularly its production and reception in the context of political changes and the Nineties war in Croatia (Pettan 1993; Bonifačić 1993, and other work which is under way). If we mention research into non-Croatian and non-European folk music (Pettan 1988, 1992) and some "older" themes

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number. All the ethnomusicologists active in Croatia today were Bezić's students -  
- seven in Zagreb, four of them at the Institute; and two in Split.

which have also been taken into consideration over the last few years, such as historical sources on folk music (Hadžihusejnović-Valašek 1990) and traditional church singing (Doliner 1991; Bezić 1993), we have probably managed to show sufficiently clearly how very different the interests of Croatian ethnomusicologists are, by which, although few in number, they approach the breadth and diversity of contemporary ethnomusicology throughout the world.

(Translated by Nina H. Antoljak)

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